

Prejudice Among Young People in Hungary: A Possible Explanation

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Research shows that strong prejudices towards minority groups are characteristic to young people living in disadvantageous socio-cultural life environments. In previous analyses, we tried to explain prejudice using the concept introduced by Fuchs and Case. According to Fuchs and Case, "... prejudice is not an attitude, but a way of life", i.e. embedded in the entire life situation. The variety of group memberships and differences between group norms encourage group members to choose alternative interpretations or participate in interactions according to various "rites". In our analysis, we primarily seek to answer whether the conception is valid with view to the representative, large (N=8,000) nationwide sample of Hungarian Youth 2020 research, also known as the Hungarian large-sample youth survey. Based on the analyses, we proved that prejudices are explained by Fuchs and Case's theory of intergroup prejudice.

Keywords: prejudice, lifeform, survey research

1. Introduction

An important conclusion of the analysis examining prejudice among teenagers in the period following the transition to democracy (and summarizing the most significant youth sociology research) was that prejudice against various minority groups is typical of young people who live in a socio-cultural environment that is at a disadvantage from the point of view of socialization (Murányi, 2006). Intolerance towards minorities is most common among the children of uneducated and elderly parents living in small towns in the north-eastern region of Hungary, living in poor financial conditions, mostly studying in vocational schools. This result resonated with the experience of a previous Hungarian research suggesting that young people studying in lower-prestige education institutions are more dismissive of members of minority groups (Szabó & Örkény, 1998). How can it be explained that prejudice is primarily characteristic of young people whose immediate family and wider residential environment, as well as their cultural situation, can be called disadvantageous?

The answer is complex, but the results of various empirical studies consistently suggest that compared to groups that differ from the majority and are considered different (in terms of nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, as well as the disabled and substance abusers), young people are "traditionally withdrawn". In the period after the system change, the results of a relatively large number of surveys based on the same methodology confirm that Hungarian society is characterized by coherent and continuous anti-foreigner sentiment, which differs only slightly in different social groups (Kende et al., 2018).

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According to the research results, Hungarian society's social representation of minorities reflects a coherent rejection, but this coherence is varied: different groups in society are characterized by different representations, but the presented research results and other studies also prove that the rejection of minorities is differentiated. How can the different patterns of rejection and social representation be explained?

The interpretation of prejudice as a lifeform (Fuchs & Case, 1992) offers a comprehensive explanation that fits the two types of the most accepted normative theories, which classify the formation and interpretation primarily according to the socialization environment or rather to contact with minority groups. The common characteristics of the two types (contact with minority groups, personal and object-communication environment) also strengthen the lifeform interpretation. We do not have the opportunity to discuss prejudice in detail, so we only refer to a relevant grouping. Based on their separation according to theoretical and empirical aspects, prejudice theories can be classified into two types: evaluative (normative) and descriptive theories (Erős, 2007). The peculiarity of the first type can be highlighted, according to which "Prejudices do not arise from human nature itself, but from a person's inherent, internal psychic abilities... external influences shape the emotional-motivational and cognitive-thinking foundations of prejudice within the personality as well" (Erős, 2007:3). Meanwhile, according to theories belonging to the second type, "...prejudice is not a value-laden expression... Prejudgment follows from the specifics of the functioning of the human psyche..." (Erős, 2007:4).

In the definition of prejudice² between groups, the interpretation that can be classified into the first group is authoritative, which defines prejudice as a judgement that is characteristically supported or opposed by an individual or group formed during group relations (attitude, prejudiced thinking, discriminatory behaviour, prejudiced attitude, intolerance, exclusionary attitude) cover different, organically connected aspects of the same phenomenon.

We seek to answer the question of prejudice formation with the help of a comprehensive explanation (Fuchs & Case, 1989), which interprets prejudice with the concepts of lifeform and ritual density based on interactionist and developmental theories. We deal with the interpretation of the term in detail below. For now, we only point out that the aforementioned summarized analysis, based on other empirical research (Angelusz & Tardos, 1988; Gábor, 2000; Bauer, 2002), proved that in the culturally and existentially disadvantaged family and residential environments, several characteristics of a high ritual density lifeform can be found (Murányi, 2006). Such characteristics include interactions taking place in closed groups, use of limited language codes, acceptance of traditional moral principles, and knowledge of socio-cultural models different from one's own group. However, the correspondence between prejudice, way of life, and the socio-cultural environment does not yet "directly" support the theory that interprets prejudice as a lifeform.³

In the following, based on the theory of Fuchs and Case, we attempt to establish the relationship between prejudice and the way of life characterized on the basis of ritual density.

² "Prejudice can be defined as a judgment characteristically supported or opposed by a group or individual, consistent in its tendency." (Tajfel, 1981:131.)

³ In previous research, we examined the relationship between prejudices and national concepts in different national contexts among university students (Murányi et al., 2010) We sought to justify that the explanation based on the view of prejudices by Fuchs and Case – according to whom prejudice is not an attitude but a way of life – is valid in different national contexts. For this reason, the procedure was applied in our survey in order to validate the conception in three (Hungarian, Finnish, Russian) different cultural-political contexts on the one hand and to use it as a reference model in determining the explanation of prejudice on the other hand.

2. Method

In this study, we analyze the database of the Hungarian large-sample youth survey. The research was conducted on a large (N=8,000) representative sample of Hungarian youth aged 15-29 (Hungarian Youth 2020) and is suitable for testing the theory – undoubtedly revealing sociocultural differences resulting from sampling and age characteristics.⁴

In the first part of this article, we briefly introduce some main characteristics pertaining to prejudice, then we outline the method and the indicators of the survey. The second part contains the data analysis. Next, we will try to interpret this relationship from a socialization point of view. However, before our analysis, we briefly summarize the thought process of Fuchs and Case's study.

3. "Ritual density"

The authors' concept for interpreting prejudice, ritual density, is based on the open and closed nature of the group frames of interactions. How "ritual" the experience of the interactions is, i.e. how homogenous, depends on the openness and closedness of the group framework. Linguistic codes can also be seen as the manifestation of ritual density. Collins classifies group networks into high- and low-density types based on their "ritual structure" (Collins, 1975).

Fuchs and Case believe that this approach is in line with Habermas's interpretation, which sees prejudice as the appearance of systematically distorted communication, which "...occurs when the actors of symbolic interaction have an unequal chance to express their opinion, to criticize the other's opinion, the validity inherent in speech acts to raise or question demands, as well as to display their self-identity..." (Fuchs & Case, 1992:503).

Fuchs and Case criticize theories suitable for the evolutionary approach to prejudice (Parsons, Habermas, Kohlberg) which assume that developmental stages are unidirectional, universal, and irreversible. Fuchs says that postconventional, egalitarian and unprejudiced morality is not independent of context: "So the structures of moral consciousness do not follow some kind of developmental logic but change with the density conditions of the life worlds. (...) In modern societies, situations of low and high ritual density coexist" (Fuchs & Case, 1992:508).

The majority of interactions in closed group settings follow the same patterns. High ritual density is the result of constant interactions within unchanged group frameworks, characterized by homogeneous shared experiences and limited linguistic codes, and which "lead to one-dimensional identification with particular group aspects," "force one-dimensional fixations on one's own group, and therefore reduce foundations of cosmopolitanism and universality" (Fuchs & Case, 1992:502). In contrast, low ritual density is characterized by extensive social networks and multifaceted interactions. Low density is characterized by a wide-ranging network of connections and – thanks to this – a variety of cultural experiences. When learning about and experiencing alternative ways of

⁴ "However, during the large-scale youth research, we also work with split samples (in 2004, 2008, 2016 and 2020), which means that different questionnaire scenarios were queried on several - individually representative - samples.... A clear disadvantage of this solution is that questions that were queried only on a sub-sample can be examined to a limited extent." (Székely 2021: 2060-2061)

life, it is less likely that they will be rejected because of their difference. Accepting the contingency of lifestyles (Luhman, 1984) is incompatible with prejudice. For Fuchs and Case, prejudice is – contrary to most social psychological interpretations – not an attitude, but a lifeform. Attitudes and cognitions are considered to be the consequence of social habits and everyday interactions, that is, the way of life. “The concept of ritual density encourages us to expand the concept of prejudice itself. When we hear about “prejudice,” specific attitudes towards certain groups – minorities, subcultures – come to mind. However, our discussion suggests that not only certain thoughts, but also the ways of life themselves can be prejudiced” (Fuchs & Case, 1992:510).

High ritual density is associated with a way of life that has a narrow knowledge of different socio-cultural patterns and where the interactions of group members are limited to their own group. Conventional moral principles concerning one’s own group are conditioned in such a way that discriminatory attitudes towards those outside the group develop. High ritual density favours viewing the world based on simplified, absolute values; its important feature is that group solidarity forged with strong collective emotions goes hand in hand with the exclusion of outsiders:

“Prejudice, as a way of life, wants to get back to the traditional way of life, absolute values, fundamentalist religious feelings, the simply constructed world view, which in our opinion are all highly ritualistic consequences of a dense lifestyle. High ritual density creates strong collective emotions, rigid group solidarity and strict distancing from outsiders. It is this internal structure of preconceived movements that goes against the ideas of modernity.” (Fuchs & Case, 1992:510)

4. Attitudes of young people towards minorities

The questions that were used in the questionnaire focused on the following topics: acceptance and rejection of members of minority groups considered deviant, media consumption, communications with family and friends, cultural and organizational activities. To explore the logic of the different forms of rejection, we performed a principal component analysis. In the first step, we created dummy variables according to whether the respondent at least accepts or does not accept the named minority as the respondent’s workplace colleague. The most rejected minority is the group of homosexuals, while the rejection rate for former convicts and drug users is lower. In addition to the limitations of the questionnaire, what is the reason that we interpreted the following prejudices regarding stigmatized minorities? Some answers to the question:

In the past period, efforts to learn about stereotypes and prejudices against groups that were previously not or only minimally studied have become more and more common. In addition to ethnic-cultural or origin groups, “(...) negative feelings toward women, people with different sexual habits, physically and/or mentally stigmatized people, and those in disadvantaged economic and social situations have gained an increasing role in research.” (Erős, 2007:8)

As part of an international comparative study, prejudice against homosexuals in Hungary – compared to the Visegrad countries – is higher than average. Assessment and acceptance largely depend on whether the respondent has a homosexual acquaintance (Dencső & Sík, 2007). It can be assumed that the lower rate of rejection towards drug users and those in prison is due to the fact

that belonging to the two stigmatized minorities is more acceptable, and accordingly the rejection of the environment is also less intense.

The direction of research that examines prejudices and stereotypes by learning about lifestyles, cultural contexts, and social representations or by learning about the characteristics of the wider political environment – in several cases by exploring causal relationships – is especially strengthened (Jost, 2003).

Attitudes towards deviant groups rejected by mainstream society were based on prejudice measured by the method of interpersonal distance (the Bogardus scale). The tolerant group that would accept minority groups as colleagues is 54 percent of the sample, while the proportion of the intolerant group is 44 percent.⁵ Taking into account the distribution of values of the social distance scale, the criterion of the dummy variable used to express the relationship with minorities was “acceptance of the colleague”. The result of the principal component analysis involving the three variables is the combined expression of the rejection of the three minorities.⁶

In the following, we present the variables necessary for the interpretation of prejudice as a lifeform.

5. Indicators of lifeforms

The questionnaire included several questions that could be suitable indicators of the previously described high and low ritual density lifestyle. To characterize the way of life, we accounted for the following topics: media consumption, religious and cultural activity, conversations with family and friends. The common characteristic of topics is that they are related to everyday interactions. Since they provide an “exit” from the narrow framework of primary (family) and secondary socialization (peer group, institutions) and they enrich communication opportunities, it is likely that they characterize a lifestyle with low ritual density. The topics were covered by a total of seven variables.

The first group of variables is related to media consumption. From the point of view of the ritual density of the way of life, we see the importance of media consumption in that it can loosen the closedness of the group frames of interactions, even if it is one-sided communication. These include listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines, and watching TV to learn about socio-cultural patterns different from one’s own group and a world view that has little preference for absolute values.⁷

Given the role of the family as a role model and the fact that socialization is one of the most important factors, the prominent role of primary socialization justifies the fact that conversations

⁵ The distribution of answers to the question (Which closest relationship would you accept with a member of the listed social groups?): 1. homosexual: would accept as a family member (6%); would accept as a roommate (4%) would accept as a colleague (17%) - total: 28%. 2. drug user: would accept as a family member (1%); would accept as a roommate (3%) would accept as a colleague (9%) - total: 13%. 3. imprisoned: would accept as a family member (2%); would accept as a roommate (2%) would accept as a colleague (9%) - total: 13%. 1: accept (1-3): tolerant: 44%. 0: reject (47%): intolerant: 54%.

⁶ Principal component analysis: Communalities (homosexual: 0.553; drug addict: 0.770, imprisoned: 0.788) Total Variance Explained (Sums of Squared % of Variance): 70,373; Component Matrix (homosexual: 0.744; drug addict: 0.878, imprisoned: 0.888)

⁷ The questions and the combined answers: How often do you listen to the radio? (less often than weekly: 40%); How often do you watch television? (less often than weekly (12%); How often do you read newspapers? (Less than weekly: 74%) The values of the dummy variable: 1: with some frequency; 0: never.

with family and friends on various topics were also included among the lifeform variables.⁸

The consideration of the third group of variables – variables related to religious and cultural organizational activity⁹ – is justified by the fact that belonging to organizations and organizational membership can also be a source of experience for different worldviews and world interpretations, contributing to the plural interpretation of the world by young people.

As a result of the quick cluster analysis performed involving the seven variables (listening to the radio, watching TV, reading newspapers, talking with family, talking with friends, religious activity, going to the bookstore), the sample of young people was divided into two groups.

Table 1. Characteristics of ritual density clusters
(average value of the variables)

	HIGH RITUAL DENSITY GROUP (N= 5530)	LOW RITUAL DENSITY GROUP N= (2570)
LISTENING TO THE RADIO	0.2616	0.7535
WATCHING TV	0.7083	0.9590
READING THE NEWSPAPER	0.0544	0.3565
TALKING WITH FAMILY	0.3607	0.9246
TALKING WITH FRIENDS	0.2662	0.8749
RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY	0.2125	0.6396
GOING TO THE BOOKSTORE	0.2224	0.2629
	68%	32%

K-Means Cluster Analysis

Table 2 proves that media consumption, communication with family and friends, going to church, and visiting bookstores are all activities that expand group frames, enrich interpersonal interactions, and expand personal communication and thinking patterns about the world. In the group with high ritual density (68 percent of the sample), all variables are characterized by the lowest activity; the least deviation is characterized by watching TV and visiting the bookstore. The activity of the group with low ritual density (32 percent of the sample) is consistently higher. In the following, we examine how our results fit with our previous studies, in which we interpreted the prejudices of young people based on socio-cultural characteristics.

⁸ The questions and answer options: How often do you talk to your family about public issues and social problems? 1 – regularly: 11%; 2 – occasionally: 63%; 3 – never: 25% And how often do you talk to your friends and direct acquaintances about public issues and social 25% problems? 1 – regularly: 10%; 2 – occasionally: 59%; 3 – never: 31 %. The values of the dummy variable: 1: with some frequency; 0: never.

⁹ The question and the distribution of answers: Apart from weddings, funerals, and family events, how often do you attend religious services these days? 1 – daily: 2%; 2 – several times a week: 3%; weekly: 3%; two to three times a month: 2%; monthly: 3 %; a few times a year: 14%; annually: 7%; less often than annually: 12%;; essentially never: 51%. The values of the dummy variable: 1: with some frequency; 0: never. How often do you go to the bookstore? 1- several times a week: 0%; once a week: 1%. several times a month: 5%; Every 2-3 months: 13%; several times a year: 27%; almost never: 54%. The values of the dummy variable: 1: with some frequency; 0: never (54%)

6. Prejudice and ritual density

Now all that remains is to see if there is a correlation between prejudice and belonging to groups separated by ritual density. The theoretical idea of Fuchs and Case can be verified empirically if groups separated on the basis of ritual density are characterized by significantly different prejudice intensity.¹⁰ The results prove that there are significant differences in the social composition of groups separated by ritual density. Based on these, we can consider it justified that a lifestyle with high ritual density is not independent of the socio-cultural environment.

The score averages of the main component showing the acceptance of minorities and the significant distributions of prejudice in the groups separated based on ritual density support our expectation: compared to the group with low ritual density, the proportion characterized by prejudice is higher in the group with high ritual density.

Table 2. Relationship between prejudice in groups separated by ritual density

(score refers to prejudice principal component score)

HIGH RITUAL DENSITY GROUP	0.1456
LOW RITUAL DENSITY GROUP	-0.0688

Oneway ANOVA, $p \leq 0.001$

7. Conclusion

Hungarian and international research has repeatedly proven that a socially disadvantaged situation is associated with a greater degree of prejudice. However, little has been explained about the types of relationship networks and communication patterns that underlie this relationship.

Similarly to the majority of social science research, the empirical provability of Fuchs and Case's idea based on the concept of ritual density is determined by prejudice (interpersonal distance) and the operationalization of ritual density. In our analysis, we tried to find an empirical explanation, following the ideas of Fuchs and Case, for why socially disadvantaged young people attending lower prestigious secondary schools are more prejudiced. Fuchs and Case's concept of ritual density offered us the opportunity to operationalize the concept of ritual density empirically on the basis of our data collection among young people in 2020 -- on the one hand to test the correlation between ritual density and prejudice, and on the other hand, based on the results of our analysis, to interpret prejudice depending on ritual density ourselves.

The confirmed relationship between ritual density and prejudice fits with the findings of early social psychological studies analyzing the formation of stereotypes. These studies proved that

¹⁰ Proportion in the high ritual density group: 1. Type of settlement (Budapest: 54%, county seat: 65%, city: 72%, village: 71%. (Significant ($p \leq 0.001$) relationships based on chi-square test (value: 149.8, Cramer's V: 0.137, $p \leq 0.001$) Age group (15-19 years: 58%, 20-24 years: 69%, 25-29 years: 72%, (Significant ($p \leq 0.001$) relationships based on chi-square test (value: 122.03, Cramer's V: 0.129, $p \leq 0.001$); Parents' highest completed education (Father: 8 elementary or less: 64%, workman: 71%, graduation: 62%, diploma /PhD: 71%, (Significant ($p \leq 0.001$) relationships based on chi-square test (value: 111.8, Cramer's V: 0.18, $p \leq 0.001$) Mother (8 elementary or less: 64%, workman: 71%, graduation: 65%, diploma /PhD: 68%, (Significant ($p \leq 0.001$) relationships based on chi-square test (value: 111.8, Cramer's V: 0.18, $p \leq 0.001$)

adherence to social norms makes prejudice more likely (Pettigrew, 1958).

Social groups with different ritual density and socio-cultural features are characterized by a specific culture. These group cultures have different social norms. Based on the interpretation of ritual density, we can rightly assume that groups characterized by high ritual density are more closely tied to the social norms of their own culture than members of low-density groups who have the opportunity to be members of several groups. On the one hand, the latter can become familiar with alternative interpretations, and on the other hand, can form their own system of norms on the basis of "choice" by meeting the norms of several groups, getting to know them, possibly complementing and clashing with each other.

In groups characterized by different ritual density, three characteristics meet: the social and cultural status characteristic of the group, the system of norms, and the worldview expressed linguistically and in the way of communication. We believe that the differences shown in the prejudice of groups characterized by different ritual density prove that in socialization understood as a series of interactions, basic values and norms can be learned as members of different communities. These communities (family, school, peer groups, wider groups) not only integrate young people, but also provide them with the social, economic, and cultural (symbolic, communication, thinking) experiences that further group memberships and that serve as the building blocks for subsequent behaviours (Percheron, 1993; 1999; Szabó, 2000). The demarcation or openness of these communities and relationship systems, their typical behaviour, thinking patterns, reality interpretation schemes, homogeneity or diversity of worldviews, the type of language codes, and, last but not least, the range of knowledge, values and emotions required for group membership are determined by the reception of other groups -- and also the prejudice of the personal relationship towards their members.

The correlations verified in our analysis provide an answer as to why the prejudice persists. The coercive force of group norms, group conformity, is stronger in groups characterized by a high ritual density. The members of these groups are more likely to obey group norms. In their case, the number of groups that can be taken into account from the point of view of affiliations is smaller, their groups are more closed, and the possibilities of relations with other groups are limited. Group norms are reproduced as individual norms of the members who identify with the group; the legitimacy of the norms is not questioned by other group norms, since the members of the groups encounter them less often. If they do encounter the norms of other groups, they do not or only barely affect them.

Groups characterized by a way of life with high and low ritual density must have a different effect on opinions related to other groups and minorities when different opinions – agreeing or disagreeing – are perceived. In addition, prejudice is probably also a function of what kind of "others" (one's own group or external group) one agrees with in the assessment of minorities. The planned later empirical verification of our assumptions may shade the research results so far -- the prejudice of young people is mostly interpreted in the system of socialization agents, on the basis of direct intergroup contact.

In further research, the interpretation and empirical verification of prejudice based on the theory of Fuchs and Case should be connected with the results of recent research on stereotypes and racial prejudices. A smaller part of today's models for the formation and explanation of prejudices

names the socialization environment as the dominant influencing factor, and the larger part, contact with minority groups. We consider the interpretation of prejudice as a way of life to be an important explanation because it cannot be clearly assigned to one or the other trend; the characteristics of both (contact with minority groups, personal and object-communication environment) can be discovered in the theory of Fuchs and Case. In the future, therefore, further relevant explanations that can properly supplement the lifeform theory should be researched. We consider this to be the case with the experiments of Stangor and his colleagues (Stangor et al., 2003), who, in contrast to explanations emphasizing direct intergroup relations, proved that beliefs about ethnic groups are influenced by the knowledge that others identify with this attitude. The high and the low for groups characterized by a densely ritual way of life, the perception of different opinions – agreeing or disagreeing – must have a different effect on the opinions related to other groups and minorities. In addition, prejudice is probably also a function of what kind of “others” (in relation to one’s own group or external group) one agrees with in the assessment of minorities. The planned empirical verification of our assumptions may shade the research results so far – the prejudice of young people is mostly interpreted in the system of socialization agents, on the basis of direct intergroup contact.

Finally, we emphasize that in the explanation of stereotypes and prejudice against others, one can and should rely on more than just one theory. Empirically verified sociological and social psychological research can be causally related to the perception of otherness in seemingly incompetent areas. We investigated the social representation of democracy among young people based on the data of an international research (Murányi, 2017).¹¹ The primary research goal of the study was to reveal how far-right ideologies are widespread and supported among European youth, and how negative attitudes towards various minority groups (xenophobia, exclusion, welfare chauvinism) can be characterized.

Perhaps the most important conclusion of our analysis is that the anti-liberal association type, which plays a central role (core) in the social representation of democracy, is supported by young people who are intensely interested in political and public issues and historical events and who are mainly nationalist, most of them still in high school or highly educated. Another important characteristic is that this group is characterized by a more favourable than average family background. In other words, it is certainly thought-provoking that the interpretation/perception of anti-liberal democracy is open to the world and inquisitive, living in an above-average social environment in terms of existence and cultural capital. It is also noteworthy that the supporters of the type of association that questions the existence of democracy (Fiction type) are also highly educated, more intensely interested than average in public and historical issues and live in families characterized by social advantages. Among the other two types, the interpretation of democracy that prefers community, consensus and law (Public law type) is only typical of young people who are intensely interested in politics, as well as young people who are characterized by a sense of difference and the resulting danger. The fourth association type (Lack type) can also be called a non-existent type, since the young people listed here did not accept the association with the concept of democracy.

¹¹ The questionnaire research was carried out in June-July 2012 within the framework of the Myplace project on a probability sample of N=600-600 people aged 15-26 from two small Hungarian towns (Sopron and Ózd).

Who are these young people? Based on the examined aspects, how can they be characterized? In contrast to the other three groups, they are characterized by a low existential family background, a low level of education and a high proportion of ethnic minorities.

In summary: for young people, whether democracy exists or not, acceptance of otherness is not supported.

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