

# Minority status effect: ethnic distance and attitudes towards ethnic minorities in Eastern Croatia and Vojvodina

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# MINORITY STATUS EFFECT: ETHNIC DISTANCE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS ETHNIC MINORITIES IN EASTERN CROATIA AND VOJVODINA

Margareta Gregurović

**Abstract:** *Different social statuses of three groups: Croats from Eastern Croatia (ethnic majority), Croats from Vojvodina (ethnic minority) and Serbs from Eastern Croatia (ethnic minority) and the country-specific legislative frameworks referring to ethnic minority rights are taken as the starting point in this paper aiming to identify the differences between these groups in expressing specific ethnic attitudes and social distance towards members of ethnic/national minorities. The paper is based on the survey data collected in 2013 (N = 1431) in eastern Croatia (Slavonia) and north Serbia (Vojvodina). Along with the modified Bogardus social distance scale, several measuring scales have been employed to analyse the attitudes expressed towards ethnic minorities (ethnocentrism scale, ethnic minority threat perception scale, ethnic exclusionism scale and Serbian minority rights perception scale). Series of bivariate analyses yielded several significant results: 1) Croats in the status of ethnic majority to the greatest extent perceive ethnic minorities as threat, support to the most the activities that exclude members of ethnic minorities from everyday social life, they especially stand out in diminishing of the importance of special rights of Serbian ethnic minority in Croatia, and express the strongest ethnic distance towards Serbs; 2) Serbs from Croatia, in the status of ethnic minority, most oppose the exclusionist attitudes towards ethnic minorities, particularly emphasize the importance of realization of the rights of the Serbian national minority in Croatia but express the strongest ethnic distance towards Croats and members of other ethnic minorities in Croatia; and 3) Croats from Serbia, in the status of ethnic minority, to the lowest extent incline towards ethnocentric attitudes and express lowest social distance towards members of the constituent peoples of former Yugoslavia in the status of ethnic minorities. The obtained results are interpreted within the context of threat perception theory and the results of other studies in the field of sociology of ethnic relations.*

**Keywords:** *ethnic distance, ethnic minorities, Eastern Croatia, Vojvodina*

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it is hard to imagine a single-nation state – Western democracies are referred to as nation-states but they are actually multination or plurinational states since they ‘contain historic sub-state groups who have a distinct national identity and who mobilize politically in pursuit of nationalist goals’ (Banting and Kymlicka, [\[su.ca/mcp/national-minorities\]\(http://www.queen-su.ca/mcp/national-minorities\)\). Croatia and Serbia are no different, especially due to a long history of inclusion in multination confederation states which reflects on contemporary ethnic structure and policies of ethnic diversity management in these countries. Aside from problems and inconsistencies in implementation of legislative framework for minor-](http://www.queen-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

ity rights, these two states have come to accept the legitimacy of minority nationalist aspirations, and they take effort in reshaping political institutions in order to grant special rights on cultural and ethnic diversity as well as greater autonomy to members of ethnic minorities. So, in a sense as Banting and Kymlicka stress: 'they have come to accept, implicitly or explicitly, that they are multinational states' (<http://www.queensu.ca/mcp/national-minorities>).

Although initial acceptance of separate cultures and their characteristics exists in most of the societies, the fact that national or ethnic cultures represent identificational frameworks that people still need to identify with cannot be ignored (Čačić-Kumpes and Kumpes, 2008).<sup>1</sup> These identificational frames often include terms like ethnic majority and ethnic minority. Since I will be dealing, to a certain degree, with the relation between these two categories, it is important to define the major terms I will be using. Ethnic minorities are frequently described using the attributions of ethnic groups, i.e. specific cultural characteristics, sense of togetherness, ethnocentrism, ascribed status and territoriality (Marger, 2009; cf. van den Berghe, 1987) and they are determined as a 'subset' within a nation-state which is referred to as 'the others' (Fenton, 2010). In sociological sense the term 'minority' always reflects the term of (ethnic) stratification and a relation to 'majority', i.e. dominant (ethnic) group, related to much analysed relations of social domination, social power and mechanisms of presentations, and not so much to numbers or proportions even though the later also make a part of the definition. Today widely used definition of ethnic minority is the United Nations' definition (more precisely definition given by Francesco Capotorti, 1977) according to which national/ethnic minorities present non-dominant group, numerically inferior to rest of the population, which possesses unique ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics and the will to preserve those characteristics (cf. Čačić-Kumpes and Kumpes, 2005). On the other hand, dominant ethnic group (ethnic majority) is 'a group at the top of the ethnic

hierarchy, which receives a disproportionate share of wealth, exercises predominant political authority, dominates the society's cultural system and has inordinate influence on the future ethnic makeup of the society' (Marger, 2009: 33).

In terms of majority-minority relations, the starting point of this paper is that every ethnic group has a specific status and specific rights in a given society which in turn define their life, everyday experiences, interactions, attitudes, etc. From that position members of various ethnic groups evaluate other groups, estimate their status and role in the society and have different perceptions of them according to the personal experiences but also according to the socially imposed perceptions. Main aim of this paper is to analyse this relation between (minority/majority) status and the perception of ethnic minorities with respect to the specific (ethnic minority) rights, using an example of three groups differing in their status, in selected parts of Croatia and Serbia.

Given the fact that ethnicity has always been socially attributed as important domain of social sphere (Jenkins, 2008) in Croatia and Serbia, the examples of three groups of specific social status could serve to test the main hypothesis: perception of ethnic minorities expressed as ethnic distance and specific ethnic attitudes would be dependent on an ethnic groups' status and position in a society defined as ethnic majority or minority and related to the rights they are entitled to. A series of analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis on a data collected within the empirical research in eastern Croatia (Slavonia) and western Serbia (Vojvodina) on a three convenience samples: Croats from Croatia (ethnic majority), Serbs from Croatia (ethnic minority) and Croats from Serbia (ethnic minority). The ethnic minority legislative framework of both countries will be described in following section in order to define specific position of ethnic minorities in two settings and to illustrate possible differences between two systems, enabling the possible interpretations of the obtained results.

<sup>1</sup> This also connects to the contemporary type of ethno nationalism which refers to determination of national identity of ethnic minorities and the challenges they face in a society dominated by some other (majority) ethnic group. In the context of multi-ethnic societies ethnic minority/minorities are often perceived as culturally different, sometimes politically oppressed, while, on the other side, majority ethnic group could diminish economic, political or cultural influence of ethnic minority which is estimated as harmful and threatening (Marger, 2009).

## CONTEMPORARY LEGAL REGULATION OF MINORITY RIGHTS IN CROATIA AND SERBIA

Long tradition of legislative regulation of rights to ethnic and cultural diversity is related to multi-ethnic composition of both, Croatia and Serbia, and being part of several multination states before breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991. Different mechanisms of ethnic diversity management were in action in all those state systems (except in the period of totalitarian Independent State of Croatia) and diverse migration policies affected the structure and spatial distribution of national minorities in different periods. Along with the shifts in social power and domination (in certain periods countries of origin of some ethnic minorities ruled over the territories of modern Croatia and Serbia) these mechanisms and policies have influenced the changes in proportions of ethnic minorities and thus the relations between ethnic majority and minorities.

In this section I will not deal with historical shifts and changes in legal regulations of minority rights in both countries, instead I will focus on shortly describing contemporary ethnic minority legislature indicating similarities and differences between the two countries.

After the establishment of autonomy and independence, Republic of Croatia faced the need to develop adequate ethnic diversity management system in order to accommodate ethnic minorities' interests and define the legislative framework for the political participation and social integration of ethnic minorities into Croatian society, simultaneously ensuring the protection of their cultural identity (Jakešević, Tatalović and Lacović, 2016). Therefore, the continuation of the existing rights of ethnic minorities was granted, in a combination with the development of a new, more adequate model of the recognition of minority rights. Several regulations, starting with the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia<sup>2</sup>, address directly the members of ethnic minorities – as equal citizens of Croatia with additional rights to their cultural autonomy.

Two separate laws,<sup>3</sup> which regulate the rights of ethnic minorities in official use of languages and scripts, as well as education in the language and

script of ethnic minorities, pose a major contribution to protecting and advancing a more stable cultural autonomy of ethnic minorities in Croatia. Their paramount importance stems from the fact that education is 'the most effective mean of preserving ethnic identity' (Tatalović, 2005). The realization of these rights should also affect the acceptance of ethnic and linguistic diversity in everyday communication.

According to Tatalović (2005) the adoption of the new Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (2002)<sup>4</sup>, to which Croatia was obliged by the Agreement on Stabilization and Association with the EU, represents the completion of the creation of a comprehensive legislative framework for the rights of national minorities. Through this Law the Republic of Croatia ensures the realization of specific rights and freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities, which they can enjoy individually or together with other members of the same national minority, and also together with members of other ethnic minorities when regulated by the Law. These rights are in particular:

- Use of their language and script, privately, in public use, and in official use;
- Education in the language and script they use;
- Use of their signs and symbols;
- Cultural autonomy by maintaining, developing and expressing their own culture, and preserving and protecting their cultural heritage and traditions;
- Right to profess their religion and to establish religious communities together with other members of that religion;
- Access to the media and conducting of activities of public communication (receiving and disseminating information) in the language and script they use;
- Self-organization and association in order to achieve common interests;
- Participation in representative bodies at national and local levels and in administrative and judicial bodies;
- Participation of ethnic minorities' members in public life and administration of local affairs through the councils and representatives of ethnic minorities;

<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, *Official Gazette*, No. 56/90, 135/97, 8/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10, 05/14.

<sup>3</sup> Law on the Use of Languages and Scripts of National Minorities, *Official Gazette*, No. 51/00, 56/00; Law on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities, *Official Gazette*, No. 51/00, 56/00.

<sup>4</sup> Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, *Official Gazette*, No. 155/02, 47/10, 80/10, 93/11.

Protection from any activity which endangers or may endanger their survival, rights and freedoms.

Listed rights cover a variety of special rights on cultural autonomy, education, self-organization, religion, public communication, and moreover, it must be stressed that Croatia belongs to the group of countries that not only recognize the existence of ethnic minorities, but also guarantee seats in parliament, or the right to political representation at all levels of government. One of the main ideas of the Constitutional Law on The Rights of National Minorities is preventing the creation of prejudice, intolerance and xenophobia, as well as the occurrence of discriminatory behaviour in Croatian society (Tatalović, 2005).

In the period from coming into force till today several changes were introduced to both Constitutional Laws: the changes in Constitution of the Republic of Croatia indicate the definition of basic equality of all 22 national minorities in Croatia (as well as their explicit list by name in the Constitution), obligation to create new laws on protection of rights of ethnic minorities (which was done in form of Constitutional Law on The Rights of National Minorities) and special right to elect their representatives in Croatian Parliament. The changes in the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities refer to the proscription of models of positive discrimination of the members of ethnic minorities dependent to their proportion in total population of Croatia, and harmonisation of processes of determining representation of members of ethnic minorities in bodies of local and regional government and in national minorities' councils.<sup>5</sup>

Republic of Serbia had a slightly more turbulent path in definition of ethnic minority rights. Neibauere (2014) in her research identifies three stages of minority right development in Serbia first being before the breakup of Yugoslavia and another two in the period from 1990s. In spite of the Yugoslav legacy marked by a rather elaborate set of linguistic, cultural and religious rights which in a sense were 'one of the unifying factors that kept the multi ethnic mosaic federation together' (Neibauere, 2014: 36) period following the breakup of Yugoslavia was marked by

<sup>5</sup> The later was enhanced by bringing to force the Law on Register of Councils, Coordination of Councils and Representatives of National Minorities (*Official Gazette*, No.80/11, 34/12) which enabled more transparent ways of minorities' organisation and political participation. For more detailed changes in legal regulation of ethnic minorities' rights in Croatia and their implications see: Jakešević, Tatalović and Lacović, 2016.

a lack of not only minority rights but basic human rights (Neibauere, 2014) accompanied by strengthening of social distance and negative perception of ethnic minorities. As Neibauere (2014: 36) stresses, during this period Serbian politics was 'centred heavily on ethno-nationalism and promoted rather dominant views on minorities, who were often defined as a threat to national identity and sovereignty'.

The contemporary legislative on ethnic minority rights protection began to shape during the third stage, after 2000 which has led to significant improvement of rights and status of national minorities in regard to their cultural autonomy and political participation. In 2001 Serbia joined the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe indicating that the country was willing to take the necessary steps in order to facilitate the promotion of its minority and human rights record. Although it was a challenging process, complicated by Serbia's post conflict status, characterized by unstable democratic institutions and a strong nationalistic atmosphere (Neibauere, 2014: 34), several laws on ethnic minority rights have been adopted and are still in force: Constitution of the Republic of Serbia,<sup>6</sup> Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities,<sup>7</sup> Law on Official Use of Language and Script,<sup>8</sup> Law on the Basis of the Education System,<sup>9</sup> Law on Local Government,<sup>10</sup> Law on National Councils of Ethnic Minorities<sup>11</sup> (Vujačić, 2012; cf. Gojković, s.a.).

The Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities regulates the compliance with individual and collective rights guaranteed to the persons belonging to minorities by Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or by international agreements. According to Neibauere (2014: 38) this law 'in addition to protecting minorities from all forms of discrimination in exercising their rights, also created the necessary instruments to implement and guarantee these rights in areas such as e.g. education, media and language, while also providing

<sup>6</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 83/06.

<sup>7</sup> Official Gazette of FRY, No. 11/02. The law stayed in force after the separation of Montenegro from Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.

<sup>8</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 45/91, 53/93, 67/93, 48/94, 101/2005 – new law, 30/2010.

<sup>9</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 62/03, 64/03, 58/04, 62/04, 72/09, 52/11, 55/13, 35/2015, 68/15, 62/16.

<sup>10</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 129/2007, 83/2014 – new law, 101/2016 – new law.

<sup>11</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 72/2009, 20/2014 – Decision of Constitutional Court, 55/2014.



the communities with an opportunity to form their own state funded National Minority Councils'.<sup>12</sup> Further on, the law defined the rights to preserve specificities such as a choice and use of personal name, right to use mother tongue, institutional use of language and script, right to foster culture and tradition, education in mother tongue and public informing in minority languages; it proscribed efficient participation in decision making on issues of diversity and distinctiveness in government and administration through federal councils of ethnic minorities; and finally it urged the general protection of minority rights and freedoms.

The other specific laws on use of language and script, education and local self-government deal in more detail<sup>13</sup> with specific determinants of implementation of these rights on national and local level presenting the model of 'segregational multiculturalism' (Vujačić, 2012).

As it can be noticed both countries have pretty similar legislative framework for ensuring the implementation of minority rights. It is important to stress that in both countries these legislations were defined under the strong external influence in internation-

al context. Namely, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – OSCE and European Union had impact in urging the law-making, among others, on ethnic minority rights, thus setting the needed prerequisites for joining EU. So in different periods, as the level of political will varied, the implementation of adopted laws in Croatia was also unstable given the fact that the external actors were of crucial importance in their definition and creation (Jakešević, Tatalović and Lacović, 2016). On the other side, in Serbia although contemporary legal framework on minority rights protection presents positive shift, on a practical level there are still issues to be resolved. As Neibauere (2014: 35) stresses 'the reasons for slow implementation of these legislations lies in e.g. the lack of coordination among the involved parties, the lack of human rights culture and a considerable ethnocentrism and nationalism amongst the Serbian population' which is not so far also from the situation in Croatia.<sup>14</sup> So it can be concluded that even though most extreme expressions of nationalism have been somewhat contained, in both societies are ethnic distance and xenophobia still highly prevalent (cf. Neibauere, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> This process additionally included the adoption of the Constitutional Charter on Human and Minority Rights and Civil Liberties in 2003, which was a central requirement for Serbia's acceptance into the Council of Europe (Neibauere, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> For detailed description of these laws refer to Gojković (s.a.).

<sup>14</sup> Recent conflicts on exercising the rights of Serbian ethnic minority in Slavonia (more specifically in Vukovar) regarding the institutional use of minority script presents a continuation of tensions and constant turmoil between two ethnic groups.

## MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE STATUS AND ATTITUDE

Taking into account that unfavourable social climate in implementing minority rights can be reflected on various aspects of life, including the expression of negative attitudes towards specific ethnic groups, it is presumed that ethnic groups whose rights are not exercised would have more negative perceptions of group proposing their rights, and maybe other groups whose rights have been implemented. Overall it is presumed that members of ethnic minorities tend to be more open to cultural diversity and in general have more positive ethnic attitudes (Gregurović, 2014) however, particularity of a context or territorial distinctiveness could quickly encourage the shift in these perceptions. There are numbers of theoretical models and concepts applicable in the research on interethnic relations, social distance being one of the most commonly used.

Even though many sociological definitions of social distance point specifically towards emotional

aspects of the phenomenon (see for example Ritzer and Ryan, 2011; Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2008), some of them however leave the space for different approaches and understandings.<sup>15</sup> Karakayali (2009) describes four dimensions of social distance: affective, normative, interactive and cultural (see also Park 1924; Kadushin, 1962) among which possibly the most 'famous' dimension of social distance is the one described by Emroy Bogardus – referring to the social distance as the affective distance. Based on the Park's definition that 'social distance refers to the grades and degrees of understanding and intimacy which characterize personal and social relations

<sup>15</sup> For example, according to Merriam Webster's Dictionary social distance is defined as 'the degree of acceptance or rejection of social intercourse between individuals belonging to diverse [racial, ethnic, or class] groups' (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/socialdistance>).

generally' (Park, 1924: 339) indicating the degree of intimacy people are prepared to establish in their relations to others, Bogardus constructed Social Distance Scale (Bogardus, 1925a, 1925b, 1933). The final form of scale includes seven equidistant social situations which are to be attached to the specific target groups, subjects of the social distance. This scale has a wide use in research on ethnic attitudes and prejudice, and in general on interethnic relations, and was used in the research which results are reported in this paper.

Among other dimensions of social distance, of great importance to the analysed subject is normative dimension, best represented in the work of Simmel (Kadushin, 1962; Karakayali, 2009)<sup>16</sup>. Simmel (1950) introduced the supra-personal perception of social distance opposing the 'personal relations which are the very life principle of small groups' to 'distance and coolness of objective and abstract norms without which the large group cannot exist' (Simmel, 1950: 97). Kadushin (1962: 518) stresses Simmel's contribution also in notion that 'social distance is an objectively observable quantity which varies from one social structure to other' based on 'consciously expressed norms'. Accordingly, normative approach could be identified via set of 'collectively recognized norms about membership status in a group' where these norms make difference between 'us' and 'them' specifying the 'acceptable relations' with specific groups (Karakayali, 2009: 541).

Another two concepts which are also frequently used in determining ethnic relations and were employed in this research to assess the relation of social status of ethnic majority/minority and ethnic attitudes are: ethnocentrism and threat perception which can further lead to the third concept of ethnic exclusion. According to Marger (2009) members of a specific ethnic group simultaneously maintain over favoured perception of their own group as they keep unfavourable perceptions of groups they do not belong to. All ethnic groups express ethnocentric ideas of their unique character. Moreover, what is often interpreted as ethnic prejudice towards non-belonging groups ('outgroups') could instead be the case of intergroup positive bias and favouritism or protection of members of own group (Mar-

ger, 2009; Brewer, 1979, 2007). 'We feeling' as Marger (2009) calls it, possessed by every ethnic group leads to ethnocentrism – the tendency to evaluate other groups according to the standards and values of own group. Inevitably, this produces the perception of one's own group as superior to others. If these ethnocentric feelings are introduced into ethnic contacts, and if dominant group feels insecure and threatened by subordinate group, the prejudices are unavoidable result. In other words, 'ethnocentrism helps to set and sustain patterns of social exclusion' (Blumer, [1939] 2000: 190) or could be used as a basis of intergroup conflict (Marger, 2009).

Finally this lead us to the concept of social dominance often used in explanation and interpretation of all sorts of prejudice, stereotypes or categorisations of groups as superior/dominant or inferior, since the members of dominant group collectively, through processes of social cognition and categorisation (also on a normative level) maintain their position (Padilla, 2008: 11, cf. Hagendoorn, 1993) in a socially constructed hierarchy based on disproportionate distribution of resources (Esses et al., 2005) and rights. In order to maintain this hierarchy, ideologies that preserve a stable system are being developed, including the promotion of the beliefs about the legitimacy of the position within society and preventing any competition and tensions between groups. In regard to ethnic minority status it could result in lag or absence of implementation of their rights what in turn has the effect on minority members' perceptions and attitudes towards dominant and other ethnic groups.

Heading forward from these conceptions, the aim of the paper is to check the possible connection between the status a member of a specific ethnic group has to his/her attitude towards other ethnic groups based on empirical data. Research questions which posed the starting points in conducting analyses were: 1) how the ethnic majority perceives ethnic minorities and their rights; 2) would members of ethnic minorities express lower social/ethnic distance and more positive attitudes towards other ethnic minorities than the members of ethnic majority; and 3) is implementation and realisation of specific minority rights positively reflected on more positive attitudes towards ethnic majority?

<sup>16</sup> Even though the last two dimensions of social distance are also closely related to the subject covered in this paper, they were not directly addressed in the research. To read more on these dimensions refer to work of Kadushin, (1962), Karakayali (2009), Granovetter (1973, 1983) and Tarde (1903).

Hypotheses referring to possible interconnection of minority status and specific attitudes towards ethnic minorities have been tested on data collected in two national settings separated by the state border: Slavonia – most eastern part of Croatia and Vojvodina – western part of Serbia. Survey was conducted on three groups of respondents: Croats and Serbs in Slavonia and Croats in Vojvodina.<sup>17</sup> The relation between these two ethnic groups has multiple characteristics. In a historical perspective, two nations have shared several states among which the latest – Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia broke down in an armed conflict on the territory of several confederative republics. The breakup of Yugoslavia shaped contemporary ethnic structure of both newly formatted states: The Republic of Croatia and The Republic of Serbia<sup>18</sup> and mirrored the changes in ethnic composition through forced migration and creation of new ‘accidental diasporas’ (Brubaker, 2000) and ‘accidental minorities’ (Čačić-Kumpes and Kumpes, 2008). According to the 2011 Croatian census data, Serbs are still the largest ethnic minority in Croatia. Overall in Croatia reside 186,633 (4.3%) residents of Serbian ethnic affiliation; however, their proportion is much higher in Slavonia which is historically the territory in which largest proportion of overall ethnic minorities in Croatia live.<sup>19</sup> On the other side, Croats in Serbia are not the largest ethnic minority (proportion of 0.81%) however; they are more significantly located in the Vojvodina.<sup>20</sup>

The data presented in this paper were gathered in September 2013 as part of a wider empirical project ‘Attitudes, Values, Personality, And Political Behaviour and Preferences: Comparative Analysis of Croats and Serbian Ethnic Minority in Croatia’<sup>21</sup> aimed at exploring interethnic relations in eastern Croatia and it was later same year applied also in Vojvodi-

na. The survey was conducted on a convenience samples (Croats from Croatia N=555; Serbs from Croatia N=555; Croats from Serbia N=321) in order to evaluate the specific issues of ethnic attitudes, political behaviour, values and personality traits on proportional and otherwise similar samples of Croats and Serbs in the two most eastern Croatian counties: Osijek-Baranja and Vukovar-Srijem and later on Croats in Vojvodina.

To describe the respondents in more detail, in Table 1 there are presented the main characteristics of three subsamples including age, gender, educational level and self-estimated socio-economic status which are widely used as main socio-demographic descriptive of samples. Here it should be stressed that these are convenience samples, so the generalisations to whole populations or even regional populations are not possible. The obtained data could however be used to illustrate to possible hypothesised relations and to serve as a platform for further research on representative samples.

The proportion of female respondents exceeds the proportion of males in both Croatian subsamples while Croats from Serbia were in larger proportion represented by male respondents. According to the age all three subsamples are on average in balance (43 to 45 years) however it can be noticed that Serbs from Croatia are notably more represented in category from 31 to 45 years, while Croats from Serbia in the category from 46 to 60 years. Serbs are also the least represented in the oldest category.

Most of the respondents in all three subsamples had completed secondary education as the highest level of education; however, Serbs from Croatia have the least completed higher education in comparison to both groups of Croats. On the other side, both minority subsamples have notably higher proportion of respondents with the lowest completed level of education. Finally, estimation of socioeconomic status reveals the pattern according to which Croats from Croatia estimate their socioeconomic status quite better than Croats from Serbia, and especially from Serbs from Croatia who in a proportion of almost of quarter of sample estimate their socioeconomic status as worse than the majority’s.

The conducted analyses which results are presented further in text are based on the comparisons of these three subsamples in order to reveal potential differences in attitudes which could be possibly ascribed to the specific status each ethnic group has in a given society.

<sup>17</sup> Not including Serbian respondents from Vojvodina as representatives of ethnic majority presents one of the limitations of this study, disabling more detailed analyses and comparisons.

<sup>18</sup> In the period between the breakup of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and formation of the Republic of Serbia the state functioned as Federal Republic of Yugoslavia consisting of Serbia and Montenegro, and later on under the name Serbia and Montenegro. Today’s name dates from 2006.

<sup>19</sup> 2011 census data indicate proportion of 16% of ethnic minorities in the two selected Croatian counties. Proportion of Serbian ethnic minority is 11%.

<sup>20</sup> The proportion of Croats in Vojvodina is around 2.4%.

<sup>21</sup> Research was carried out within the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies in Zagreb (Dr Zlatko Šram was project coordinator).

**Table 1.** *Sample descriptive*

		Croats from Croatia	Serbs from Croatia	Croats from Serbia
		(N=555)	(N=555)	(N=321)
Gender	Male	45.80%	46.70%	53.60%
	Female	53.90%	53.30%	46.40%
Age	30 years or younger	27.90%	22.00%	26.20%
	31 – 45 years	27.20%	35.50%	21.80%
	46 – 60 years	26.30%	27.60%	32.70%
	61 years or older	18.40%	15.00%	19.00%
Education	Primary school or lower	6.70%	12.10%	12.20%
	Secondary school	55.50%	63.20%	53.00%
	College or higher	37.50%	24.10%	34.60%
Socioeconomic status	Worse than the majority	12.60%	23.60%	12.80%
	Neither better nor worse than the majority	62.70%	63.80%	67.30%
	Better than the majority	23.80%	11.90%	18.40%

## ETHNIC DISTANCE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS ETHNIC MINORITIES

The obtained results are grouped into two sections, first one dealing with ethnic distance interpreted on the basis of results of Social Distance Scale (Bogardus, 1925a, 1925b, 1933) and second dealing with selected attitudinal constructs aimed at measuring perception of different ethnic groups.

The original Bogardus Social Distance Scale was adapted and translated to Croatian and it was estimated on 18 ethnic groups/ethnic minorities.<sup>22</sup> The respondents were asked to indicate the closest relationship they were prepared to achieve with the members of different ethnic groups using the scale 1) Marital relation; 2) Personal friend; 3) Close neighbour; 4) Associate at work; 5) Inhabitant in my country; 6) Visitor to my country; and 7) Would exclude them from my country.<sup>23</sup> The respondents were instructed to mark only one option for each ethnic group what was afterwards treated as the cumula-

tive response also for the answer options referring to more distant types of relationships.<sup>24</sup>

Figure 1 presents results of social distance expressed towards four categories of ethnic groups: 1) Croats and 2) Serbs (both representing ethnic majority and minority categories), 3) grouped former Yugoslav constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Slovenians, i.e. 'new' minorities<sup>25</sup>) and 4) grouped other ethnic minorities (i.e. 'old' minorities). The results are presented separately for each subsample in order to show the results in a more comparable manner. Additionally, differences between the subsamples were tested using the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

As expected, Serbs express towards Croats highest social distance accepting them an average on the level of close neighbour. There are slight differences between Croats from Croatia and from Vojvodina according to which Croats from Vojvodina in a higher proportion accept Croats as personal friends. Proportions on other categories of the scale are almost negligible when comparing two groups of Croats.

<sup>22</sup> Albanians, Bosniaks, Croats, Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Jews, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Roma, Russians, Ruthenians, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Turks and Ukrainians.

<sup>23</sup> The original scale answer options were slightly modified to represent more personal relations of respondents towards members of different ethnic groups. The original Bogardus scale consisted out of following possible interactions: 1) Close kin by marriage; 2) Fellow club members; 3) Neighbours; 4) Workers in my occupation; 5) Citizens of my country; 6) Visitors to my country; and 7) Persons to be excluded from my country (Bogardus, 1925b).

<sup>24</sup> For instance, if the respondent marked the option 2) Personal friend, that implies that he/she is prepared to accept the members of that ethnic group also as close neighbours, associates at work, inhabitants in his/her country and visitors to his/her country.

<sup>25</sup> After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the members of constituent peoples living outside their country of origin gained the status of ethnic minority along with other already recognised ethnic minorities residing in the territory of Yugoslavia.

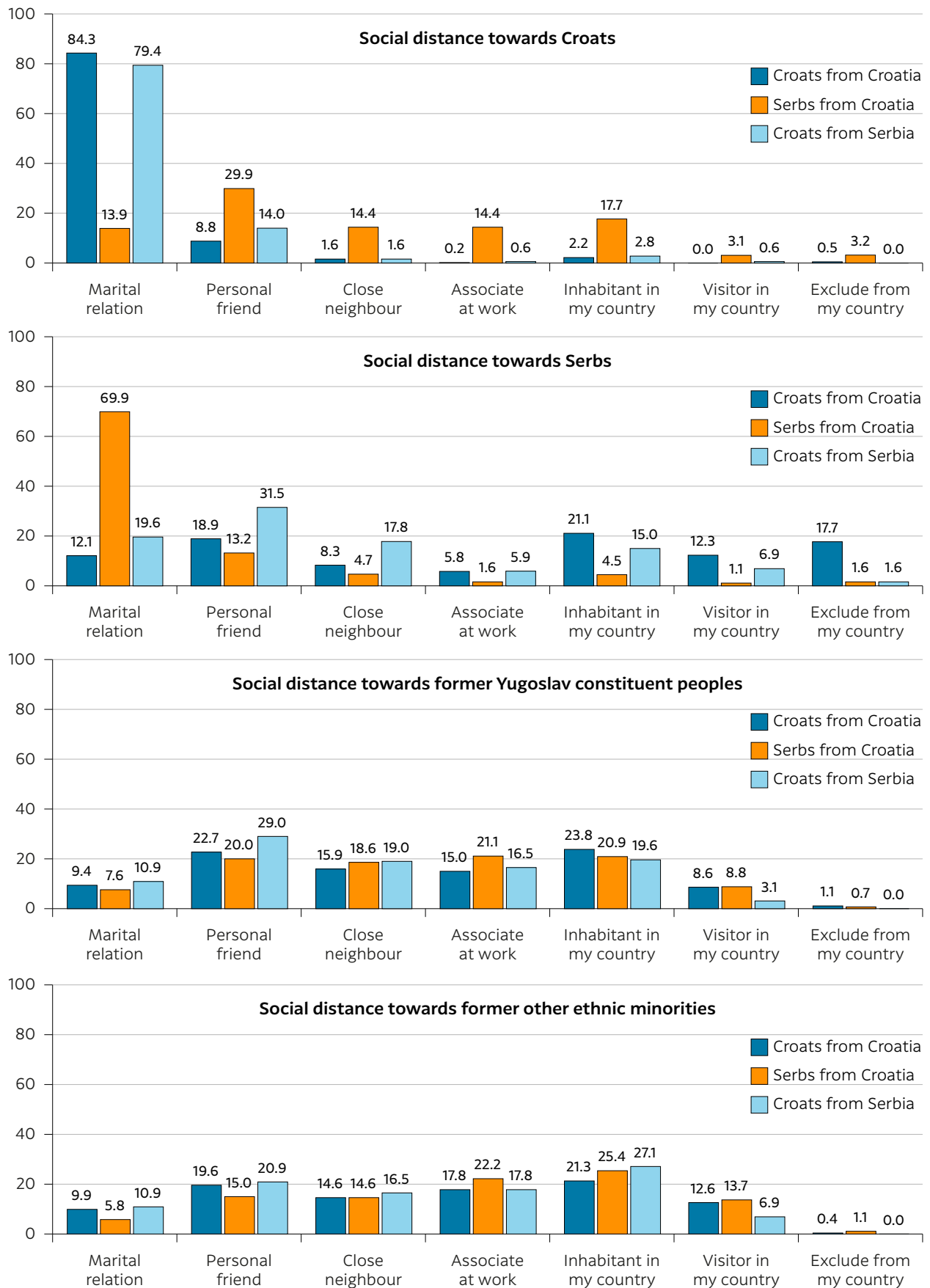


Figure 1. Social distance scale

The analysis of variance indicated significant difference between Serbs and two subsamples of Croats confirming the highest ethnic distance towards Croats expressed by member of Serbian ethnic minority in Croatia ( $F = 405.224, p = 0.000$ ).

On the other side, Croats from Vojvodina are somewhat more inclined towards Serbs in comparison to Croats from Croatia who express on average the highest distance towards Serbs – only on the level of associate at work. Even though in highest proportions Serbs are prepared to obtain closest relation to other Serbs, an average result on the scale indicates level of personal friend. Noticeable proportions of Croats from Croatia express the most distant relations towards Serbs especially visible in the final category indicating the exclusion from the country. Statistically significant differences were obtained between all three subsamples indicating that Croats from Croatia express on average the highest social distance towards Serbs, while Serbs from Croatia express the lowest distance towards them ( $F = 291.848, p = 0.000$ ).

In estimation of social distance towards other ethnic groups, all three subsamples are somewhat more inclined towards former Yugoslav constituent peoples than towards other ethnic minorities. The most frequent relationships chosen within all three subsamples in both remaining graphs were the ones of inhabitant in my country and personal friend/associate at work. Although the presented distributions are quite even, Croats from Vojvodina tend to express somewhat closer relation towards former Yugoslav constituent peoples – averagely on a level of close neighbour in comparison to Croats and Serbs from Croatia who tend to accept them averagely on level of an associate at work ( $F = 9.407, p = 0.000$ ). Another noticeable result indicates no respondents from Vojvodina selecting the most extreme social distance category towards neither of the last two groups of ethnic minorities. On the other hand, Serbs express the highest average social distance towards other/ 'old' ethnic minorities ( $F = 9.981, p = 0.000$ ).

Second set of analyses refers to attitudes towards ethnic minorities which were operationalised through four attitudinal constructs: Ethnocentrism scale (Šram, 2010), Ethnic minority threat perception scale (Canetti-Nisim, Ariely and Halperin, 2008), Ethnic exclusionism scale (Canetti-Nisim,

Ariely and Halperin, 2008)<sup>26</sup> and Serbian minority rights perception scale (Šram, 2013).<sup>27</sup>

Ethnocentrism scale included 10 items which in a characteristic manner deal with superiority of one's nation, indicating the willingness to protect own country until death, pride of its history, tradition and culture and need of 'national purity' in order to protect and defend national culture and national interests. The items were summarised into composite variable indicating the respondents' level of ethnocentrism (higher values on the scale refer to stronger sense of ethnocentrism). Results on a scale presented in Figure 2 indicate that, although all three samples are normally distributed– which indicates moderately expressed ethnocentric attitudes, a slight inclination towards rejection of ethnocentrism is visible among Croats from Vojvodina. On the other side, Croats from Croatia are in greater proportions positioned on far right categories indicating strong acceptance of ethnocentric attitudes. Analysis of variance significantly singled out Croats from Vojvodina as averagely least ethnocentric respondents ( $F = 17.719, p = 0.000$ ).

Ethnic minority threat perception was measured by 5 items indicating that the national minorities are threat to the security of a country and they try to destabilise it, as well as they pose immediate threat to life of respondent and his/her family. In the results of a composite scale in Figure 2 the subsample of Serbs from Croatia stands out with noticeable proportions of respondent rejecting the notion of ethnic minorities as a security threat. Croats in a status of ethnic minority are also more inclined to rejecting the threat posed by members of ethnic minorities. However, Croats from Croatia statistically significant are the most prone to consider national minorities as national and personal threat ( $F = 57.641, p = 0.000$ ).

Ethnic exclusionism scale was also constructed out of 5 items dealing with the notions such as depriving the members of ethnic minorities right to be politically or publicly active imposing that the citizenship should be deprived to those not loyal to the country.<sup>28</sup> Again, the Serbs from Croatia are signifi-

<sup>26</sup> Ethnic minority threat perception scale and Ethnic exclusionism scale are dimensions of a single scale constructed by Canetti-Nisim, Ariely and Halperin (2008) aimed at determining perception of ethnic minorities.

<sup>27</sup> The scale on rights of Serbian ethnic minority in Croatia was constructed by Z. Šram for the purposes of the research.

<sup>28</sup> With the later statement Croats from Croatia agreed in an especially high proportion (more than 50%).

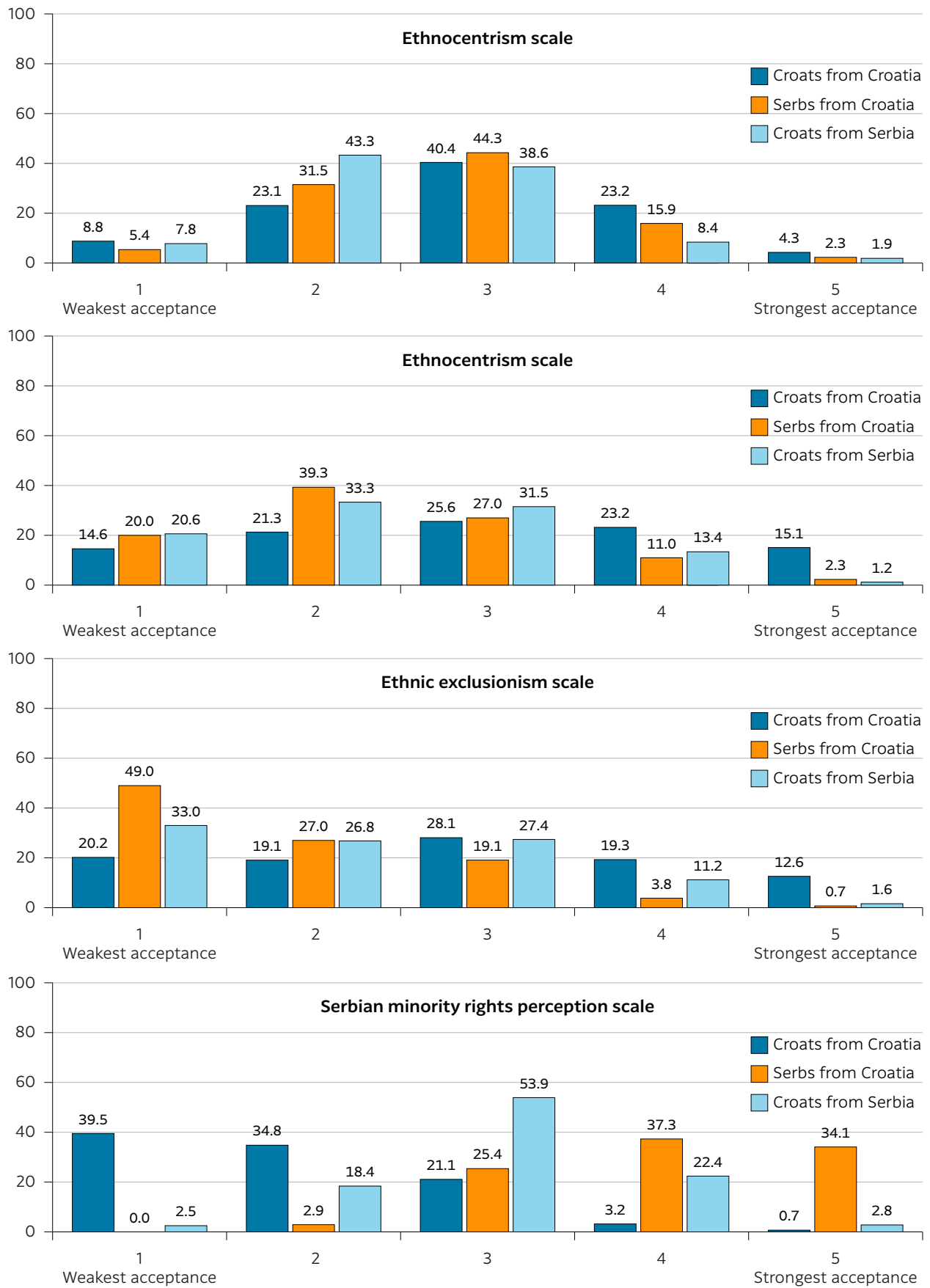


Figure 2. Attitudes towards ethnic minorities

cantly represented on a most extreme rejecting category of the scale what was also confirmed by the results of variance analysis which showed statistically significant average differences among all three subsamples. Results indicate that Croats from Croatia agree with the statements indicating exclusion of ethnic minorities from Croatia to the greatest extent, while Serbs from Croatia most oppose this attitudes ( $F = 123.689, p = 0.000$ ).

Final scale on the rights of Serbian ethnic minority in Croatia was constructed from 9 items pointing to granting the members of Serbian minority various rights (to education, to use of their script and language, to practice religion, to be politically represented, etc.). The distributions of the scale in Figure 2 are very significant indicating strong differences between all three subsamples. As Croats from Croatia tend to oppose the recognition and exercis-

ing of the specific rights to Serbian minority in Croatia, Serbs agree to the great extent that these rights should be granted to them. Croats from Vojvodina seem to be relatively indecisive, possibly due to absence of direct link to their status in Serbia.<sup>29</sup> Polarisation between two samples from Croatia has also been confirmed by analysis of variance which resulted in statistically significant average differences between all three samples depicting Croats from Croatia on average as most restrictive in granting the Serbian minority special rights while simultaneously Serbs from Croatia attach the greatest importance to granting them special, minority rights ( $F = 862.510, p = 0.000$ ).

<sup>29</sup> The absence of instrument measuring perception of rights of Croatian minority in Serbia presents another limitation of the research.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The conducted analyses yielded several significant results which, even though obtained on a convenience sample, can be confirmed in other research studies. The results of Croats from Croatia – in the status of dominant group and ethnic majority indicate that they to the greatest extent perceive ethnic minorities as threat, support to the most the activities that exclude members of ethnic minorities from everyday social life, they especially stand out in diminishing of the importance of special rights of Serbian ethnic minority in Croatia, and express the strongest ethnic distance towards Serbs. Further on, Serbs from Croatia, in the status of ethnic minority most oppose the exclusionist attitudes towards ethnic minorities, particularly emphasize the importance of realization of the rights of the Serbian national minority in Croatia but express the strongest ethnic distance towards Croats and members of other ethnic minorities in Croatia. Finally, Croats from Serbia, in the status of ethnic minority to the lowest extent express ethnocentric attitudes and lowest social distance towards members of the constituent peoples of former Yugoslavia in the status of ethnic minorities. The reasons of low significance of the results of Croats from Vojvodina could possibly be ascribed to the limitations of study, i.e. not including Serbian sample from Serbia representing the second ethnic majority and analysing the perception of realisation of specific minority rights of Croats in Serbia.

In general, the result indicating that the highest average ethnic distance is expressed by the members of ethnic minority<sup>30</sup> is somewhat surprising given that the expected result would be highest ethnic distance expressed by members of ethnic majority. But sometimes, the assigning of positive values to their own ethnic minority group, even when stigmatised, produces the prejudices towards other ethnic minorities, what is also called the 'horizontal hostility' (White and Langer, 1999). Namely, members of the Serbian ethnic group express high ethnic distance also towards the Croats as the ethnic majority, which according to Parrillo (2004) may indicate that expressing distrust and distance to the majority group can contribute to a reduction of its impact on adopting the inequality policies of ethnic minorities. According to Banton (1960) motives for a stronger expression of social/ethnic distance could be found in social transmission of negative attitudes or bad experiences with specific ethnic groups, in special types of social relations (e.g. between dominant and subordinate groups or young and old), in the absence of common interests and experiences or imposed expectations regarding a particular social position.

<sup>30</sup> Even though the results in expression of ethnic distance towards ex-Yugoslav peoples do not differ, Croats and Serbs from Croatia, the obtained result of Serbian respondents indicates relatively high average distance on a level of associate at work.



The results on other attitudes towards ethnic minorities more coincide to the expected ones. Observing the obtained results on four attitudinal constructs can be concluded that the most negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities express Croats from Croatia through strongly agreeing with the notions that members of ethnic minorities' present threat should be socially excluded and not granted specific rights. Having in mind that the indicator of ethnic minority threat was composed out of items indicating first and foremost threat to life and was connected to the perception of armed conflicts, the results are consistent with the original research of Canetti-Nisim et al. (2009). According to these results, the exposure to armed attacks leads to creation of nondemocratic attitudes which endanger minority rights, bringing to the light the importance of socio-historic context in the analyses on interethnic relations mostly reflected in 1990's war, slow process of social transition and economic characteristics of analysed parts of Croatia and Serbia (Čačić-Kumpes, Gregurović and Kumpes, 2014).

If the overall results are analysed within the context of recent war conflict and generational transfer of negative ethnic attitudes in a combination with strong ethnocentric attitudes expressed evenly by both Croats and Serbs, the obtained results do not come as surprise. Even twenty years after the war Huntington's premonitions <sup>31</sup>(1996) are still effective and are reflected in constant turmoil between the two groups almost on everyday bases. Huntington described the conflict between Croats and Serbs, at the primary level of involvement in fault line war, as extremely coloured by their nationalism, inflexibility and toughness in their demands and militancy in pursuing their goals and all those characteristics are still visible today.

Further on, having in mind that Slavonia is the region with higher proportion of members of ethnic minorities, additional reason to expressing more negative attitudes towards Serbian ethnic minority could be in their numbers (Pettigrew, Wagner and Christ, 2010; Wagner et al., 2006; Schlueter and Scheepers, 2010).

Another interpretation often used in similar studies is the one related to economic situation and perceived socioeconomic status of person, region or country. Although direct questions referring to

the effect of inclusion of minority members into the labour market were not included in the analyses, the concept of economic threat (developed to explain the prejudice towards immigrants) is more than applicable to the underdeveloped area of Croatia characterised by very slow economic growth and high rates of unemployment (cf. Gregurović, Kuti and Župarić-Iljić, 2016).

From the perspective of ethnic minority, the results of Serbs from Croatia are accentuated more since the survey included the assessment of realisation of their special rights in Croatia which was not the case for Croats from Serbia who did not have same questions adapted to their position. Even though for Croatia, the normative regulation and effective realisation of freedoms and rights of ethnic minorities became one of the important exams and the measure of societies' level of democratization, and also one of the essential conditions for economic and political integration to Europe, the rights of (Serbian) ethnic minority are still not completely respected and this can further lead to negative perceptions of Serbs towards other minorities whom they perceive as more respected in Croatian society, and towards Croats who are in charge for law implementation. On the other hand, the long-term effects of the exclusionary model of nationalism (Neibauere, 2014: 37), 'combined with feelings of trauma and victimization on the part of the ethnic Serbian community and a highly negative perception of minorities as potential threat to a state's integrity [which] went hand in hand with large scale human and minority rights violations' are still to be investigated in more detail in Serbia both on members of ethnic majority and Croatian ethnic minority.

Finally, the complete understanding of any social phenomenon and especially in the domain of interethnic relations only becomes possible if a complex mixture of historical, political, economic and socio-structural forces operating in a given analysed situation is taken into account (Brown, 2010: 9). The importance of history is highlighted though language, cultural traditions, norms and social institutions which in combination have an effect on constructing diverse social categories and are, as Brown (2010) stresses, primary and unavoidable predecessors of any kind of prejudice. Political processes are also of great importance since they directly influence the state's legislative framework used to define basic civil rights of all citizens and special rights to immigrants and ethnic minorities, to create immigration policies and regu-

<sup>31</sup> According to his *Clash of Civilisations* book 'the former Yugoslavia was the site of the most complex, confused, and complete set of fault line wars of the early 1990s' (Huntington, 1996: 281).

lations which contribute to different evaluation and perceptions of some groups (minorities) in a society (Brown, 2010). So in the future researches, hopefully on more representative samples of two analysed multicultural countries characterised by the complex

interethnic relations, a wider socio-historical contexts well as some predominantly actual determinants of selected groups and their status will be consulted and incorporated in the study.

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