

Identity discourses on national belonging: the Hungarian minority in Romania¹

Valér Veres²

ABSTRACT³

This paper deals with national representations of the Hungarian minority from Transylvania and its group boundaries within the context of the Hungarian and Romanian nation. The main empirical source is represented by qualitative data, based on a focus group analysis from 2009. It analyses the ways in which Hungarians from Transylvania reconstruct national group boundaries based on ideological discourses of nationalism, including specific differences that may be observed in discursive delimitations within the minority group. Based on focus group answers, two marked national discourses may be distinguished about the representations of Hungarians from Transylvania regarding nation and national belonging. The two main discussions are centred around the essentialist-radical and the quasi-primordial – moderate discourse. Conceptually, the discourses follow Geertz's typology (1973). As for the Hungarian minority from Romania, we may talk about a quasi-primordialist discourse which is also based on cultural nation, but with a civic nation extension towards Romanians. That is why we call it quasi-primordialist, in other words „moderate”.

KEY WORDS: *identity discourses, national identity, Hungarian minority, group boundaries, focus group*

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² Valér Veres, PhD, is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babes-Bolyai University, Romania. His research interests include the perception of identity of the national Hungarian minority in Romania, social structures and ethnicity. E-mail: veresv@socasis.ubbcluj.ro

³ A similar topic was covered in Volume 7, No. 1, Summer 2007 of the Romanian Journal of Political Science which focused on the topic “Regions, Minorities and European Integration” and in Volume 4, No. 2, Winter 2004 of the Romanian Journal of Political Science which focused on the topic “Minorities and Ethnic Politics.”

Introduction

Hungarians living in Transylvania – the northern province of Romania – represent 19% of the region's population and 6.5% of the country's population, which renders them the largest ethno-national minority in the country. However, their number has started to steadily decrease over the past two decades. 1,624,000 people considered themselves Hungarians at the Romanian census from 1992. This number decreased to 1,434,000 in 2002 and to 1237 thousand in 2011 (INS 2012). However, the entire Romanian population had significantly decreased between 2002 and 2011.

The political and public representatives of Hungarians from Romania are greatly concerned about the future of their culture and its relationship to the majority population from Hungary. The present paper employs a qualitative method and makes use of a focus group analysis to explore representations of national identity among Hungarians from Transylvania and their group boundaries within the context of the Hungarian and Romanian nation.

Literature review

Our analysis is based on a theoretical background developed during our earlier research (Veres 2005, 2010). Therefore, we shall only review the most important concepts used in this study. We conceive a nation as the "imagined community" of a large social group, where the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.(Anderson 1991). *National identity* can be defined as collectively developed knowledge and an inclination made up of affective and cognitive elements that are the result of a national ideology. A national identity represents one of the most important forms of bonding for modern social groups, and can be differentiated in terms of cultural or citizenship-based senses of identity (see Hobsbawn 1990).

Previous studies have analysed the social manifestation of *national discourses* about the Hungarian minority identity, but we can grasp *natural national identity* 'as the consequence of the social communication of the national ideology, namely that people consider themselves subject to the national category in their everyday life with the help of certain elements of the stock of knowledge presented

by the national ideology, they distinguish the in-group designated by the national category, they share the symbolic universe created by the national name, fatherland, meanings of national symbols' (Csepeli, 1997: 108). This delineation is not so simple for minorities. It has been noticed that many minorities feel that they belong to two nations at the same time, as different cultural and citizen-based aspects of one's identity may play complementary functions. According to Csepeli, it is not rare for people today to be within the scope of two national categories, which is also the case for many Hungarians living in minority (Csepeli 1992: 35). In fact, this may occur frequently in an identity field which, as Brubaker has stated, "feeds upon the ideological effects of three ideological sources: the majority state, the leaders of the minority community and the cultural, external kin-state" (Brubaker 1996: 60–69).

During our data gathering, we did not only inquire about the participants' knowledge as to national symbolism (see A. D. Smith, 1991), but we also categorised group boundaries and mapped interpretations of group relationships. We define Hungarians from Transylvania as a social group according to Horváth István's interpretation of *national minorities* according to which ethnoculturally self-conscious groups that have developed into national groups, but which experience belonging to a majority nation, suddenly finding themselves in a subordinate position due to a modification of state frontiers (Horváth 2006).

The antecedents of this research may be traced back to Verdery, who analysed in detail the characteristics and transformation of the Romanian national discourse about the nation during the last phase of communism and in the first years after 1989 (Verdery 1991, 1993). Research on the identity of Hungarians from Romania and Romanian-Hungarian relationships was commenced by a common work group set up within Babes-Bolyai University from Cluj in cooperation with Eötvös Lóránd University from Budapest in 1997. The writings of this work group offer a representative and complex picture of the relationships between Hungarians and Romanians from Transylvania (Csepeli-Örkény-Székelyi, 2000), the duality of cultural and civic identity among Hungarians from Romania (Culic, 1999) and the main characteristics of the national identity of Hungarians and Romanians from Transylvania (Veres 2000). Another prior study conducted by Mungiu used the focus group method and it had a similar topic. Mungiu contends

that Transylvania continues to be an obsession for “geostrategists” who include this location on risk maps, disregarding the stability which has been characteristic to it since the last half of the nineties (Mungiu 1999: 236). Another stream of research on Hungarian-Romanian relationships is related to ethnobarometers. Their results may be consulted in a paper by Culic, Horváth and Raț (2000) and they provide a starting point for the question of self-identification and group boundaries in relation to Romanians and Hungarians from Transylvania. However, because this paper lies on different premises, it is difficult to compare its results with our own. In a collection of data from 1999, Hungarian respondents were asked what they considered themselves in terms of group identification, yet this was investigated by means of closed questions and the researchers did not allow for the selection of an ethnonym without connection to predefined answers (Magyar-Hungarian). Culic pointed out that the “problem” of Hungarians living outside the country’s borders had persisted in Hungary (Culic 2006:175-200).

The research carried out by Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea in Cluj-Napoca in 2006 concluded that “there is a contrast between the rhetoric, ideological inclusion of Transylvanian Hungarians into the Hungarian nation, but at the same time, many Transylvanians experience social exclusion from the ‘Hungarian’ category in everyday life in Hungary, and they are frequently regarded ‘Romanian’ by common people.” (Brubaker et al. 2006[2010]: 350-356.) Recent works in Hungary have revealed that the discourse of national radicalism takes into account expectations of political correctness in a proactive way. National radicals represent a closed worldview feeding upon the anti-historical narratives of mainstream history, and the national identity it feeds upon is novel compared to the previous national authoritarianism model (Csepeli, Murányi & Prazsák, 2011). These radical discourses have also influenced the discourse regarding the national belonging of ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, but to a lesser degree.

A volume of articles on the topic of Romanian national identity edited by Boari, Gherghina and Murea (2010) contains a chapter that analyses the identity of Hungarians from Romania based on quantitative data from the research of the Carpat panel (2007) that compares the characteristics of the identity of the Hungarian minority from Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine, as well as the

minority attitude toward Romanians and Hungary (Veres 2010). In the following we will think through the results of this paper.

The ethno-political context of national discourses

The Hungarian nation-building process was rather controversial because Hungary, as part of the dualist Habsburg empire, was multi-ethnic, with less than 50% declaring Hungarian as their mother tongue in 1880 (Varga 1998, see also Szűcs, 1984, p. 30-31, Bibó, 1997, p. 23-24). The minority status of Transylvanian Hungarians is the result of World War I and the Treaty of Trianon signed in 1920, when a significant part of the Hungarian population (roughly 1.5 million) became a minority in Romania. As a result, ethno-cultural nation development emerged both in Hungary and successor states (see Veres, 2005, p. 33-39): between the two world wars, Hungarians from Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia did not belong to the state-forming process. Therefore, they were viewed as defeated and “imperial” minorities, especially in the interwar period (see Mungiu 2007). During this period, the position of the Hungarians from Transylvania had undergone significant changes. Not only did they become a minority, but also their political, economic, and social status decreased (Culic 2006: 176).

After World War II, with the instauration of the communist dictatorship, the linguistic and educational rights of minorities were mostly respected in Romania (see Bottoni 2003, pp. 71-93); but in the second half of the communist period, an assimilation policy was implemented in Romania (and Czechoslovakia), which was meant to speed up the linguistic-cultural assimilation of the Hungarians into the Romanian (and Slovak) majority (Bugajszki, 1995, p. 200; see also Gallagher, 1999, and Gilberg, 1974).

After the political regime changes from 1989-1990, Romania's minority policy became more tolerant in several respects, yet in the field of minority rights, significant changes could only be witnessed after the initiation of the EU integration process. The European integration process significantly influenced interethnic relations in Romania, and also the relational potential between the Hungarian society and the Hungarian minority communities from neighbouring countries (Mungiu 2007: 70-71).

The last years of the communist regime had a particularly strong impact on the ethno-national minority discourse of Hungarians in Romania. The late communist minority policy in Romania generated an “imagined community,” to use Anderson’s (1991) term, within the Hungarian minority in Romania, forging an unequivocal form of social solidarity and self-identity. The influence of Hungary in Transylvania has also increased after 1986. Two practices of discourse were naturalized as constitutive elements of the Hungarian community in Romania: the first was a continuous reference to the kin-state (external homeland), Hungary. The second underlined minority repression in the representation of communist repression, seeking to weaken the notion of generalized repression throughout the entire population (Culic 2006: 181). In this discourse of identity, the Hungarians from Romania became a specific community with different historical experiences stemming from both the Romanian majority and Hungary alike. This paper attempts to describe the content of two forms of Hungarian national discourse via empirical analysis.

Methodology

Our analysis allows us to capture the ways in which the national ideology functions in Transylvania with regard to different narratives of historical events and to the assumed role of Hungarians. Our general thesis is that contradictory national ideologies lie behind the creation of Hungarian identity narratives, and that different narratives develop due to this with regard to different historical events and the assumed role of Hungarians. These ideologies pose problems for individuals based on the extent to which they have been affected by them, and given that these ideologies are related to education, their effects are seen in a stratified manner within society.

In the social sciences literature there are several studies on the structure of national ideologies and the notions they are framed upon (see Verdery 1991, 1993, Csepeli 1992, Culic 2006, Szűcs 1984), as well as on the way the national identity of individuals manifests itself in everyday life (see, Boari et al. 2010, Csepeli et al. 2011, Papp Z.–Veres 2007, Mungiu 1999). However, we know relatively little about the mechanisms through which they take over and “translate” to individual level ideologies that are framed on community level, and the types of discourses that

appear among ordinary people in everyday life, which connects “official” mainstream national ideologies to everyday national identity that manifests itself on the individual level. It is in this field that our paper attempts to assert something new.

During our research, we analysed the ways in which Hungarians from Transylvania reconstruct national group boundaries due to ideological discourses of nationalism, including specific differences that may be observed in discursive delimitations within the minority group. Particularly, we focused on the following research questions:

1. How do the respondents perceive the national boundaries, how they relate to the categories of “Hungarian”, “Transylvanian”, “Romanian”, and “Romanian citizen”? Additionally, how do they describe the discursive environment of these categories?
2. How do the people perceive the concept of homeland? How do the respondents affectively and cognitively describe the interpretations of the homeland/fatherland?
3. In what way do Transylvanian Hungarians relate to Hungary and to the ideologically stated “unity of the Hungarian nation”?

Data and Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative analysis in focus group research. The field of our research includes counties with a significant ethnic Hungarian population in Transylvania. We carried out 10 focus group interviews in a total number of six locations throughout different counties of Transylvania, as part of the Carpat Panel research⁴, including Sfântu Gheorghe (Covasna), Miercurea Ciuc (Harghita), Târgu Mures, Band (Mures), Cluj-Napoca (Cluj), and Oradea (Bihor). The timeframe of data collection was February – March 2009. Focus interviews were carried out on 8 topics and we asked 3-4 standard questions within each topic. The topics were the following: individual and group identification, including short biographies of our

⁴ The Max Weber Foundation for Social Research and Babes-Bolyai University, the Hungarian Dept. of Sociology are the owners of intellectual property rights related to this research. The focus group research was conducted by Veres Valér and Papp Z. Attila, and carried out with the support of the Szülőföld Alap (Homeland Fund) Hungary, while the analysis (study) was supported by the Bolyai János Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and ISPMN Cluj Napoca.

participants, homeland and fatherland, feelings and criteria of collective identity belonging, the concept of and belonging to a nation, group boundaries and attitudes, attitudes concerning the minority situation, representations regarding the future, national and regional stereotypes.

When selecting participants and locations for these focus groups, we took into consideration regional distribution, gender, locality type, and educational level. Each focus group included eight to nine persons. The average duration of discussions, which were carried out in Hungarian, lasted two hours.

The secondary data source of the study was represented by Carpat Panel quantitative survey data, which were collected in 2007 and 2010. The sample contained 900 respondents and 890 cases selected from the Hungarian speaking population from Romania and from 15 Transylvanian counties via a random, multi-stratified aleatory sampling method. The topic of the survey analysis deals with the social situation of Hungarians from Transylvania and their national-civic identity.

Focus group discussions were analysed using critical discourse analysis, which is useful to detect the processes through which important concepts such as nation and homeland are constructed in an on-going discussion. This method was used by Wodak et al. (1999) to analyse Austrian national identity discourses. With this method we were able to understand the impact of discourses of nationhood transmitted by political communication and elites. Thus, we could analyse the reception and re-contextualization of the national identity discourse in the social environments of our subjects.

We calculated the frequency of topics and categories used in the interviews via the ATLAS text analysis program (see also Veres-Papp 2012). Next, we analysed how different topics were contextualized, connected to other concepts, and the emotional attitudes that they were coupled with. We classified the focus group conversations into three groups and analysed them based on the three questions above in terms of the following:

1. National boundaries: we critically analysed how these relate to the categories of "Hungarian", "Hungary", "Transylvanian", "Romanian", and "Romanian citizen", as well as the discursive environment they exist within, the differences between groups with high and low educational levels, and how nation and group boundaries are drawn on a discursive level.

2. The idea and the content of the notion of “homeland”.
3. Identity discourses: for this, we first reviewed the topics of discussions around which discourses about national belonging were formed. We then elaborated upon the main dimensions of the two ideal types of national discourses, defined their elements and made a summary of them. We elaborated the following dimensions: nation concept, homeland, citizenship, attitudes toward Hungary, attitudes toward Romania, group stereotypes.

To synthesize the different variants of the analysed categories of the above mentioned themes, we created a table for each important analysis category, in which we summarised the number of respondents who chose that category, according to the different focus group locations⁵ and a number, after the each location indicator which indicated the number of persons answered that category, with association to the level of education.

Results

We grouped the interviews into categories by means of the ATLAS program, and delimited analysis codes according to themes. In this analysis, we took into consideration only those categories that were mentioned with a frequency of at least 2% during conversations (i.e., they were mentioned at least 23 times within a total of 1150 categories) (see **Table 1**). The list of the most frequent categories (codes) in conversations is led by the *opinion of Hungarians from Hungary* by almost 15%, followed by the opinion of Hungarians from Transylvania (11.2%) and the characterisation of Romanians (10.2%), which is then followed (5 to 10%) by the categories of *homeland*, *minority existence*, *national belonging*, *identity in relational context* and *important communities*.

Table 1: The distribution of codes/notions during focus group discussions (over 2%)

Codes (notions translated into English)	Total	Percentage (original)	Percentage (redistributed)
Perception of Hungarians form Hungary	111	9,7	14.7
Perception of Transylvanian Hungarians	84	7,3	11.2
Perception of Romanians	77	6,7	10.2

⁵ Location indicators are as follows: CN: Cluj-Napoca, TM: Târgu-Mures, SG: Sfântu Gheorghe (Covasna), MC: Miercurea Ciuc (Harghita), O: Oradea (Bihor), B: Band (Mureş).

Fatherland	50	4,3	6.6
Minority situation	47	4,1	6.2
Belonging to nation	46	4,0	6.1
Identity in relational context	43	3,7	5.7
Important communities	39	3,4	5.2
Belonging to Hungarians	38	3,3	5.0
Belonging to Romanian nation	34	3,0	4.5
European men	33	2,9	4.4
Characterizing Hungary	32	2,8	4.2
Discrimination	25	2,2	3.3
Homeland/birthplace	25	2,2	3.3
Interethnic relations	23	2,0	3.1
Demographical data	23	2,0	3.1
DAHR (UDMR), politics	23	2,0	3.1
Total	753	65,6	100.0

Source: Veres-Papp et al. (2012, p.113); ATLAS application made by Papp Z. A.

In the following sections we shall analyse the occurrence, contextualisation and emotional perception of these categories.

National boundaries

We have analysed how our respondents relate to the category of *Hungarian*, if they perceive it as unitary and the way they delimit the in-group within this, the content they provide to the categories of *Transylvanian Hungarian* and *Hungarian from Hungary*. In the second part we have analysed the relationship with the category of Romanian. Then, broadened by the concept of citizenship and national belonging, we have analysed their correlations and the discursive contents they attached to these concepts.

Which is the primary social group participants feel they belong to and that is the closest to them: this was one of the primary topics of these focus group discussions. The answers were divided, but in each case they felt attachment to the Hungarian category, however, in a nuanced way, according to a regional delimitation. We summarised the answers and grouped them according to level of education. *Transylvanian Hungarian* is the most frequent identification category, one that dominates among both people with a lower level of education and people with a higher level of education, making up for the great majority of answers in the Central and Western parts of Transylvania. In the Eastern part of Transylvania, in Covasna and Harghita counties, the answers were divided: about half of the respondents declared to be *Szekler*, while the other half declared to be

Transylvanian Hungarians (see **Table 2**). Rarely, some respondents mentioned *Hungarian*, without any attribute, or declared that they identify themselves with a county, small region or locality, for example: Clujean (from Cluj), Háromszéki (from Covasna county, in old Hungarian version), Barcasági (from Ținutul Bârsei) etc. In Oradea, several respondents mentioned the expression *Hungarian from Romania* or *Hungarian from Oradea*, given that Bihor county was not part of historical Transylvania, being part of the so-called Partium⁶ region, which belonged rather directly to Hungary in pre-modern and early modern times. Consequently, Transylvanian identification had always been weaker in that particular region.

Table 2: Respondents' perception of the boundaries of the primarily national group of identification

Categories	Higher educated	Lower educated
Transylvanian Hungarian	CN:5 TG:5 SG:4	CN:5 TM:3 SG:5, MC:1
Hungarian from Romania	O:3	O:1
Hungarians	CN:1	MC:1
Hungarian living in Romania	SG:1	CN:1, SG:1
Szeklers	CN:1 SG:2 MC:3	SG:2, MC:3
Hungarian with Romanian citizenship	O:1	
Other (local identities)	CN:1 SG:1	

Note: The abbreviations are location indicators as follows: CN: Cluj-Napoca, TM: Târgu-Mures, SG: Sfântu Gheorghe (Covasna), MC: Miercurea Ciuc (Harghita), O: Oradea (Bihor), B: Band (Mureș). The figures after location indicators show the number of persons from each focus group from that location who have chosen that answer category. Example: CN:5 means that – within the focus groups organised in Cluj-Napoca – 5 persons answered that they firstly identify themselves as Transylvanian Hungarians.

Source: Focusgroup interviews, Carpat Panel 2009, computed by the author

As mentioned above, Hungarians from Romania, just as generally people from Eastern Europe, give priority to the cultural nation concept, as for their national identity. This was already observed by Brubaker and others in Cluj-Napoca in another research: those who identified themselves to be in the *Hungarian* ethnic category implicitly considered themselves as being part of the Hungarian ethnocultural nation, meaning the community of those whose mother tongue is Hungarian (Brubaker et al. 2006:14). Based on the focus group research we may assert that in a conceptual sense, especially in the case of high-school and higher level education graduates, this marking of ethnocultural group boundaries is even more emphasised, delimiting the concept of nation from any other citizenship conception.

⁶ Crișana, in Romanian regional terminology.

In general terms, all of the respondents agreed that Transylvanian Hungarians are part of a pan-Hungarian nation. The pan-Hungarian nation was characterised as a network, as a "framework", and people also indicated that conceiving all Hungarians as an in-group is problematic because a part of the Hungarians from Hungary do not consider those living in minority as "Hungarians", but in many cases they use exactly the term (category) "Romanian" to characterise them⁷. The idea of the so-called „unitary Hungarian nation” defined on ethnocultural basis is rendered more nuanced among our respondents by the fact that they also point out the specific separate character of people from Transylvania. As for the ideologically stated “unity of the Hungarian nation”, the concurrent discourse was disrupted by those remarks which pointed out that „historically, Transylvania was separated from Hungary”. The idea of Hungarians as a ‘unitary’ nation was only peripherally criticised in this context from a discursive point of view. It appeared especially in the discourse of respondents from rural areas and with low educational levels, when we inquired about relationships with Hungary.

The answers are unanimously positive to the question whether there are differences between Hungarians from Transylvania and Hungarians from Hungary. While representations about Hungarians from Transylvania were always positive and self-critical voices appeared only sparingly, perceptions and attitudes toward Hungarians from Hungary were predominantly negative. These opinions became more nuanced as follows: the great majority, irrespective of their level of education, attached negative stereotypes to Hungarians from Hungary and did not identify themselves with them, or because Hungarians from Hungary consider the Transylvanian Hungarians as "Romanians" (see **Table 3**). Among the answers, minority opinions were divided into two groups: on the one hand, they rejected more radically any community with Hungarians from Hungary, as they felt that Hungarians from Hungary did not have a joint community feeling with the Hungarians from Transylvania, while on the other hand the other minority opinion was more tolerant as they only mentioned differences in pronunciation (accent)

⁷ An excerpt from a conversation on the topic of whether the Hungarians from Transylvania are part of the Hungarian nation: A6.Absolutely. In my opinion, too. (Oradea, concordant opinions of 6 highly educated people).

and a different attitude towards language, but no other differences were mentioned.

Table 3: Perceptions and attitudes toward Hungarians from Hungary and Hungarians from Romania

Categories	Higher educated	Lower educated
Negative attitudes, stereotypes toward Hungary	CN7 SG2 MC2	CN3 TM2 SG9, MC4
Rejection because Hungarians from HU consider Transylvanian Hungarians as "Romanians"	TM5 MC1, B3 O1	CN2 B3
Differences mainly because of spelling, language specificities	SG6, O1	MC1, O2
Hungary is considered „kin state”	O1	O1, B1
Hungary is NOT considered „kin state”	TM2	
It appears as country of destination to stay		

Note: The abbreviations mean: CN: Cluj-Napoca, TM: Târgu-Mures, SG: Sfântu Gheorghe (Covasna), MC: Miercurea Ciuc (Harghita), O: Oradea (Bihor), B: Band (Mureş). The figures show the number of persons from each focus group from that location who have chosen that answer category.

Source: Focus group interviews, Carpat Panel 2009, computed by the author

According to the respondent's concordant opinion, Hungarians from Romania are sometimes labelled Romanians in Hungary, i.e. they are called Romanians based on their citizenship. Hungarians from Transylvania perceive this as an offence, because by this Hungarians from Hungary indicate certain group boundaries which exclude Hungarians from Transylvania from the *Hungarian* category. Related interpretations are based on the fact that Transylvanian Hungarians held on to their identity since 1920, although they could choose between becoming Romanians and keeping their Hungarian identity. Consequently, Hungarians living in minority expect this to be "valued" in Hungary⁸.

⁸ Excerpts from different focus groups held in different cities about the relationship with Hungarians from Hungary: A8: "For me Hungary is not a kin state (patrie mama/anyaország). But we cannot even consider it as such, I say this in plural, because they do not consider us Hungarians (Târgu-Mureş), intellectual); In Hungary, there is this thing that that Romanian ... in every city. 3: Yes, they call us like this and this hurts me very much. 8: That 'Romanian'. Although they are Hungarians from here (Târgu-Mureş, concordant opinions); A4. For me my homeland is here (he refers to Romania), Hungary is not home for me. I just simply didn't feel good there and Hungarian people from there don't feel themselves as much Hungarians as I feel here in Romania. (Oradea, intellectual 4); [...] From time to time it is good to be Hungarian, some other times it is not; 1f: could you tell us about a situation like this?; 4f: Well, for example, out there in Hungary they call you Romanian, this is what I know, that I am Hungarian and out there I was called Romanian. I was proud to be Hungarian and I didn't care about the rest. (Miercurea Ciuc 4); A1: Well, if I could freely choose, I would rather stay here. Hungary is excluded. Because if you go there they will say that you are Romanian. So if you go, let's say more to the West, there they will not say that, look, here is

The *Romanian* category has several meanings for our focus group subjects, as also observed by Brubaker et al (2006 & 2010), the ethnocultural content and the civic identification entailed by citizenship alternate: focus group subjects primarily emphasised ethnocultural content as relevant for themselves as a reflection towards the idea that they also primarily and predominantly conferred an ethnocultural content to the *Hungarian* category.

Focus group participants were asked if Hungarians from Transylvania were part of the Romanian nation. The great majority of the answers were negative. Then, during conversations, the majority bolstered their opinion by saying that a nation is an ethno-cultural unity and Hungarians and Romanians belong to different cultures. A smaller part of our respondents said that Hungarians from Transylvania are part of the Romanian nation, but then they specified that they use the term Romanian nation in a political sense, while others specified that they actually consider themselves part of the Romanian citizens' community and they tried to argue what this meant: for example, abroad they are also considered Romanians – this was mentioned most frequently. People with lower levels of education were more likely to feel themselves members of the Romanian political nation or of the Romanian citizens' community (see **Table 4**).

Table 4: Attitudes concerning Transylvanian Hungarians belonging to the Romanian nation/ having Romanian citizenship

Categories	Higher educated	Lower educated
Transylvanian Hungarians do not belong to the Romanian nation (in an ethno-cultural sense)	CN4, SG8 TM6 MC3	CN4 TM2, SG2 MC3
Transylvanian Hungarians belong to the Romanian (political) nation	CN2	
Belonging to the Romanian nation is a secondary identification form	CN1	SG2, MC1
Belonging to the Romanian citizens' community, but not to the Romanian nation		CN2, SG5

Note: The abbreviations mean: CN: Cluj-Napoca, TM: Târgu-Mures, SG: Sfântu Gheorghe (Covasna), MC: Miercurea Ciuc (Harghita), O: Oradea (Bihor), B: Band (Mureş). The figures show the number of persons from each focus group from that location who have chosen that answer category.

Source: Focus group interviews, Carpat Panel 2009, computed by the author

the Romanian. So there is this conflict between Hungary and Romania, so here we are Hungarians, there we are Romanians, therefore that is completely excluded (Band-Mures, intellectual, 1).

Among people with a lower educational level, the issue of belonging to the Romanian nation was more ambivalent, especially because in their case previous knowledge about the ethocultural nation and civic nation-state concepts was more limited, thus indicating no clear distinction between the concepts of ethnocultural nation and citizenship.

During non-intellectual focus group discussions, the categorical separation from belonging to the Romanian nation, which may also be noticed elsewhere, became significantly nuanced, first by considering that membership in a nation equals citizenship, but also by filling it up with content afterwards. They point out that they live in “spiritual, political and geographical” unity with Romanians, with the Romanian nation, and although Romanian national symbols do not move them emotionally, some of them (in the typology presented later on we call them “moderates”) accept being part of the Romanian political nation as participants to the Romanian political system, but they emphasise that emotionally this is a weaker bond than that to the Hungarian nation⁹.

In order to see how the respondents differentiate between the Hungarian and Romanian category, we have inquired if there are differences between Hungarians from Transylvania and Romanians. If the answer is yes, what are these differences? The majority of the respondents answered yes (because of different national belonging), and they bolstered this by characterizing Hungarians from Transylvania and Romanians, respectively, in a different way, using different stereotypical pictures. This is characteristic especially to most respondents from Cluj-Napoca, Târgu Mureş and Sfântu Gheorghe, and a few from Oradea and Band (Mureş) (see **Table 5**). A smaller group of respondents, especially those with a lower level of education, only interpreted differences in a minimizing way: i.e. that their mother-tongue and culture were different, but they did not attach any prejudices to this, and in Cluj-Napoca we could also witness that some simply traced back differences to the majority-minority structural position, and not to some “essential” group characteristic. In all focus group conversations respondents

⁹ As for the topic whether Hungarians from Transylvania are part of the Romanian nation, the respondents said: **A1**: let's better say that we are citizens; **A2**: as far as I know, generally Hungarians do not celebrate the holidays of Romanians. I think that every Hungarian complies a little bit with this, they watch TV as such, they behave as such, but for example on December 1st you are only glad that you have a day off at school, at the university, but somehow you do not feel like celebrating or so, I think that they are not in the mood for that. (Band, Mures county).

agreed that Romanians from Transylvania are different from Romanians from Old-Romania (Valachia and Moldova). They also consider that Romanians from Transylvania also perceive this in the same way.

Table 5: Perception of differences between Transylvanian Hungarians and Romanians

Categories	Higher educated	Lower educated
Yes, because of their different national belonging (strong stereotypes)	CN5 TM4 SG8, O1, B2	TM2, SG3, B3
Yes, because of their different national belonging (different language, culture)	O3, B1	SG6, O3
Yes, because of majority-minority relations	CN3	B1
No significant differences	MC1	

Note: The abbreviations mean: CN: Cluj-Napoca, TM: Târgu-Mures, SG: Sfântu Gheorghe (Covasna), MC: Miercurea Ciuc (Harghita), O: Oradea (Bihor), B: Band (Mureş). The figures show the number of persons from each focus group from that location who have chosen that answer category.

Source: Focus group interviews, Carpat Panel 2009, computed by the author

These group boundaries can be straightened by the political ideologies of the community. Culic also states that the Hungarian minority from Romania has started to develop its own nation-building projects starting with the 1990s (Culic 2006: 192).

The respondents considered that the *Romanian* category is not valid for them, only the *Romanian citizen* category. This conceptual clarification is essential because the quantitative method has not proven sufficient to distinguish between these two categories: according to the results of the Carpat Panel surveys, in 2010, the great majority of the respondents, i.e. 82%, considered that Hungarians from Transylvania were part of the Hungarian nation, but also a significant percentage (67%) considered that Hungarians from Transylvania were also part of the Romanian nation, and this tendency had not changed significantly since 2007 (see Veres 2010: 145). According to the survey data, belonging to a nation is associated with social-demographic variables: a smaller percent of higher education graduates (56,7%) said that Hungarians from Transylvania are part of the Romanian nation as compared to those with low educational levels (78%). These answers are not that surprising. For example, in Hungary as well, the great majority (78-80%) consider that both Hungarians from abroad and the national/ethnic minorities from Hungary are part of the Hungarian nation (see Papp –Veres 2007).

Focus group conversations have revealed that Hungarians from Romania find it disturbing when citizenship is simplified in the Romanian public sphere, especially in the central electronic media, and they simply talk of Romanians (and not of Romanian citizens). This phenomenon was pointed out by Brubaker and others: while the ethno-cultural, citizenship and geographical identification is differentiated for Hungarians from Transylvania, these categories are rather blurred for Romanians from Transylvania (Brubaker et al. 2006, [2010]: 230)¹⁰.

The idea and the content of fatherland/homeland

Based on an earlier questionnaire research from 2007 we knew that the great majority of ethnic Hungarians from Romania would indicate Transylvania and Romania, respectively, as their fatherland/homeland (in Romanian: *patrie*, in Hungarian: *haza*, see Veres 2010. Besides the analysis of the way our respondents named their homeland, based on focus groups we also found that the most frequent answers are Transylvania, which is linked in some way – indirectly or directly – to Romania. In Covasna and Harghita counties, Szeklerland (Secuime) or sub-regions (Odorhei, Gheorgheni/Gyergyó) and the counties (Covasna) as well were also indicated by approximately half of the participants. Approximately half of the respondents mentioned the following categories: Hungary, the Carpathian Basin or historical Hungary, although in some cases they were persons who originated partially or completely from Hungary. Romania was mentioned most frequently as homeland if we asked respondents from outside the borders of historical Transylvania (for example Oradea) (see **Table 6**).

Table 6: The perception of one's "homeland"

Categories	Higher educated	Lower educated
Transylvania (some mentioned: and after that, Romania)	CN(4) TM7, SG3, MC1	CN2 SG1, MC1 CN2
Romania (and after that, Transylvania)	CN1 O2	CN1, SG1 O3
Szeklerland (Secuime)	SG2 MC2	SG2 MC2
Other smaller regions (Crisana, Covasna etc)	CN1, SG1	SG3
The locality where they live	CN1 SG1 O2	CN2, SG2

¹⁰ This statement can be underlined by the declaration of an intellectual from Oradea to which his dialogue partners have adjoined: „A5: *I am personally bothered by the fact that for example (...) no difference is made between citizenship and nationality. This bothers me. However, I do not consider that it is a shame to be a Romanian citizen.*” (Cluj, intellectual, 5).

Hungary	MC1	O1
Charpatian Basin or historical Hungary	SG1, MC1	TM1
No specific homeland		CN1

Note: The abbreviations mean: CN: Cluj-Napoca, TM: Târgu-Mures, SG: Sfântu Gheorghe (Covasna), MC: Miercurea Ciuc (Harghita), O: Oradea (Bihor), B: Band (Mureş). The figures show the number of persons from each focus group from that location who have chosen that answer category.

Source: Focus group interviews, Carpat Panel 2009, computed by the author

Analysing the answers, we may assert that in most cases the Transylvania/Romania answer variants are not each other's alternatives but complementary categories: emotionally the homeland is more often represented by Transylvania, while Romania, as its cognitive extension, generalisation, "legitimate" formulation, so that foreigners could also understand it. Some respondents also argue that Transylvania is not a political-administrative entity because it is not autonomous, therefore they also add Romania to their answers, given that Transylvania forms part of Romania.

The concept of homeland was described affectively, and not cognitively by one of the respondents who pointed out that the concept of homeland may also be blurred for national minorities and it may not be described exactly from a cognitive point of view¹¹.

The Hungarian minority identity from Romania is defined more and more in a specific way. Although there is a dominant ideology and national discourse on the 'unitary' Hungarian national identity characteristic toward the whole Carpathian basin, identification with Hungary is not a central part of it. The majority of our respondents have categorically declared that Hungary is not their homeland. A smaller percentage do not even recognise it as "kin state", this being where opinions are divided. This is primarily explained by the fact that during decades of separate historical evolution Hungarians from Hungary and Hungarians from Transylvania perceived each other as different. A further aspect is represented by the fact that the citizenship based national identity, which has developed in Hungary in the meantime, has become considerably prevalent (this is characteristic to almost half of Hungary's population based on our questionnaire survey, see Veres 2010: 130-174).

¹¹ One participant stated the following: A8: I feel that for many of us our homeland is inside us. It cannot be defined as something that ends here or that ... (Sfantu Gheorghe, intellectual focus group).

The *homeland* may be conceptually clarified in association with the concept of *motherland*¹². A significant number of our respondents were able to differentiate between these two concepts: the *motherland* is more closely related to one's place of birth and it is a narrower, smaller unit from a geographical point of view, while the *homeland* is more often a wider category, a country or part of a country. On the other hand, the two concepts coincide or at least they are not unequivocally delimited for another group of respondents. The question is further nuanced if someone lives relatively far from his/her place of birth. Then, the content of these concepts may be different if compared to other respondents¹³.

Variants of identity discourses

During the focus group conversations, it became obvious that there was a rather strong Hungarian ethnocentric discourse among Transylvanian Hungarians in which all of the elements characteristic to national discourses could be found. Proceeding from a historical grounding, the positive role of one's own group in the past – as part of the pan-Hungarian nation – and the negative role and negative traits of the rival reference group (Romanians) were emphasised in relation to historical events. The participants sketched the greatness and missionary “acts” of their own nation, as well as detailed the greatness of their own national culture and its representatives. This understanding became more nuanced, with the *Hungarian* category viewed in a unitary way in the past, being divided for some into the present majority from Hungary and the communities of national minorities.

At the same time, political disputes and preferences became important, yet one's own group was narrowed down to minority communities despite certain

¹² In Romanian: *pământ natal*, in Hungarian: *szülőföld*.

¹³ Some pertinent excerpts illustrating that Transylvania and Romania are linked in our respondent's conception of homeland (answers to the question referring to what they consider to be their homeland: A2: Transylvania. So Transylvania by all means, I have been thinking about it, I only want to talk about it for a second, I do not have a Hungarian certificate. (Targu Mures, no.2); A4: Transylvania from Romania. A3: But if you think about the fact that you were born in Hungarian times, it could be different... (Cluj, intellectual); A2: Szeklerland. A9: The city I live in. A3: 'Háromszék' (Trei Scaune, Covasna). A1: Transylvania. A4: (?Romania) A6: 'Erdővidék' (Baraolt area), A7: Transylvania. A8: Transylvania. (Sfantu Gheorghe, focus group); **A3**: well, Transylvania for me. **A1**: In my heart it would be Transylvania, but if I listen to my mind, then it is Romania, so we cannot say that Transylvania is an autonomous territory and then I cannot say that... (Band-Mures, intellectual, focus group).

disputes concerning Hungarians from Hungary indicating the group-boundaries between Hungarians from Transylvania and Hungary.

We noticed that, during conversations, certain answer categories correlate with the answer categories of another dimension. Those who declared themselves Transylvanians, who sharply delimited themselves from Hungarians from Hungary and considered that their homeland was Transylvania or Romania, using these two categories as two sides of the same coin, were more likely to agree that Hungarians from Transylvania feel attachment to the Romanian political nation or to the Romanian citizens' community, and their perception of Romanians was also more positive, an interesting finding considering that they are different from Romanians, yet they did not attach negative feelings or prejudices to it. A greater proportion of those who had more negative attitudes towards Romanians than the others and who did not see any kind of attachment between Hungarians from Transylvania and the Romanian nation or who only emphasised the negative sides of this attachment considered themselves simply Hungarian or Szekler. They were more likely to emphasise the existence of a united Hungarian nation, they did not have a negative opinion about Hungarians from Hungary and they were greatly affected by the repulsive attitude of some Hungarians at the referendum from Hungary on the question of double citizenship held on December 5th, 2004.

Two prominent national discourses with regard to the way Hungarians from Transylvania perceive the concept of nation and national belonging could be developed from the divergent opinions. These discourses are made up of several representations which characterise different aspects of the discourse on nation. We named the first discourse essentialist-radical and the second one quasi-primordialist, moderate. The classification of these discourses follows Geertz's typology of national ideological discourse, but this could only be carried out partially, as, in Geertz's opinion, the primordialist discourse predominantly follows the characteristics of a citizenship-based national identity. In our case, we speak of a quasi-primordialist discourse, which is also based on a cultural sense of nation, but also has a citizenship-based sense of national identity toward Romania. This is why we call it a quasi-primordialist, or, in other words, "moderate", discourse (Geertz, 1973). These discourses may be construed along the following dimensions:

Table 7: The characteristics of two types of national minority identity discourses of Transylvanian Hungarians from Romania

Dimensions	Essentialist – “radical”	Quasi – primordialist – “moderate”
Nation concept	Purely Hungarian cultural nation, there is no trespassing towards the Romanian nation or trespassing possibility towards Hungarian citizenship	Primarily Hungarian cultural nation with trespassing possibility towards citizenship based national consciousness, primarily towards the Romanian nation
Homeland	Their homeland: Transylvania /Széklerland (Cv, Hr counties)/, but this may not be extended to Romania; Less frequently and in an ambiguous way the Hungarian speaking territory, Hungary or the historical “Great Hungary” appears as homeland	They primarily consider that Transylvania is their homeland, which may be further extended to Romania; Reject Hungary (or its historical variant) as homeland
Citizenship	Romanian citizenship is a constraint for them; Need for Hungarian (double) citizenship; The Hungarian referendum from December 5, 2004 represents a serious emotional convulsion	Acceptance of the Romanian citizenship, perceiving it in a neutral, but rather positive way; Lack of the need for Hungarian (double) citizenship
Attitudes toward Hungary	Strong emotional identification; The need for Hungarian citizenship, the Hungarian referendum from December 5, 2004 represents a serious emotional convulsion; It is considered „kin state”; It appears as country of destination in relation to emigration, but it is not dominant, they formulate demands, expectations towards Hungary	Weak emotional identification with Hungary; There is no need for Hungarian citizenship; They are offended by being called “Romanians” in Hungary; They do not even accept Hungary as “kin state”; It does not appear as country of destination, there is not even need for that
Attitudes toward Romania	Weak, ambivalent, negative emotional identification; Romanian citizenship, knowledge of the Romanian culture as a constraint	Ambivalent, rather positive emotional identification; Romanian citizenship, knowledge of the Romanian culture as an advantage
Group stereotypes, representations	Undifferentiated negative perception of Romanians; Only partially differentiated, but positive perception of Hungarians	Differentiated perception of Romanians: Romanian from Transylvania positive-neutral, Romanian from Old Romania neutral-negative perception; Differentiated perception of Hungarians, Hungarians from Hungary negative, Hungarians from Transylvania positive perception

Source: focus group interviews, Carpat Panel 2009, computed by the author

The identification of these two discourse types should not suggest that Hungarians from Romania were separated into different groups based on these two discourses. These descriptions only represent ideal types, because in everyday life they can take mixed forms. In many cases, their blending is

characteristic to Hungarians. The elements of one discourse or the other may dominate, but they do not represent opposing groups. The employment of different discourses may also depend on the actual ethno-political situation. In certain cases, an element from one discourse is used, while in other cases an element from the other discourse is used in the private or public life.

Conclusions

Our focus group research outlines some conclusions which may be partially phrased in an undifferentiated and differentiated manner, respectively. The principle of the 'unity' of the pan-Hungarian nation formulated by the mainstream Hungarian national ideology is strongly nuanced in everyday discourse about the nation in case of ethnic Hungarians from Romania. We differentiated between two ideal types of prominent national discourses among the divergent opinions. They each offer different perspectives of nation and Romanian-Hungarian cohabitation. Based on Geertz's typology of national ideological discourses, we named these two discourses essentialist-radical and quasi-primordialist-moderate. These often blend in the everyday lives of Hungarians from Romania, with the elements of one or another discourse being more predominant. These discourses do not represent clearly opposite groups among the Hungarian national minority from Romania, but some associations with the visions and messages of the Hungarian political organisation's ideologies from Romania can be assumed.

The main shortcomings about the national discourses, according to the research questions are twofold. Although in a differentiated manner, the majority of the respondents also point out the specific separate character of *Transylvanian Hungarians*, they perceive Hungarians from Hungary as a different group. Following Barth, the Transylvanian Hungarian category was made a group category to mark the boundaries of a group both in relation to Hungarians from Hungary and Romanians" (Barth 1969: 15-16). In the case of high-school and higher education graduates, ethno-cultural group boundary marking is even more emphasised and serves to delineate the concept of nation from any kind of citizenship or territory-based conception. As for membership in the Romanian nation, they consider that only the *Romanian citizen* category is valid for them, and not the *Romanian* category (considered an ethnolinguistic term), which they (the Transylvanian Hungarians) believe to be excluded from.

However, Transylvanian Hungarians describe their belonging to the community of Romanian citizens in a differentiated manner. We distinguished the descriptions according to the two discourses. As for the question regarding homeland, the options Transylvania or Romania were not alternative concepts, but complemented each other in most cases. According to the majority opinion, Transylvania was specified by the respondents as their homeland from an emotional point of view, while Romania was used as its cognitive extension, the 'legitimate' formulation. According to our respondents, the perception of being from Romania is not unitary and may be classified into two types: one that is unequivocally negative, and one that is neutral with slightly positive aspects.

The role of Hungary in the Transylvanian Hungarian national belonging is strongly nuanced and treated in a contradictory manner by the respondents, and in many cases it is frontally refused. On the other hand, if we measure the 'unity' of national belonging by the degree to which the respondents identify themselves with the common Transylvanian Hungarian (i.e. their Hungarian historical and cultural inheritance), they agree with this to a great extent.

The relationship between Hungarians from Hungary is contradictory and imbued with negative impulses, as - according to the concordant opinions of the respondents - Hungarians from Hungary indicate group boundaries that exclude Hungarians from Transylvania from the *Hungarian* category. According to the majority of our respondents, Hungary is not their homeland and, for a smaller group, not even a *kin state*. But for another smaller group of Hungarians from Romania, however, every aspect of their identification with Hungary was positive.

The results from this paper describe the mechanisms through which they take over and "translate" to individual level ideologies framed on the community level, and the types of discourses that appear among ordinary people in everyday life, which connects "official" mainstream national ideologies to everyday national identity that manifests itself on individual level. It is in this field that our paper attempts to add something new to the literature about everyday national discourses.

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