

STUDIES

NATIONAL MINORITIES WITH RESPECT TO EDUCATION. THE CASE OF HUNGARIANS¹

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to draw attention to national minorities as a group distinct from immigrants. Additionally, it attempts to introduce a global perspective on national minorities, specifically on Hungarians in Central Europe, where, instead of concentrating on the respective countries separately, it adopts a comparative approach.

As there are no specific theories addressing the issue of national minorities from the educational point of view, immigrant theories might be a useful starting point. For example, Ogbu's categorization of minorities on the basis of voluntariness (free will) allows us to distinguish between immigrants and national minorities as two distinct categories. The applicability of Ogbu's theory on national minorities gives us a good opportunity to test the utility of his thesis in European context.

Using empirical evidence from a nationally representative survey carried out in the Carpathian Basin I find little support for Ogbu's thesis. According to the data, there is a high discrepancy between the autochthonous minorities examined in the study which questions the possibility of generalisation of minorities based solely on voluntariness.

Additionally, the empirical analysis testing Ogbu's concept on the example of Hungarians does not favour the thesis of oppositional culture. The Hungarian national minority as an involuntary group is not significantly disadvantaged with respect to educational attainment (with the exception of Slovakia). On the contrary, they seem to catch up with the majority i.e. the gap between majority and minority appears to be closing.

Keywords: ethnic minorities, educational inequalities

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INTRODUCTION

While immigrants have been at the centre of attention of sociological research for a long time, much less research has been devoted to national minorities. The autochthonous or national minorities in Europe usually became part of their countries involuntarily, as a result of post-war territorial arrangements. These are groups of people who are trying to retain their ethnic origin and native language, which differs from the majority in a certain country, but is, in most cases, the same as that of the population of a neighboring state.

As there are no specific theories addressing them, immigrant theories might be a useful starting point to look at. For example, Ogbu's categorization of minorities on the basis of voluntariness (free will) allows us to distinguish between immigrants and national minorities as two distinct categories. According Ogbu a new classification of minorities can explain why some minorities are doing well and others poorly in American schools. He looked at the problem of low minority achievement from a different angle and introduced the concept of "involuntary" minorities who react on discrimination and the barriers for entering higher education and the employment market by forming an "oppositional culture" and adopting anti-achievement norms.

The aim of this study is to draw attention to national minorities as a group distinct from immigrants. Additionally, by testing Ogbu's framework it attempts to introduce a global perspective on national minorities, specifically on Hungarians in Central Europe, where, instead of concentrating on the respective countries separately, it adopts a comparative approach.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ogbu's Cultural-Ecological Model

Several explanations have been proposed to account for the variability in school performance and educational attainment of minority children. Arthur Jensen (1969) for example claimed that blacks are less successful in schools because of genetic inheritance. Others promoted the view that the academic problems of low-achieving minorities are associated with their social class. In their view the fact that more blacks are coming from 'underclass' families than whites is attributable to their low school performance.

According to Ogbu (Ogbu and Gibson 1991) the conventional explanations fail to capture the problem of minority school performance as they ignore the historical and societal forces which may determine the attitude of young people towards school success. Additionally, they also fail to consider the groups' collective orientation and their own notions toward schooling in the context of their social reality.

Findings from comparative research indicate that what distinguishes minority groups who are doing relatively well in school from others who do less well is not that the former possess a particular type of genetic endowment, nor that they inhabit a cultural environment which enables

them to develop the type of cognitive, linguistic, motivational and socio-emotional attributes characteristic of the middle-class members of the dominant group, nor that they attend schools that are without defects. Nor are the major distinguishing features the particular minority group's experiences of economic, political or other discriminatory treatment at the hands of the members of the dominant group, nor the cultural and language barriers they encounter in school – although all these factors are important. (Ogbu and Gibson 1991: 7–8.)

Ogbu argues that the difference between the low and high performing minority groups lays in the types of cultural models that guides them, i.e. in the understanding they have of the workings of the society and of their place as minorities in that order. As a response to it he has developed his own theory known as the cultural-ecological approach of differential educational attainment.

Most nations today are plural societies with one or more minority groups. Ogbu defines *minority as a population which occupies some form of subordinate power position in relation to another population in the same society* (Ogbu 1978). According Ogbu the first step on the way of understanding the relative success or failure of these groups in terms of education or occupation is recognizing the fact that there are different types of minorities (or rather minority groups) which in turn are experiencing different educational or occupational attainments. As a response to these differences Ogbu has created a new classification of immigrant groups distinguishing them in respect of their own choice or necessity to settle in a country different of their own.

- Immigrant minorities according Ogbu are those, who have moved (more or less) voluntarily to the host society. They may occupy the lowest ranks on the occupational ladder, may take menial jobs but in comparison to their family or relatives back home they still see it as self-improvement, especially considering the good prospects for their children. They usually maintain instrumental attitudes toward economic and educational opportunities even if they face prejudice or discrimination; and despite the possible initial problems of school adjustment are not characterized by low academic performance. E.g. Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, Cubans.
- Involuntary or caste-like minorities did not initially choose to become members of their host society; they were incorporated more or less involuntarily through slavery, conquest or colonization. Usually they do not accept their subordinate position and reject complete assimilation, devoting effort to fight for political, social and economic equality within the host society instead. Involuntary minorities do not hold positive expectations for the future, and they are more at risk experiencing disproportionate school failure. E.g. Indians, Mexican Americans, Black Americans, etc.

The above mentioned types of minority groups differ a great deal in their assumptions on how to get ahead in society, which in turn affects how they experience and give different responses to schooling. According Ogbu the immigrants interpret the economic, political and social barriers they encounter as temporary problems which can be overcome with the passage of time through individual effort: by hard work or more education.

Furthermore, the immigrants are characterized by having a positive dual frame of reference, comparing their current situation to that of their peers back home, allowing them to develop an optimistic view of their and their children's future. Ogbu notes, that immigrants do not necessarily bring the folk theory stressing success through education from home, rather they develop it after their arrival. Immigrants are more likely to excel in school and do not usually experience low achievement.

Involuntary minorities largely differ from immigrants as they interpret the several economic, social and political barriers against them in a very different way. Involuntary minorities have a negative dual frame of reference with respect to status mobility. As they do not have a 'homeland' to return to, they compare their situation with that of the members of the dominant group. As for result they usually conclude that they are worse off than they ought to be for no other reason but that of their subordinate status in society. Hence they do not see their status as temporary; they rather interpret the discrimination against them as permanent and institutionalized. They believe that it requires more than education, individual effort and hard work to overcome the barriers against them. Consequently they develop a folk theory of getting ahead stressing collecting effort as providing the best chances for overcoming the opportunity barriers.

Involuntary minorities do not believe that the established rules work for them, so instead of following the rules of the dominant group they struggle to change the rules themselves. Hence collective struggle is one of the several survival strategies involuntary minorities develop to face the barriers in order to get education, jobs or to advance in other ways.

Involuntary minorities are also characterized by secondary cultural systems, which arose after the group had become an involuntary minority. It constitutes an ideal way of acting and believing which affirms the person as a member of the group. This cultural frame of reference is not merely different but is in opposition to the cultural frame of reference of the dominant group (the 'oppressors').

Immigrants interpret cultural differences as barriers to be overcome, involuntary minorities, on the contrary, see the differences as markers of group identity to be maintained. They may perceive – perhaps unconsciously – learning or speaking English as threatening to their own minority culture, language or identity. So the cultural and/or language differences may become boundary-maintaining mechanisms between them and the dominant group.

Involuntary minorities develop a new sense of people-hood or social identity after their incorporation to the host society based on the discriminatory treatment they encounter. As they perceive and experience their treatment by the dominant group as collective and enduring, they develop an oppositional identity where the cultural and language differences serve as boundary-maintaining mechanisms giving the minority group both a sense of collective identity and a sense of self-worth.

The status mobility patterns and responses to education are modified also by the unequal power of the dominant group to control minority access to schooling and jobs, and by the introduction of job ceiling against the minorities that limits their range of occupational choices. Ogbu pictured the American societal ideal in the frame of: GO TO SCHOOL – GET CREDENTIAL – TO GET A JOB, where more and better

education or credentials meant better jobs, wages and promotions. But the system did not work the same way for the Blacks as for the whites. The opportunity structure of Blacks has differed from that of whites in America as it has operated in two set of rules: one for the dominant, the other for the subordinate group. The dominant group may prohibit the minority group to advance beyond a certain level in the system regardless of their educational attainment. Or the under-representation of minorities in the most desirable jobs may be explained as due to their individual or collective faults or incapability of achieving the necessary qualifications.

Research Validating Ogbu's Thesis

Ogbu's theory was attacked by sociologists from many directions. Trueba (1988) argued that his classification of minority groups exhibited "overwhelming generalizations". He strongly criticized Ogbu because of avoiding the individual level factors and concentrating on cultural differences at group level only. The same point was made by Erickson (1987) as well. According his view Ogbu has failed to interpret the success of some individuals coming from an involuntary group and portrayed a very bleak vision of the future of Blacks in America. Another weakness of his study was looking at success in absolute terms rather than taking into account the relative success of minorities compared to their past accomplishments.

Similarly, O'Connor (1997), who interviewed high-achieving African American students from low-income families, criticized Ogbu of not recognizing the fact that black responses to schooling were not uniform. On the other hand, Ogbu also failed to carry out comparative research including both white and ethnic students (Jaynes and Williams 1989) in order to validate his research.

On the other hand, there was research carried out in favor of Ogbu as well. Fischer (1996) argued that the low performance of blacks on IQ tests is rather due to their low caste-like status than genetic predispositions but he failed to give empirical evidence in support of his argument. On the other side, Graham (1998) collected data on students from a predominantly black and an ethnically diverse school. His research showed that while white boys valued high achievers from their own group, ethnic minority boys valued them least, which supported Ogbu's theory.

It was, however, valid only in the case of boys and not girls, as girls of all ethnicities valued their high-achieving classmates a lot. Farkas (2002) explained this difference by exploring the NAEP data where he found that males experience more peer opposition than females, and especially Blacks and Hispanics were subject to such peer pressure to a greater extent.

Ogbu's theory on minorities has proved to be one of the most influential theories applied to differential educational attainment by ethnicity in the US. To date, empirical work testing the validity of his thesis has been carried out mostly in the United States. My aim is to test the applicability of Ogbu's theory to national minorities in Europe. I look at involuntary minorities in a broader aspect, examining whether the autochthonous minorities have common features across Europe (i.e. occupying a subordinate position) which is one of the key aspects of Ogbu's interpretation.

Following this, I examine the possibility of applying the theory of oppositional culture in a narrower sense, in the case of the Hungarian involuntary minority groups. Since Hungarians in Central Europe became minorities at the same time and for the same reason and were commonly facing prejudice and discrimination from the majority, it is likely that they have developed similar coping strategies (“folk theories”) as well. Hence it is reasonable to expect that I will find similar trends and patterns with respect to education in all of the countries considered. In order to accept Ogbu’s theory I need to prove that the Hungarian minorities outside Hungary are educationally disadvantaged at a similar rate in each country considered.

NATIONAL MINORITIES AS INVOLUNTARY MINORITIES

Testing Ogbu’s Theory on Autochthonous Minorities in Europe

Autochthonous or national minorities in Europe can be seen as involuntary minorities as they have not freely chosen to live in that country where they occupy a subordinate minority position. Mostly they (or their ancestors) lived on a territory which was transferred to another country in the 20th century as a consequence of the territorial arrangements after the great world wars. Hence, they belong to the same ethnic group as the population of the neighboring country but have a very different citizenship. As they did not change citizenship voluntarily, assimilation is generally not the goal of national minorities.

National minorities do not only tend to keep their national identity but in many cases they even develop a much stronger sense of belonging as a result of involuntary separation from their own nation. Retaining their own language and culture is essential to their very being, and successfully allow for the maintenance of boundaries between them and the majority group. As a result of the complicated historical and political development most of the national minorities face prejudice and are discriminated against.

Ogbu’s concept of involuntary minorities seems related to the problem of national minorities in Europe. Therefore it offers a good opportunity to assess whether it is really applicable to this particular type of involuntary minorities. In the analysis which follows I will test his theory firstly in a broader sense on the European autochthonous minorities then on the specific case of Hungarians.

On examining the autochthonous minorities in Europe it becomes clear that not all of them occupy a subordinate power position in the society in which they live; therefore Ogbu’s typology of minorities does not apply to all of them. According to Mikesell and Murphy (1991) giving recognition, access and participation to the minorities supports equal power positions in the society and will diminish or reduce the possibility of conflict (given as separation, autonomy and independence).

In assessing minority-majority relations in this broader sense I propose to build a model based on a two-way approach. I argue that problems occur only if the goals of minority population are different from those of the majority population, otherwise no conflict arises. “Identical goals” would mean either favoring assimilation on both parts or preferring maintenance of both the cultures.

Table 1. Model Strategies for National (or Autochthonous) Minorities

MAJORITY GOALS	MINORITY GOALS	
	Assimilation	Maintenance
Assimilation	Cultural Conformity Hungarians in Austria	Cultural Conflict Hungarians in Slovakia, Romania, etc.
Maintenance	Cultural Conflict Jews (before World War II in Europe)	Cultural Pluralism Swedish in Finland

With regard to the involuntary minorities in Europe there is a conflict situation between Hungarians in Slovakia, Romania, etc., and the host populations where the objectives of the groups greatly differ. The example of identical goals is provided e.g. by the Swedish minority in Finland, the Germans in Italy, etc.

The Swedish minority is not a minority in Ogbu's sense. The Swedish kept their language and identity by developing good relations with the Finnish majority. This provides us with an ideal example of positive minority-majority relations (Györi Szabó 1999). The Swedish in Finland are often referred to as a model minority in Europe, an ideal situation to be followed. The Swedish population in Finland has distinct privileges as compared to minorities in other countries. Firstly, even though they comprise only 6% of the population they are considered to have the same rights as the majority. The Swedish language together with Finnish are official languages of the country and Finland is seen as a Finnish-Swedish bilingual country where both nationalities have the right to be educated in their mother tongue (up to university level), but are also obliged to learn the language of the other community. This allows the retention of both languages, which enables Swedish speakers to use their language in every setting in the society. There are no studies on the educational inequalities in Finland with respect to ethnicity, but statistics show that the proportion of Swedish speakers is representative at each educational level.

Another example is that of the German population in Italy in the province of South-Tyrol (Györi Szabó 1999), where about 300 thousand people belong to a nationality other than Italian. However, as with the Finnish example, both the German and the Italian languages are 'equal' which means education is available in both languages and each group has to learn the language of the other. Parents have the right to choose the language in which their children are schooled. Schools are available in German language up to gaining a secondary school certificate but following this they can freely continue their studies at HE level in the neighboring Austria as Italy recognizes most Austrian diplomas. As a response to the low proportion of higher educated people in the province in 1997 a new state-accredited university in Bolzano was founded offering three-language instruction in many fields.

In contrast to previous examples, a preference for assimilation existed in both groups in the case of Hungarians in Austria. There are a small number of Hungarians living in the province of Burgenland which was part of West-Hungary before 1921. After the Treaty the highly educated people left the province and moved to Hungary leaving about 10,000 Hungarian peasants in one of the least developed provinces of the country (Gal 1991).

The main aim of Hungarians in Austria became social mobility; this was only possible by learning the majority language. German language became a symbol of high status and prestige, the only way in which to get ahead in society. Hungarians tended to assimilate to the host society and endogamy within the group has decreased over time. According to the census of 1971 the Hungarian speaking population had the highest participation rate at HE level. This was almost double that of the German population. Hungarians were overrepresented within intellectual circles and in professions requiring a higher level of schooling, especially in Vienna. They were slightly underrepresented among state officials (which sometimes required citizenship or party membership). This implies that their educational payoffs were similar to that of the majority. Their behavior was also reinforced by the political changes in the area, as more Hungarians considered themselves Austrian (citizens) in order to distance themselves from the communist regime and the relatively underdeveloped Hungary. The political changes and the large economic differences between Austria and their mother country have led to the devaluation of the Hungarian language. While the use of German became a matter of prestige, a synonym of authority and savvy, the Hungarian language slowly became the language of grandparents as its use was limited only to older generations. It used to be said: "With Hungarian you cannot go far". However, the language has not died out completely, as its knowledge is still indispensable in accessing the community resources.

The previous examples can be taken as a critique of Ogbu's concept as the diverse "coping strategies" of autochthonous minorities outlined in the model suggest that such a general categorization based solely on the voluntary or involuntary character of minorities is invalid. There is still the possibility of applying the theory in a narrower sense, using the example of a single case – that of Hungarians.

Testing Ogbu's Theory in the Case of Hungarians

An example of a conflict situation similar to that of Blacks and Mexicans in Ogbu's theory in the US is that of the Hungarian minority in the Carpathian Basin. The 1000 year-old Hungarian state was deeply affected between the Great Wars by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, when the country lost 71% of its area and 62% of its population (see map in *Appendix*). One third of Hungarians, about 3-4 million people, suddenly became minorities of the surrounding states, mostly living just across the 'new' borders.

Nowadays, there are still considerable Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries. According to the latest census there are over 520,000 people in Slovakia who consider themselves Hungarian (Census 2001) which comprises about 10% of the Slovak population. In Romania the Hungarian minority totals about 1.5 million people (in 2002), in Serbia almost 300,000 (in 2002) and in Ukraine around 150,000 people (in 2001). Altogether it makes about 2.5 million people.

The features of the Hungarian autochthonous or national minorities are obviously similar to that of the involuntary minorities defined by Ogbu. However, there are also some significant differences, which have impacted on the school behavior of their descendants.

As with the involuntary minorities in the US Hungarian minorities outside Hungary usually try to retain their language and national identity; they may – sometimes unconsciously – perceive the learning and speaking of the majority language as threatening their own identity. On the other hand, as the Hungarian language is not the national language of the country, Hungarians often have to face the nationalism of the majority e.g. “In Slovakia (only) in Slovak”, etc. They are often ‘reminded’ to use the state language in public as the only acceptable method of communication. Language and culture became boundary-maintaining mechanisms between the majority and minority, and those members who try to cross these boundaries may experience social and psychological pressure for not doing so, as endogamy within (each) group is strongly encouraged.

Hungarians also differ from the majority in their perceptions of getting ahead in society. This affects their response to schooling. Hungarians outside Hungary – just as Blacks in the States – value and desire to succeed through education. They might believe, however, that individual effort is just not enough to get ahead. Like Ogbu’s involuntary minorities, Hungarians may find no justification for the collective prejudice and discrimination which they view as institutionalized and enduring.

As a response to this they stress collective effort as the best means of achieving social mobility and equality. Instead of following the rules of the dominant society they struggle to change the rules themselves. The Hungarian minority is well known for high participation rates in elections and they are ready to unite their forces if they see an action of the dominant group as threatening to their own identity. E.g. the wide protest of Hungarian parents in 1995 succeeded in avoiding the introduction of alternative education that could have led to the closing down of Hungarian schools in the long term.

Within national minorities there is no distinct second, third or fourth generation in the sense of assimilation experienced by immigrants. Many Hungarians live as their ancestors did before the border revisions, even whilst becoming bilingual (at a certain level) their language and identity remained almost intact over generations. On the contrary, those who assimilate (through intermarriage, by education in the majority language, etc.) are lost for the Hungarian community completely, and become Slovak, Roman, etc.

Within this complex situation national minorities react by developing different identities. As with Africans or Mexicans in the US, they develop types of hyphenated identity (e. g African American), calling themselves Slovakian Hungarian, Romanian Hungarian and so on. It can be seen as an in between group category as well, as they mostly do not consider themselves either Slovak or ‘just’ Hungarian. Being separated from the mother country and wanting to distance themselves from the majority they create a ‘new category’ of belonging.

The identity of people belonging to a minority group is tightly linked to schooling; mother tongue education is crucial for the further existence of these minorities. In contrast to US involuntary minorities, national minorities in Europe preserved their school system parallel to that of the majority. It is important to note that the Hungarian schools already existed in these countries at the beginning of the 20th century as part of Hungary’s school system but were badly affected by the two World Wars. The schools

mainly reopened after 1945, when the new 'minorities' had to secure their schools again. Instruction was provided in the mother tongue at primary and (in some type of schools) at secondary level.

The main stress at the time of the border revisions was on keeping the mother tongue education (at least) at primary school level. Later on, by extending compulsory education, the expansion of secondary schooling led to a stronger demand for secondary schools with Hungarian language instruction. The structural inequalities in the minority educational system were caused by the newly introduced vocational secondary schools after 1945, which had no past tradition in most of the countries considered. Hence they were founded in state languages. Therefore, solely the traditional network of Hungarian academic-oriented gymnasia teach wholly in Hungarian.

Consequently, the attainment of Hungarian minorities resembles the structural inequalities of the minority school system. In most of the countries there were a large proportion of Hungarian secondary school educated people, especially those that finished their education at the gymnasia, because this was the last level at which they could be taught in their mother tongue; no (or not many) Hungarian higher educational institutions were available within the countries earlier.

Reflecting on Ogbu's theory, the existence of a minority school system implies that the concept of oppositional culture is not valid in the sense that young people do not face prejudice or discrimination at school, and are in many cases protected at their place of residence as well. There is no negative peer pressure which might discourage engagement in schooling so they can potentially develop a more positive attitude towards school success. According to official reports the minority schools are not disadvantaged either, as they usually share the same building and equipment with the majority schools of the same level and teaching is provided by native teachers who were accordingly qualified as minority teachers at HE level.

In the given case 'oppositional culture' could be spotted somewhere else, mainly at refusing further studies in the majority areas or by consciously avoiding the employment opportunities outside the language border. Hence, the minority population itself can limit their opportunities in consciously preferring to stay within the community, even if job opportunities are more limited there. The notion of prosperity and getting ahead is hereby simply reduced to the choice between ethnic identity and social mobility.

The prosperity of an ethnic individual is, however, strongly restricted by the low level of industrialization and hence by the few employment opportunities that are available. Many Hungarians face unemployment as they mostly live in rural agricultural areas, others are forced to choose the level of petty bourgeoisie in order to avoid unemployment and secure acceptable living conditions.

From the other point of view employment prospects are often challenged by the job ceiling effect which can remarkably reduce the occupational choices. Prejudice and (often hidden) discrimination experienced from the dominant group deny them to get the most desired positions even if they have the appropriate qualifications, but unequal access to educational opportunity itself can be seen as an obstacle.

All these factors naturally affect the educational aspirations of the young, and are manifested in their achievement and in their decisions regarding advancement

through the school system. The question of how effective Ogbu's model is for the Hungarian minorities will provide a theoretical framework for the empirical part of the paper.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Hypotheses

In order to answer the question of whether or not belonging to a (national) minority affects the educational opportunities of individuals I developed a number of hypotheses. Working on the basis that each country has a different level of educational attainment the features of minority attainment can differ greatly.

- *The educational level of the Hungarian minorities outside Hungary is similar to that of Hungarians in the mother country.*
- *Hungarians outside Hungary resemble each other with respect to educational attainment as the result of their minority status, i.e. they are disadvantaged (eventually advantaged) in each country at a similar rate (minority effect).*
- *The minority population is trying to comply with the majority in the society they live in, i.e. the educational attainment of minority young people is similar to that of the majority youth (country effect).*

Finally, we can also analyze the persistence of inequalities over time. This is especially topical given the significant changes in the education systems in the '90s after the change of regime in many countries of Eastern Europe. Therefore, the last hypothesis will test whether the prior disadvantage has decreased or completely diminished due to the positive effect of expansion of the educational system most likely affecting the younger generations (cohort comparisons). Additionally, I intend to compare today's youngsters' attainment with that of their mothers and fathers to identify generational shifts in the transmittance of inequalities (generational differences).

Data and Methods

The MOZAIK 2001 survey used for the analysis is a follow up of the YOUTH 2000 [Ifjúság 2000] study (Szabó et al. 2002a) which researched the 15–29-year-old Hungarian population (8000 cases) regarding family situation, schooling, occupation, social mobility, identity, values and religion. They were also asked about their life style, health, sport and leisure activities, tourism and cultural consumption.

In 2001 the survey was repeated in the countries of the Carpathian Basin, having a substantial Hungarian minority population. They were young people in the age of 15–29 questioned in Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine and Serbia (6500 cases in 4 countries). These country samples all consist of a representative minority and (in the minority areas living) majority samples. The data are representative for gender, age cohorts and settlement type. For the purposes of this analysis I am using only the data collected on educational attainment.

The use of the above mentioned dataset seems to be reasonable as it has sufficient information to conduct a comparative analysis on the educational inequalities. Because of the limitation of the dataset used – there are no data on achievement (as grades or average) – I mainly focus on detecting inequalities at the advancement of students through the school system.

To get a better understanding of the researched population I broke it down by calendar years instead of ages. The oldest age cohort (25–29 years old) was born in the seventies between 1972 and 1976, the middle cohort (20–24 yrs old) between 1977 and 1981, and finally the youngest in the eighties, between 1982 and 1986. The next table shows the exact years when a certain age cohort was due to finish primary or secondary schooling and eventually the university. As the research was conducted in 2001 most of the students had the possibility to enter HE but some of them have not completed it.

*Table 2. Calendar Years of Reaching a Certain Branching off Point
[MOZAIK 2001]*

	Year of birth	Starting Primary	Finishing Primary/ Starting secondary	Finishing secondary/ Starting university	Finishing university
25–29	1972–1976	1978–1982	1986–1990	1990–1994	1995–1999
20–24	1977–1981	1983–1987	1991–1995	1995–1999	2000–2004
15–19	1982–1986	1988–1992	1996–2000	2000–2004	2005–2009

From a methodological point of view I made comparisons on the basis of cumulative attainment, where I used graphs for an expressive demonstration. Later on I used logistic regression to determine the significance of effects outlined in the hypotheses.

I considered three main models: The first model included the country effect, to which I added the ‘Hungarian’ (minority) effect in the second model, and finally I included the interactions between the countries and the respective minorities. I ran this regression at three different transitions reflecting the characteristics of the educational systems in the countries considered (dependent variable: binary choice of attainment).

As for testing the last hypothesis I calculated the index of dissimilarity which refers to as the percentage of one group that would have to change attainment in order to produce an even distribution. It is calculated as the maximum difference between cumulative levels of attainment. The dissimilarity index allowed me to measure the gap between the different educational levels of the majority and the minority parents which I compared to that of their children. In order to reflect the changes in short term I compared the index between the different age-cohorts of young people as well.

Table 3. The Highest Level Attained by the 15–29-Year-olds
[IFJUSAG 2000 AND MOZAIK 2001]

	HUNGARY	Slovakia		Romania		Ukraine		Serbia	
		Hungarian	Slovak	Hungarian	Romanian	Hungarian	Ukrainian	Hungarian	Serbian
Primary School	31.2%	34.5%	23.3%	26.5%	29.2%	22.9%	24.0%	41.7%	43.3%
Vocational Secondary	26.7%	30.9%	12.2%	15.6%	14.9%	8.0%	3.9%	12.4%	9.9%
Academic Secondary	34.7%	30.5%	49.4%	46.8%	45.1%	57.2%	58.5%	28.1%	33.2%
HE	7.4%	4.1%	15.0%	11.2%	10.8%	11.9%	13.6%	17.8%	13.6%

COUNTRY COMPARISONS

The IFJÚSÁG and MOZAIK data allow us to compare the educational attainment of the 15–29-year-olds between and within countries. The level of education is measured by grade completion, for the aim of this comparison split into 5 main levels: primary education, vocational secondary (secondary without certificate), technical secondary and gymnasium² (secondary with certificate), and higher education. It gives us a simplistic view on the attainment of each group which might be satisfactory for the aim of comparative analysis.

The educational attainment of the young people belonging to either minority or majority in all the countries considered is summarized in *Table 3*. In the following I will test the above outlined hypotheses with the help of graphical demonstration, which will be proved by logistic regression later on.

Considering my earlier hypotheses the first assumption is not supported by the data as there are great differences between the Hungarian minority attainment and the educational level of 15–29-year-olds in the mother country. The second hypothesis must be rejected, too, as the Hungarians seem to differ significantly from each other with respect to educational levels attained.

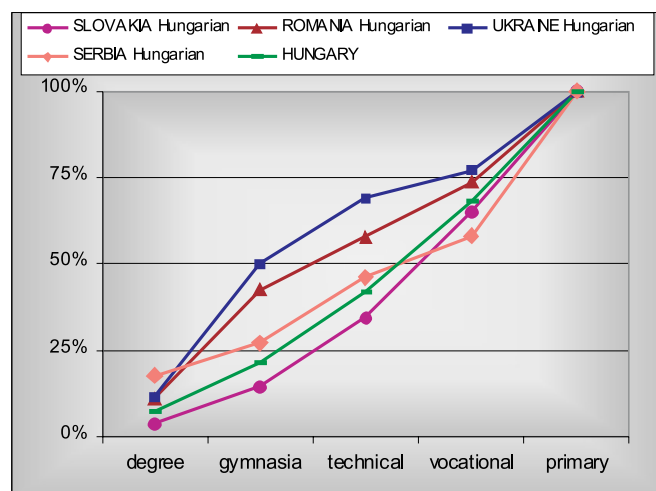


Figure 1. The Highest Completed Level of Attainment by 15–29-Year-old Hungarians [IFJÚSÁG 2000 and MOZAIK 2001 – Cumulative Data]

Testing of the third hypothesis requires comparing data on attainment of minority and majority people in each country separately. As the educational inequalities and advancement through the school system are determined by the availability and access to (minority) schools I find it necessary to comment on the educational system of each country.

- 2 Later on I refer to the technical secondary schools and gymnasia as academic tracks, as they both issue secondary final certificates which are necessary for applying to HE.

Romania

In Romania, having the largest Hungarian minority population, the state school system officially includes 1121 kindergartens, 450 junior (1–4) and 634 senior level (5–8) primary schools, 140 secondary schools and 22 vocational schools with Hungarian language instruction. It is important to note that the Hungarian students have the right to write the entrance test in their mother tongue even by applying to Romanian courses if they did their previous studies in that language.

At a higher education level there are four state institutions offering fields in Hungarian language with the largest being the Babes-Bolyai University (46 specializations). There are also four private institutions, church affiliated, with instruction in Hungarian language. Additional options include studying at centres founded by Hungarian universities (mostly part time education) or further studies in Hungary. As the statistics show only 10% of the HE students pursue their studies in Hungary but more then two third of Hungarian university students are studying in Romanian language.

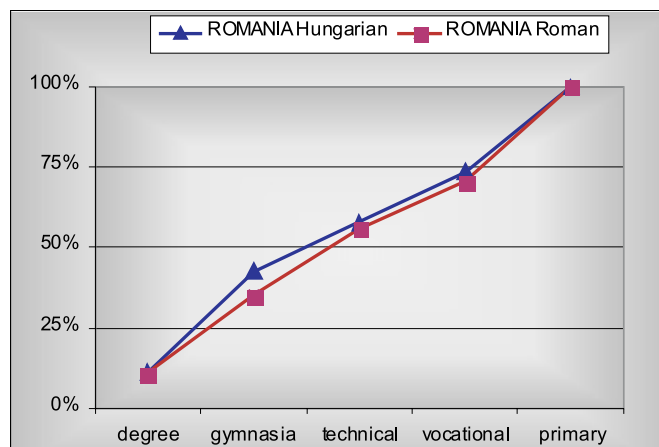


Figure 2. Cumulative Attainment
[MOZAIK 2001: Romanian Sample]

In case of Romania the data does not show large inequalities in the educational attainment of the 15–29-year-olds so the third hypothesis might be accepted. The attainment of both the minority and the majority is very similar, or even the educational level of Hungarians seems slightly better than that of the majority because of a lower proportion of primary school educated and a larger proportion of young people studying in gymnasia in the sample. The differences at other levels are very low.

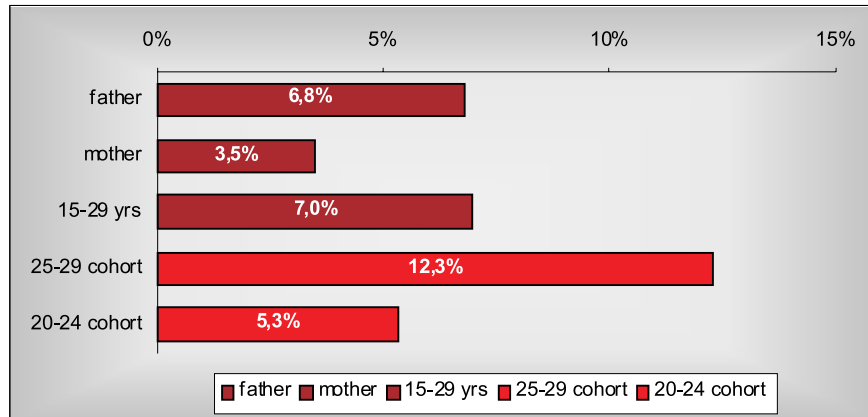


Figure 3. Index of Dissimilarity
[MOZAIK 2001: Romania Cohort and Generational Differences]

As the educational attainment of children is determined by the parents' level of education we can calculate the index of dissimilarity for the parents which allows for measuring the gap between the different educational levels of the majority and the minority parents. As for the fathers the percentage is higher (6.8%) than that of the mothers (3.5%), which was caused by a slightly higher level of vocational educated fathers in the minority sample.

The index of dissimilarity of the 15–29-year-olds shows that about 7% of the young people would need to change their attainment for the two groups being completely equal, which is rather low percentage so we can conclude that all the young people can get ahead through education; it means that in Romania there are no educational inequalities with respect to ethnicity.

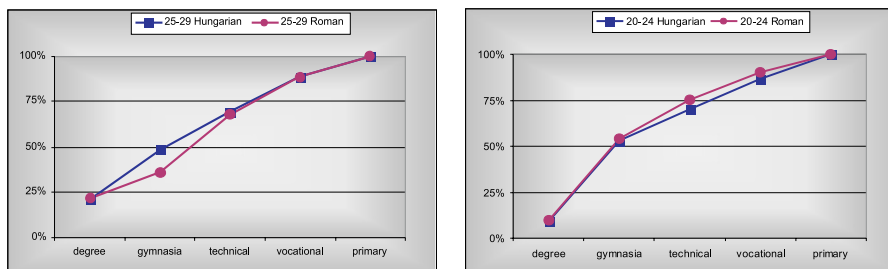


Figure 4. Cumulative Attainment by Age-Cohorts
[MOZAIK 2001: Romanian Sample]

To check whether the equality of opportunity has arisen just recently, as the consequence of the educational expansion, it is important to compare the last two age cohorts. According the graphs there were significant changes in the attainment

affecting the younger generations, as there is a visible shift from vocational, and especially technical schools towards gymnasia which has changed significantly in the majority population.

On the other hand, looking at the trend in minority-majority differences the two groups seem to be getting closer over time. The index of dissimilarity confirms our assumptions, as there was a decrease from 12% by the 25–29-year-olds to 5% by the younger generation. We can conclude that the changes in the educational systems and the expansion might have led to a greater equality of educational opportunity.

By examining the labour market activity of the people we differentiate between those who are currently studying, who are actively involved in labour force and who are unemployed. There is one additional group labelled as inactive including all those who are somehow between categories, namely who are not studying but are not actively engaged in work either nor are registered as unemployed. This category includes women on maternity leave (3 years), men in compulsory military or public service (6–12 months), people with disabilities in social care, etc.

Table 4 The Current Labor Market Activity of Romanian Youth
[MOZAIK 2001: Romanian Sample]

		studying	working	inactive	unemployed
Romania	Hungarian	29.3%	52.7%	9.3%	8.7%
	Romanian	39.7%	35.5%	14.9%	10.0%

As for the labour market activity of the 15–29-year-olds we find an interesting pattern. Opposite to our expectations that people in such young age are supposed to be studying, the highest proportion, about half of the Hungarian young people are already in the labor market while the majority of Romanian youth is still in the education system. The unemployment level is rather high; however, it affects both of the groups at a similar rate.

Ukraine

The Ukrainian minority education system is rather unequal as the number of available institutions is decreasing by advancing through the school system. An interesting feature of the school system is that Hungarian kindergartens were opened only after 1989, but their efficiency is lower than expected due to the unfavorable economic situation in the region. There are 10 junior primary, 36 complete primary schools and 17 secondary schools. From the church-affiliated gymnasia 4 of them offer Hungarian language instruction, 4 technical schools are also opening Hungarian classes.

There had been only minority teacher education offered in Hungarian language in HE level for long, however from 1998 the college has been offering other specializations as well. Still 50% of the HE students are studying abroad, in Hungary. The admittance to Hungarian institutions is not easy for the students because of the differences in the curricula between the countries. In order to increase the success rate

of young Hungarians an institution was created with the support of the Hungarian Ministry of Education offering preparatory courses for students. If the student after attending the course was admitted he/she could apply for scholarship for his studies. HE education serves as an opportunity to break out from the bad economic situation in the country, so most of the students are not returning after graduation.

It is important to note that interest in education in the mother tongue has risen considerably in the last years; in 2000 the proportion of enrolled minority students (11.4%) was close to the proportion of Hungarians in the country (12.5%). The change of preference was partly caused by introducing the opportunity of higher studies in Hungary from 1989.

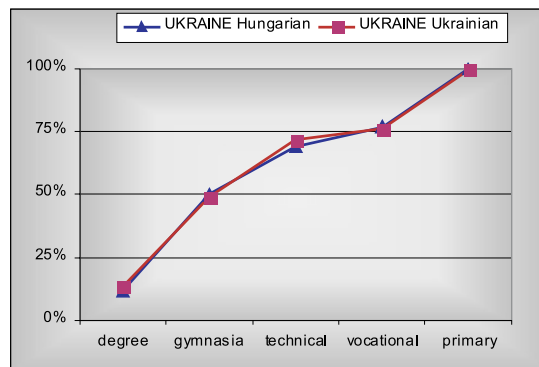


Figure 5. Cumulative Educational Attainment
[MOZAIK 2001: Ukrainian Sample]

In Ukraine the situation is very similar to Romania with respect to ethnic differences; however, the general level of attainment of the young people (the shape of the curve) differs. The cumulative percentages of attainment of each group shown in the graph confirm the existence of minor inter-group differences only.

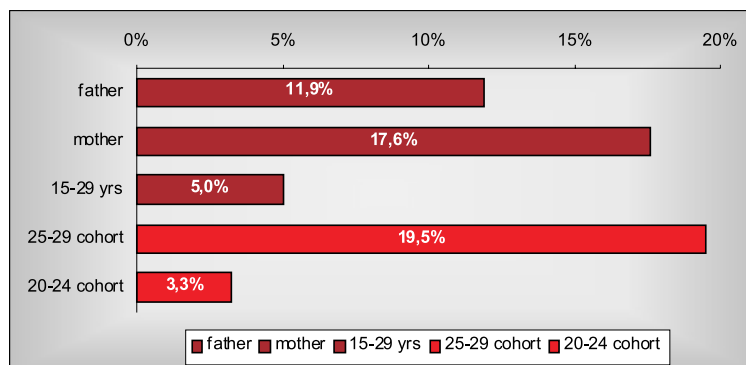


Figure 6. Index of Dissimilarity
[MOZAIK 2001: Ukraine Cohort and Generational Differences]

Compared to the parents' educational attainment the inequalities seem to be lower, as the index shows 11.9% by fathers and about 17.6% by mothers to be changed in order to achieve equal results. The dissimilarity index of the young people is much lower, about 5%. Looking at the change between the two generations the index shows a substantial decrease, as it has fallen from 19.5% by the 25–29-year-olds to 3.3% by the 20–24-year-olds.

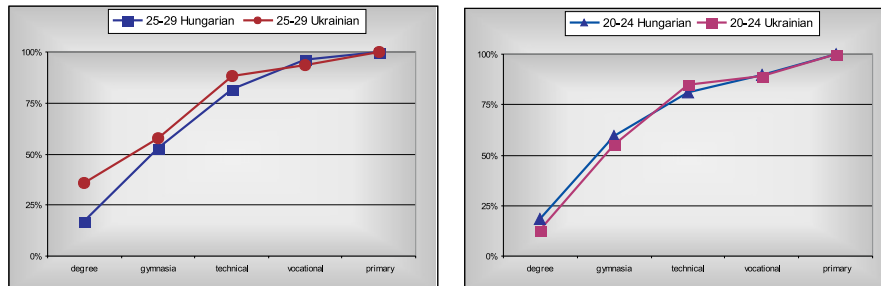


Figure 7. Cumulative Attainment by Age-Cohorts [MOZAIK 2001: Ukrainian Sample]

A pattern similar to that of Romania emerges by looking at the differences in attainment over time. The educational expansion seems to have shifted the preference from technical schools towards gymnasia and affected more the majority than the minority, which had already a high number of young people in gymnasia.

Table 5. The Current Labor Market Activity of Ukrainian Youth [MOZAIK 2001: Ukrainian Sample]

		studying	working	inactive	unemployed
Ukraine	Hungarian	29.2%	46.2%	14.2%	10.4%
	Ukrainian	40.0%	47.4%	12.1%	0.5%

As regards the current labor market activity the majority is characterized by high levels of students while most of the minority youngsters are employed. Contrary to Romania, however, the unemployment affects only the minority youth, 10% of the 15–29-year-olds being unemployed.

Serbia

The Serbian educational system offers Hungarian language instruction in 83 primary schools as a result about 80% of Hungarian pupils can learn in their mother tongue. There is Hungarian instruction offered in 30 technical schools and there are 8 Hungarian gymnasia as well. The secondary schools are not 100% Hungarian as they teach some subjects in Serbian language. Only 69% of the Hungarian students enrolled in secondary schools can study in their mother tongue.

As for HE education there is no Hungarian university or college in Serbia, only the Technical College is organizing Hungarian group-education in limited subjects. A significant part of the students (35%) pursue their studies in Hungary. It is important to note that the war substantially affected the Hungarian population in Serbia. Many students left to study in Hungary and on the overall number of migration (50,000 people) the educated were overrepresented. The large proportion of teachers leaving the country badly affected the Hungarian language education as well.

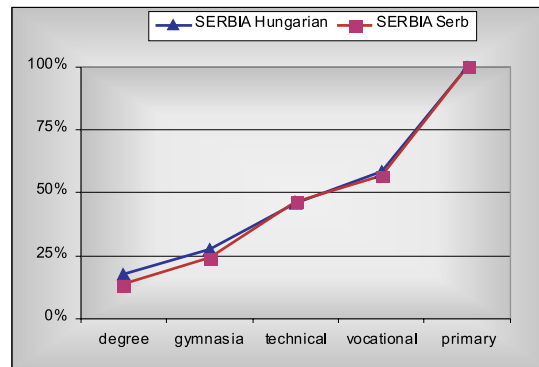


Figure 8. Cumulative Educational Attainment
[MOZAIK 2001: Serbian Sample]

The case of Serbia is not different from the previous ones as the cumulative attainment of both groups is very similar. Looking at the educational attainment of parents the index of dissimilarity shows us considerable inequalities, as 19.6% of the fathers' and 12.9% of mothers' attainment has differed. However, now Serbia has the lowest dissimilarity index between minority and majority young people which is only about 4.2%. Comparing the dissimilarities between age cohorts we experience decreasing inequalities as the index is lessened from 6.3% to 4.5%.

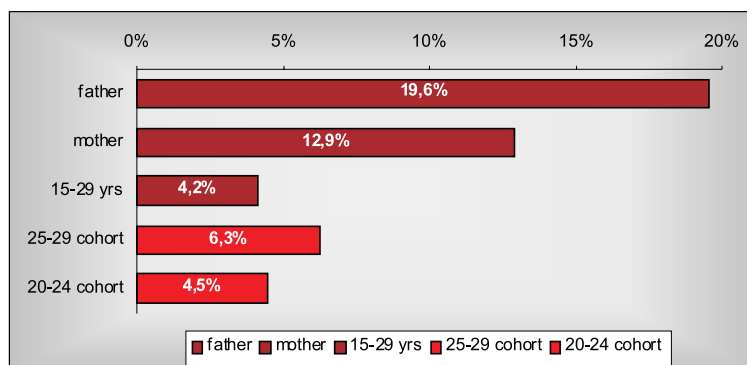


Figure 9. Index of Dissimilarity
[MOZAIK 2001: Serbia Cohort and Generational Differences]

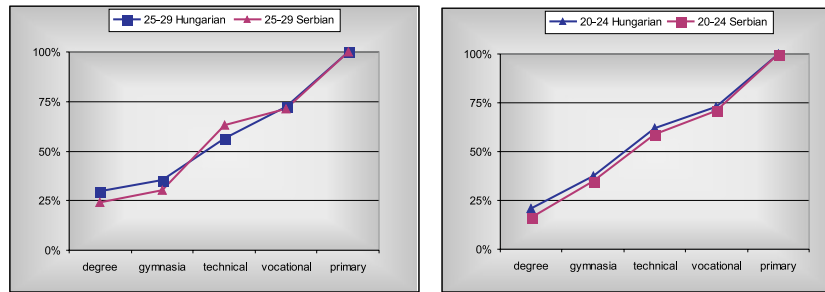


Figure 10. Cumulative Attainment by Age-Cohorts
[MOZAIK 2001: Serbian Sample]

As regards the general trends in educational expansion the proportion of students in vocational schools was reduced in favor of technical schools and gymnasia in both samples. The minority youngsters, however, seem to retain their advantage in educational attainments over the majority youth by the younger generation as well. The current activity of young people does not indicate any inequalities as the same proportion of the minority and majority youngsters is studying, employed or unemployed.

Table 6. The Current Labor Market Activity of Serbian Youth
[MOZAIK 2001]

		studying	working	inactive	unemployed
Serbia	Hungarian	39.6%	48.7%	6.2%	5.6%
	Serbian	40.1%	47.2%	7.8%	4.9%

Slovakia

According to data from 2003 there were 260 Hungarian and 35 bilingual primary schools, 25 Hungarian gymnasia, 8 Hungarian and 17 bilingual technical secondary schools and 18 Hungarian and 7 bilingual vocational secondary schools. The total number of schools (including kindergartens) with Hungarian language instruction was 584, and an additional 201 schools offered bilingual education.

Though there were no Hungarian universities, only 2 institutions offered instruction in Hungarian language for minority teacher profession. So the Hungarian students had to study in Slovak language or go to Hungary. As for Hungary they were facing the curricula differences at entrance exams and financial problems, as they were considered foreign students who are supposed to pay fees. There were only few, about 10 scholarships per year available for studies in Hungary. Regarding the admittance into Slovak universities there were difficulties at the entrance exam which they had to take in Slovak language even if coming from Hungarian secondary schools and the situation was worsened by the high possibility of discriminative processes at admittance.

To answer the growing demand of minority population for higher education after the regime change some Hungarian HE institutions opened centres in Slovakia with staff from Hungary for the minority students, offering free education in the mother tongue in the form of part time studies. However they were not a real solution as the Slovak state did not acknowledge their diplomas at all.³ Finally, in the year 2004, a new university was opened in Komárom – mostly based on the previously opened centres – offering instruction in Hungarian language in the field of education, economics and theology, accredited by the Slovakian state.

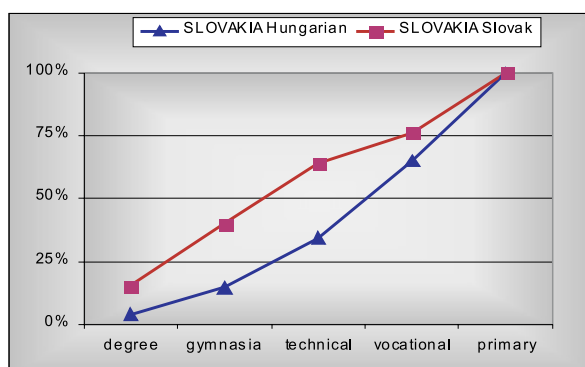


Figure 11. Cumulative Educational Attainment
[MOZAIK 2001: Slovakian Sample]

Looking at attainment Slovakia proves to be an absolute outlier, as the minority does not seem to follow the previous pattern at all. There are significant inequalities between the attainment of the minority and the majority youngsters; however, the wide gap could have already been attributed to the attainment level of the parents. Calculating the index of dissimilarity confirms our assumptions, as about one third of the parents would need to change their educational level in order to close the gap. Surprisingly, in contrast to the previous experience, where there were gender differences in attainment, in Slovakia fathers and mothers are disadvantaged at the same rate as the index is 28% for fathers and 29.2% for mothers.

Obviously, these differences are visible on the children's attainment as well, as the dissimilarity between the Hungarian and Slovak youth is 29.7%, so the inequalities are transmitted from parents to children. We can still compare the trend over time, which is not promising either. The inequalities between the majority and minority in the Slovakian sample seem to be growing rather than decreasing as the index has slightly risen from 43.7% to 451%.

3 In certain cases the students had to take a 2-year-long fee-paying course in Slovak language after finishing the programme in Hungarian if they wanted to accredit their degrees.

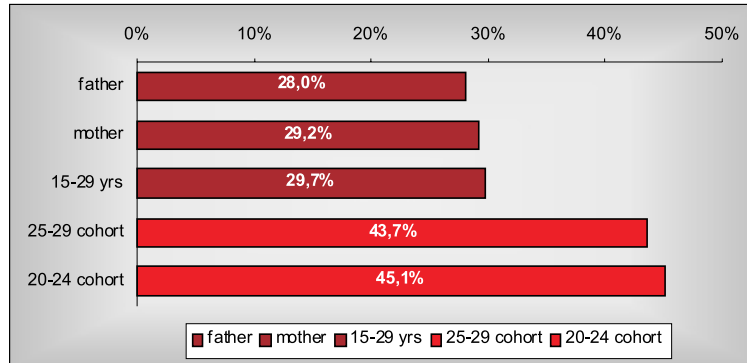


Figure 12. Index of Dissimilarity
[MOZAIK 2001: Slovakia Cohort And Generational Differences]

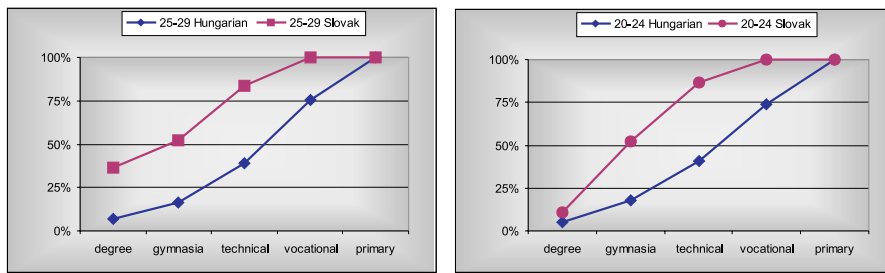


Figure 13. Cumulative Attainment by Age Cohorts
[MOZAIK 2001: Slovakian Sample]

The current activity of young people is dominated by labor, as almost half of the Hungarians and Slovaks are employed. There is a large gap between them regarding the currently studying people where only one quarter of Hungarians belong to this group having the lowest proportion regarding all the countries in the sample. The proportion both of the inactive and unemployed is double that of the majority, having the highest proportion of unemployed, 18% in the dataset.

Table 7. The Current Labor Market Activity of the Slovakian Youth
[MOZAIK 2001]

		studying	working	inactive	unemployed
Slovakia	Hungarian	25.6%	44.3%	12.5%	17.6%
	Slovak	42.3%	43.6%	5.9%	8.2%

Summary (Test of Hypotheses)

The analysis aimed at discovering the features of minority attainment in the countries with substantial Hungarian population. The comparisons made on the basis of cumulative attainment were in favor of the third hypothesis, namely that the national minorities tend to comply with the majority with respect to advancement through the educational system. This was supported by the results of the logistic regression as well.

As for the logistic regression I included into the model both the country effect and the minority effect based on the last two hypotheses (*Table 8*), and tested the interaction effects as well. The country effect in this case refers to the likelihood of enrolling into academic secondary school, while the minority effect reports whether being minority has an effect.

The regression confirmed the significance of the country effect(s), especially for the first two transitions (see the Appendix for additional transition). There was no significant minority effect by the first transition, but even by later transitions it was largely explained solely by the minority effect in Slovakia. From the interaction effects (only) the interaction between the minority and Slovakia was significant in all transitions considered which signaled the significance of the educational disadvantage of Slovakian Hungarians but none of the others.⁴

Taken that there was no minority effect at work in the countries analyzed, but rather a statistically significant country effect, it supports the 3rd hypothesis on the minorities trying to progress in the society in which they live.

Furthermore, the index of dissimilarity of the parental generations showed substantial inequalities between the minority and majority parents in Ukraine and Serbia, in Romania having the smallest and Slovakia (with 30%) the largest gap. Comparing the transmittance of inequalities from the parents to children we can estimate decreasing inequalities in Ukraine and Serbia, somewhat constant (but still low) in Romania but the data show persistent inequalities in Slovakia.

The additional hypothesis which predicted decreasing inequalities due to the expansion of the school system was also supported by the data. Comparing the two generations of minority and majority young people there was a significant decrease in dissimilarity, in Ukraine having the most rapid change.

4 See *Appendix* for full details.

Table 8. Enrolment Into Academic Secondary (Instead of Vocational)

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Country Effect	Ukraine	0.549*** (0.087)	0.515*** (0.087)	0.712*** (0.149)
	Serbia	-0.503*** (0.065)	-0.525*** (0.065)	-0.450*** (0.117)
	Slovakia	-0.566*** (0.065)	-0.588*** (0.066)	0.287* (0.121)
Minority Effect	minority vs. majority		-0.316*** (0.055)	0.043 (0.088)
Interaction Effects	Minority x Ukraine			-0.254 (0.184)
	Minority x Serbia			-0.770 (0.141)
	Minority x Slovakia			-1.280*** (0.146)
Constant		0.352*** (0.039)	0.585*** (0.057)	0.321*** (0.075)
Chi-square		211.683***	244.508***	333.956***
Df		3	4	7
-2 Log likelihood		8725.825	8693.000	8603.553
N		6463	6463	6463

Reference group: Romania.

Level of significance: *** p=0.000, ** p=0.001, * p<0.005

Table 9. Overview of Changes in Dissimilarity

	Index of dissimilarity		current index of 15–29-year-olds	cohort changes	
	father	mother		20–24	25–29
Romania	6.8%	3.5%	7.0%	5.3%	12.3%
Ukraine	11.9%	17.6%	5.0%	3.3%	19.5%
Serbia	19.6%	12.9%	4.2%	4.5%	6.3%
Slovakia	28.0%	29.2%	29.7%	45.1%	43.7%

Large and persistent inequalities were found only in Slovakia, which was an outlier in all respects. There was the largest gap between the minority and majority parents which, however, was not reduced by their children. Even the cohort comparisons were showing rather constant disadvantage which was not possible to reduce through the changes related to the expansion of the educational system.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results presented here do not support Ogbu's theory of oppositional culture. According to the data the Hungarian minority as an involuntary group is not significantly disadvantaged with respect to educational attainment in most of the countries considered. Even they rather seem to catch up with the majority i.e. the gap between majority and minority seems to be closing.

The young Hungarians seem to value education more than their ancestors; they probably see it as a way to social and (in some cases) geographical mobility. Higher education studies in Hungary might be an example of the applied strategies to achieve these aims. For young people in Ukraine and Serbia or in more disadvantaged areas of Romania education can be the only way to getting out from the economic hardship or the ethnic conflict which they experience at home.

The theory of oppositional culture could work only in the case of Hungarians in Slovakia, who experienced large inequalities in the past that still persist. Not only were the inequalities passed on from parents to their children, but surprisingly, the educational expansion does not seem to have affected their educational attainment at all, which calls for further analysis.

APPENDIX

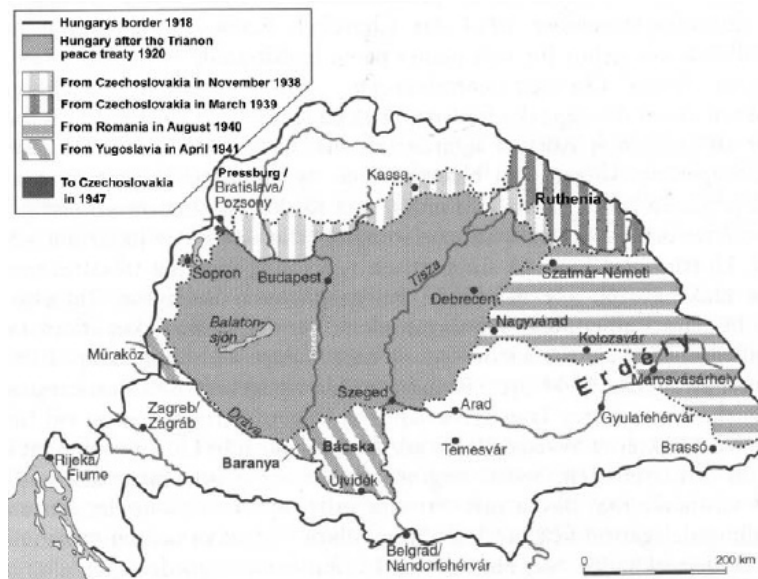


Figure 14. Hungary after the Trianon Treaty

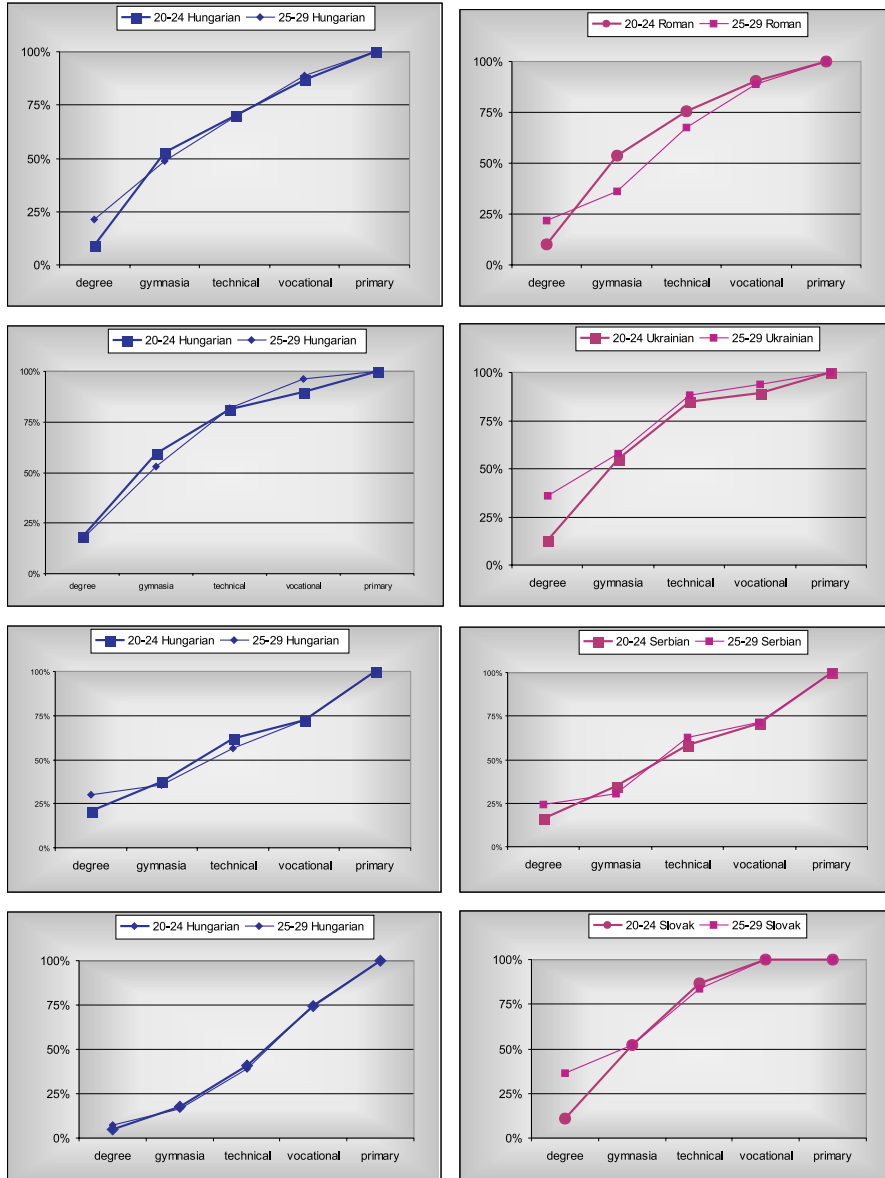


Figure 15. Within Group Differences by Age Cohorts In Educational Attainment

The Logistic Regressions on Separate Transitions

Table 10. First Transition: Enrolment into Any Secondary Given a Completed Primary

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Country Effect	Ukraine	0.202* (0.095)	0.194* (0.095)	0.282 (0.159)
	Serbia	-0.715*** (0.068)	-0.720*** (0.068)	-0.683*** (0.122)
	Slovakia	-0.214* (0.071)	-0.218* (0.071)	0.250 (0.135)
Minority Effect	minority vs. majority		-0.073 (0.059)	0.106 (0.098)
Interaction Effects	Minority x Ukraine			-0.111 (0.199)
	Minority x Serbia			-0.038 (0.147)
	Minority x Slovakia			-0.663*** (0.160)
Constant		1.028*** (0,044)	1.081*** (0.062)	0.951*** (0.083)
Chi-square		140.676***	142.191***	162.564
Df		3	4	7
-2 Log likelihood		7840.220	7838.706	7818.332
N		6463	6463	6463

Reference group: Romania

Level of significance: *** p=0.000, ** p=0.001, * p<0.005

Table 11. Enrolment in HE Given with Completed Secondary

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Country Effect	Ukraine	0.107 (0.113)	0.076 (0.114)	0.275 (0.179)
	Serbia	0.207* (0.089)	0.191* (0.089)	-0.100 (0.167)
	Slovakia	-0.589*** (0.110)	-0.606*** (0.110)	0.073 (0.162)
Minority Effect	Minority vs. Majority		-0.257** (0.077)	-0.119 (0.124)
Interaction Effects	Minority x Ukraine			-0.321 (0.233)
	Minority x Serbia			0.438* (0.197)
	Minority x Slovakia			-1.289*** (0.234)
Constant		-1.832*** (0.056)	-1.649*** (0.078)	-1.746*** (0.105)
Chi-square		53.854***	64.768***	117.214
Df		3	4	7
-2 Log likelihood		5023.554	5012.640	4960.194
N		6463	6463	6463

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