

The Social Distance and Structural Social Capital of Croatian Students

Abstract

Along the lines of Putnam's (2008) findings of positive correlation between social capital and tolerance, this article is aimed at examining the relationship between the social involvement of Croatian students as a structural dimension of social capital and the level of social distance towards the main ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia. The empirical data was collected in 2010 on a representative national sample of 2000 regular students from all universities in Croatia. For the purpose of this article, only respondents of Croat ethnicity were included in the statistical analysis (N=1618). The structural dimension is operationalized in associational membership and volunteering and the expressed readiness for some form of civic action. Associational membership alone does not imply low expression of social distance; hence these data do not entirely support Putnam's findings. The results however do suggest that the type of association and readiness for civic action are connected to the level of acceptance of ethnic groups, so it may be said that our hypothesis was only partially confirmed.

Key words: structural social capital, social ethnic distance, voluntary associations, university students, Croatia

Anja Gvozdanić
Institute for Social Research
Amruševa 11
10000 Zagreb
Croatia
anja@idi.hr

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Introduction

Social capital is important in forming the foundations of the socio-political order, which gives power to voluntary collective behaviour, and generates "the good will and understanding vital for peaceful resolution of conflicts" (Newton, 2004: 301). It is a characteristic of both collectives and individuals (Putnam, 2008) and consists of structural and cultural dimension. The former encompasses horizontal networks of association and the latter is comprised of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity (Newton, 2004; Putnam, 2008; Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009). Putnam (2008) emphasizes the importance of membership in various social networks since it establishes norms of reciprocity, eases communication and information flow related to individuals and their reputation. In this process, members create trust and consequently the foundation for their future cooperation. Alongside the internal impact which comprises benefits of improving cooperation among members, social engagement has a certain amount of external impact on immediate social environment. In surveying dynamics of social capital in USA, Putnam (2008) has found a positive correlation between membership in voluntary organizations and openness towards "others" in terms of support for attitudes regarding gender equality and racial integration. Along those lines, this article examines the connection between the social engagement of students as a structural dimension of social capital and the level of acceptance of ethnic groups, which comprised the majority people groups of the former Yugoslavia.

Voluntary associations have been ascribed with the role of "schools of democracy". Newton (2004: 304) says that they "teach citizens civic virtues and trust, moderation, compromise and reciprocity, as well as the capacity for democratic discussion and organization", by establishing bonds of equal, horizontal face-to-face cooperation. Inspired by Putnam, Cigler and Joslyn (2002) have tested the hypothesis that group membership has a positive effect on political tolerance. They have identified a significant role of group membership and multiple membership in detecting the level of political tolerance towards non-conformist groups, such as homosexuals, atheists, militants and racists. The results, therefore, confirmed Putnam's assumption that multiple membership which represents density of bonds, contribute to more tolerant attitudes (Cigler and Joslyn 2002). In this respect, Offe and Fuchs (2002) believe that society with vibrant associational life enables social and moral resources to be easily transferred. Values and skills learned through face-to-face interaction in voluntary associations produce social effects that are beyond their formally declared social goals. In other words, in their work and effects, associations become an integral part of the democratic political culture, and amongst other things, provide citizens with feeling of power in relation to the paternalistic and authoritative state (ibid).

In a normative sense, the consequences of social capital are not uniform. The proportions of quantity and quality of social capital dimensions (networks, general trust and norms) form its specific types which Putnam (2008) calls bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital is characteristic of groups striving for homogeneity and strengthening of identity, with high levels of trust among its members and high levels of distrust towards non-members. Since it does not support the open principles of civiness (which include membership by choice) it is inherently exclusive towards non-members (Offe and Fuchs, 2002). In other words, bonding social capital expresses a specific reciprocity and particular trust. On the other hand, bridging social capital is characterized by connecting socially different groups and identities, through general social trust and general norms of reciprocity towards non-members or those who do not share a specific identity (Putnam, 2008). If an association lacks in bridging social capital whilst creating strong bonding social capital, we refer to the "dark sides" of social capital, which may be found in many racist and similar groups (Putnam, 2008; van Deth, 2010), that are driven by anticivic and antidemocratic principles.

Moreover, social groups may be so big that majority of its members is unable to interact face-to-face however they generate social capital. For instance, ethnic groups. According to one of the definitions of ethnicity, it is "an involuntary group of people who share the same culture, or the descendants of such people who identify themselves (and/or others identify them) as people who belong to the same involuntary group" (Mesić, 2006: 274 according to Isajiw, 1979: 25). The question is how do groups with low degree of face-to-face interaction and cooperation create social capital. Wollebaek and Selle (2002) respond with the theory of imagined communities developed by B. Anderson (1990: 18) which says that a nation, and here we could add - an ethnic group - is primarily conceived as a *community* "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." (Anderson, 1990: 18). However, the development of social capital in an ethnic group is also influenced by the wider social context and cultural determinants.

The latter are represented by valuesⁱ for which Welzel, Inglehart and Deutsch (2005) believe are in the foundation of a collective action. In other words, attributes of social capital and its uses are determined by dominant social values.

At the beginning of the 1990's, especially during and after the war in Croatia between the Croats and the Serbs and Montenegrins and after Croat-Bosniak conflict in Bosnia, strong bonding social capital was formed within these ethnic groups. Here, the focus is on the Croatian case. The foundational values of this social capital type were embedded in national exclusiveness, whose dynamics along with other value-political orientations during 25 year period (1985-2010) are studied by Sekulić (2011)ⁱⁱ. The author

states that in Croatia in 1985 the value orientation of national exclusiveness was more pronounced than in 1989, shortly before the war. After the war ended, in 1996 values of nationalism got considerably stronger. Since then, they remained relatively stable with stagnation and low-level variations in 2010 (ibid). Nationalism, along with religiosity forms a set of traditional values which was generally highly supported and accepted. Namely, during the transition period in Croatia, a process of re-traditionalization of the society was detected (ibid)ⁱⁱⁱ. Moreover, "ethnic homogenization" also occurred and was reflected in a relative increase in the number of Croats in the total population, with a simultaneous decrease of the Serb minority^{iv} by about two thirds (ibid).

Radicalised ethnic relations, war and socioeconomically unfavourable circumstances were characteristics of a society in which today's young people spent their childhood. In terms of their values, they strongly support those that are typical for their age (15-29): hedonism and values relating to social affirmation. Also, in comparison to older respondents they show fewer tendencies towards traditional value forms (Ilišin, 2011). Young people, says Ilišin (2011) largely accept liberal-democratic values and in that sense, their democratic potential is stronger than that of older respondents. However, the same research indicates the existence of stable and undisturbed generational continuity of value transmission (ibid). Recent findings regarding Croatian citizens' attitudes towards cultural differences support these claims (Mesić and Bagić, 2011). Namely, the variable of age, as a predictor on the scale of cultural exclusivity is found insignificant which opposes the conclusions of other surveys which detected that the young are more tolerant in comparison to older respondents (Ilišin, 2005; Ilišin, 2011). However, it should be pointed that the process of society's retraditionalization has strengthened the traditional orientations among certain proportion of the young, as well as that "polarization occurred between tradition and modernist oriented Croatian young people" (Ilišin, 2008: 225). As for the expression of social ethnic distance in young people, although it is relatively weaker with regard to that of the older respondents it is still quite high (Radin, 2005). The results indicate the persistence of prejudice, which has been insufficiently overcome primarily towards members of main ethnic groups that once comprised Yugoslavia (ibid).

It is assumed that at the beginning of the 1990's a humanitarian crisis caused the strengthening of social solidarity (Bežovan, 2003) among Croats, which was certainly part of pronounced bonding social capital. But in the middle of the 1990's, as a result of economic turmoil, privatization and transformation, as well as the resulting social middle class impoverishment and erosion, initial solidarity weakened and was redirected towards primary groups (ibid), that is the immediate family and relatives. Nevertheless, during the war period foundations of today's civil society and freedom of association were established.

Civil society and voluntary associations in Croatia, however, developed their work with the help of foreign donors and organizations until the second half of the 1990's when some associations terminated their work due to financial support reduction (ibid). Today, official register lists more than 44 000 associations, but it is estimated that only 9 000 of them are active, and mostly being sporting (35%), cultural (15%) and economic (10%) types of organizations. The ones for entertainment and leisure, religious and similar activities account for 1 to 4% of the total number^v. Most of associations, (apart from charities and those whose survival is inseparable from voluntary work), according to the same source, do not have any regular activities which would lead to an increase in membership. Regarding voluntary work, an increasing number of associations uses the advantages of volunteer engagement, but only 15% of them continuously work with volunteers, whilst 68% engage volunteers ad hoc when necessary (ibid). Although this text is not aimed at analysing the potential of the actual associations, they should be shortly defined. On the basis of the research, Bežovan and Zrinščak (2007a: 172-175) determined strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary civil society in Croatia with focus on associations. The strengths include existing associations' human resources, available financial support from the state and the economy, quality work in some areas such as empowering marginal groups and meeting their needs, and in promotion of environmental protection. Regarding the informal forms of involvement, charitable donations are increasing. The weaknesses of associations in Croatia are numerous, but according to mentioned authors, they particularly include: regional inequality (associations are mainly located in urban areas), their underdeveloped mutual network connections and cooperation, members' low level of general trust, poor visibility in the media and lack of professionalism in their activities and cooperation. Moreover, associations are not immune to corruption and dependence on party politics, whereby their influence on public policies is modest, dialogue with the state is limited and the approach to problems is rather reactive instead of active (ibid). Although the civil society in Croatia in general does not have a strong influence on social trends, it may have a transformational role on an individual level.

This is followed by question regarding associations' potential in overcoming social distance particularly towards members of different ethnicity. The democratic society assumes the dominance of bridging, inclusive social capital^{vi} which establishes relations of trust among people irrespective of socioeconomic or cultural as well as ethnic background. Therefore we are interested in detecting the structural dimension of bridging social capital among students and whether it is related to the level of social distance towards individual ethnic groups in Croatia. Since this article relies on Putnam's research (2008) and other empirical findings, we hypothesize that there is a positive correlation between higher level of social engagement and higher level of acceptance of ethnic groups.

Methodology

The representative sample of 2000 regular students of all universities in Croatia was stratified according to gender, university, the field of science and the year of the study. The national survey was conducted in 2010 as part of the Institute for Social Research project entitled: *Croatian Students in the European Context: the Coming Social Elite*, and it covered a wide range of research topics (political opinions, social economic status, family, technology, risky behaviour, education, aspirations etc.). Since we are examining social distance of the ethnic type, the statistical analysis includes respondents who declared themselves as Croats (in an answer to an open type question on national self-identification) N=1618. The rest of the sample is comprised of 333 or 16.7% who haven't declared their ethnicity, and 49 or 2.5% are of other ethnical origin. In defining the structural dimension of social capital, we examined the behavioural component related to formal association activity and the readiness for social participation. Firstly, respondents were asked to indicate the organizations they were members of and in which they had already volunteered (political parties, organizations for protection of human rights, organizations for protection of women's rights, peacemaking organizations, organizations for environmental protection, sports clubs or groups, or artistic groups, youth associations, students' associations). According to Welzel, Inglehart and Deutsch (2005) membership in a voluntary organization remains the only empirical indicator of social capital upon which all researchers agree. However, mentioned authors notice that there is a general lack in research of informal or non-institutional forms of action such as boycotts, petitions, strikes etc. The latter differ from institutional involvement in terms of their "challenging" nature towards the elite and its decisions, but also "indicate the effectiveness of networks in producing collective action" (ibid, 2005: 124). Therefore the analysis includes a set of 15 assertions describing a level of readiness on scale from 1 to 4 for certain political and civil forms of action in society (1=I am not at all prepared, 2=I am mainly unprepared, 3=I am mainly prepared, 4=I am completely prepared). For the needs of descriptive analysis and t-test, we recoded "I am not prepared at all" and "I am mainly unprepared" into "I am not prepared", and "I am mainly prepared" and "I am completely prepared" into "I am prepared". In order to establish the level of (in)tolerance towards ethnic groups, we used social distance scale, that is adjusted form of the Bogardus Scale^{vii} as it does not contain negative relationships towards ethnic groups, such as exclusion from the country etc. (Radin, 2005). The scale predicts different forms of relationships from the closest to the most distant level of closeness: marriage or close kinship (7), performance of leadership functions in political life of the subject's country (6), socializing and visiting (5), superintendence at work (4), cooperation at work (3), being neighbours (2), permanent life in the subject's country (1). This way we examined the attitudes of young Croat respondents towards

ethnicities from the former Yugoslav republics, who nowadays have the status of national minorities in Croatia (Albanians, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Slovenes and Serbs). In analysis of the data we used SPSS 17 for univariant (percentage) and bivariant (t-test) analysis methods.

Results and Discussion

Research on young people using a nationally representative sample (Ilišin and Radin, 2002; Ilišin, 2005; Ilišin and Radin 2007) indicate their heterogeneity regarding acceptance of different social values whereby social-professional status emerged as an important stratification factor. Students, as a subgroup of young people, are more liberal and have demonstrated a higher level of political socialization than other young people (pupils, the unemployed and the employed) (Ilišin, 2005). Students, besides being part of the university community and consequently being institutionally supported in various forms of formal and informal horizontal associations (Offe and Fuchs, 2002), are more often members of associations than other young people (Ilišin, 2005). Despite this, results relating to membership show that a little more than half of the students in our sample are not members of any associations at all^{viii} (51.7%). Moreover, 64.3% of them have not volunteered in any association, which further indicates relatively poor spread of the tendency for formal associational behaviour and the volunteering practice. Respondents are most often members of sporting organizations (21.4%), student associations (19.8%), cultural-artistic groups (12.6%) and youth associations (11.4%) while almost 10% of them have joined political parties^{ix}. The rest of associations gather less than 5% of respondents each (human rights associations, women's rights, environmental and peacemaking organizations). Although volunteer engagement, a phenomenon which is also examined, does not necessarily imply formal membership, Offe and Fuchs (2002) consider it to be important part of civic involvement. Namely, they define it as "giving services to those who need those services, motivated by that need and by meeting it, and not primarily for material gain or as an instrument of career advancement" (Offe and Fuchs, 2002:197). In comparison to number of members, there are fewer respondents who had or who were having experience as volunteers, and most of them have been involved as volunteers in student associations (13.3%), sporting organizations (11.1%) cultural and artistic groups (10.3%) and youth associations (10%)^x. Hence, students are mostly engaged as members or volunteers in associations which cannot be described as typical representatives of the civil society that stemmed from the period of democratic transition, since those associations existed and gathered members in the period of socialism as well. The least significantly represented associations among our respondents are those that are traditionally regarded to be the source of bridging social capital, such as organizations for the protection of human

rights, women's rights and peacemaking organizations. However, the division of associations into strictly bonding and bridging social capital resource does not imply their exclusivity in reality. In practice, an association may be attributed with both (Putnam, 2008), so we should treat the forms of social capital as ideal-types. "In short, bonding and bridging are not 'either-or' categories into which social networks can be neatly divided, but 'more or less' dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital." (ibid: 27). Multiple membership, as another indicator of structural social capital, is relatively poorly present as well, since those who are members and volunteers of two or more organizations comprise one fifth of the sample (Table 1).

- Table 1. -

As another part of the structural dimension of social capital, we examined the readiness for some form of civic behaviour which also contains non-institutionalized "elite-challenging actions" (Welzel et al, 2005).

- Graph 1 -

In contrast to voluntary organizations or associations, in which formal membership may create permanent relationships among individuals, social participation of this type is temporary and situation dependent (ibid). However, voting in elections cannot be included in this category since it represents traditional formal civic activity and is also one of the most widely among students. It is followed by signing petitions, which certainly has the character of an "elite-challenging action" and more than three quarters of the sample are ready to do this, whereby it represents a highly accepted informal political activity. Less than half the respondents are prepared to take part in all the other activities, whereby more traditional activities (such as participation in associations, collecting money and making flyers) are found in the first part of the lower half of the scale. About one third of respondents expresses their readiness to initiate and organize civic action and initiatives and the same number were ready for some form of communication, whether with public or media as well as foreign or international organization they believe could resolve a problem effectively. Various forms of making contact with politicians and politics are at the bottom of the scale, which indicates the students' steady avoidance and distrust towards this profession.

Social distance towards ethnic groups who constituted the former Yugoslavia

Viegas (2007) deems that attitudes towards political exclusion and social discrimination may arise under the influence of socialization, through formation of habitus and under the influence of generalized problems and crises which assume a feeling of threat. Iglíč (2010) says that tolerance towards others stems from a personal acceptance of the other. Referring to Stouffer (Iglíč 2010, according to Stouffer 1955) she finds an argument to support this assertion in the thesis that the affective aspect is necessary for the development of tolerance. It is part of a belief structure that "promotes tolerance because it is a way of experiencing others as benevolent and not threatening" (ibid: 720). Precisely the feeling of threat exploded in former Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990's. The reasons and circumstances for the destruction of proclaimed Yugoslav "brotherhood and unity" are beyond the subject of this article. However it is necessary to point out that the negative radicalization of ethnic relations as well as deep ethnic distance occurred especially between Croats and Serbs, and particularly in parts of the country that were temporary under Serb rule (Kardov, 2006; Babić, 2010).

According to our data, today's students hold strong social distance as well. Graph 2 clearly shows that the line of greater acceptance, of course apart from Croats themselves, is surpassed by Bosniaks and Macedonians. The others are in the area of somewhat lower acceptance or a relatively strongly expressed social distance.

- Graph 2

These results as a whole are along the lines of previous youth research conducted in 1999 and 2004 (Baranović, 2002; Radin, 2005). The peoples of the former Yugoslavia were at the very bottom of the social distance scale and nations of Western Europe and USA (which are not presented here) at the very top. Baranović (2002) interprets the results using the situational factor of the war, whilst assuming that the extremely low position of the Macedonians and Albanians, who did not participate in war, was a case of the hierarchical principle. The principle gives greater value to nations of Western Roman Catholic provenance than those from Eastern, Orthodox and Islamic societies. However, Banovac and Boneta (2006) believe that there is no single explanation for social distance between individual ethnic groups. They base their conclusion on ethnic distance analysis in three regions of Croatia (Lika, Gorski kotar and Istria), which are characterised by different levels of social-economic development, various ethnic groups and an uneven intensity of war experience. Albanians, who were on the side of the Croats during the

war, are at the very bottom of the scale in all three regions, as they are in our research. Authors conclude that "it appears that the (un)acceptability of the Albanian minority is after all more strongly affected by socially visible cultural differences than their engagement during the war" (ibid: 43). Also their data do not support the thesis of the self-explanatory nature of the causal-effect relationship between conflict and ethnic distance, as it was common to expect, for example in the case of the distance between Serbs and Bosniaks. Moreover, a higher level of acceptance is expressed towards Bosniaks in relation to other ethnic groups, which conflicts with the level of re-traditionalization in the form of a "return" to Christian religiosity. So it may be said that religious differences do not play the role they may rationally be expected to play (ibid). The authors, giving an overview of several theories of ethnicity, state that the explanation is not to be found in any of them and because of the fluidity of ethnicity itself, reflected in many aspects of social life. However, the only thing that connects two regions (Istria and Gorski kotar), which in total express less social distance towards ethnic groups in relation to Lika, is the lack of national exclusivity value orientation (ibid), which, according to the previously discussed data is generally present in Croatian society.

Our students' social distance is visible in the relatively low readiness for close kinship and the relatively strong support for the most distant relationship towards the former Yugoslav people groups (Graphs 3 and 4). It is founded in the stable value framework of national exclusivity, which is fundamentally uncivic. The question that arises is whether the presence of this value framework can be "reduced" by structural social capital.

- Graph 3
- Graph 4

Is there a positive connection between social capital and social distance?

By using the t-test we established that there is no difference between those who are members of an association and those who are not in terms of social distance expressed, regardless of multiple membership. This is in contrast to the findings of Cigler and Joslyn (2002) who found increased political tolerance resulting from membership in a larger number of associations. Then, we presumed the difference between "ordinary members" and those who have volunteering experience in these associations. By using the t-test and ANOVA we established the same results as with membership variables. Nevertheless, comparison of members of individual types of associations to non-members shows the differences (Table 2). The analysis included associations of which more than 10% of the

respondents are members (student, sporting, cultural and artistic groups, political parties and youth organizations), and it appeared that there are significant differences between members and non-members of these associations, apart from youth organizations.

- Table 2

Members of student associations show significantly higher acceptance of Serbs while Macedonians are more accepted by members of cultural and artistic groups. Expression of social tolerance towards Albanians is significant in a negative direction by members of sports associations in comparison with non-members. Political parties members show significantly more distanced attitude towards all ethnic groups, apart from Croats ($t=3,230$; $p=0.000$) (which are not presented in the Table2). However, the lack of the data on the type of trust and values that each association cultivates, both in relationships to their own members and those who are not, limit the certainty of making general conclusions on relationship between social capital and tolerance. However, it is indicative that political parties, which, in relation to other associations, are hierarchical in structure and by definition create bonding social capital (but also taking into account their ideological and world-view differences), emerge as environments in which social distance is supported. Since sporting organizations have a stronger element of specific bonding social capital and nurture the value of competitiveness in relation to rival teams, we can presume that they have a lower capacity for creating bridging social capital towards "others".

Recent research on general population in Croatia shows that there is no correlation between memberships in associations in general and democratic political culture (Šalaj, 2011). These findings can be interpreted as a sign of associations' weak and ineffective socializing role (ibid, Bežovan and Zrinščak, 2007b). Also, they may point to what some authors have already emphasized, and that is the influence of the wider social context (Hooghe, 2003; Welzel et al, 2005; Iglič, 2010; Albacete, 2010) for effective socializing role as well as other social consequences derived from associational activities. In addition, it is necessary to take into account the ongoing debate about associations' socializing effects in relation to the self-selection of members (Hooghe, 2003). Hooghe (2003) reconciles these two approaches by applying the social theory of identity and concludes that voluntary associations are "subject to the dynamics of selection and adaptation" (Hooghe, 2003: 106). In other words, members join individual associations led by their own interests and values, then adapt and "socialize" within the association, which may give added strength to previously expressed values and interests (ibid). These findings point

to the need for caution when drawing conclusions about the (un)favourable consequences of socialization within individual types of associations.

Also, the findings suggest further research, based on the approach to associations as social context of specific dynamics "in which processes of building interpersonal trust and political influence and mobilization are responsible for the production of civic and uncivic orientations among members" (Iglič, 2010: 732). That is to say, associations in which members are linked by strong intra-group trust and generally low trust towards non-members reduce the total of social tolerance, despite possibly higher individual level of tolerance (Iglič, 2010). These types of associations are obviously not "schools of democracy" and are protagonists of the "dark side" of social capital (Iglič, 2010). Additionally, Iglič (2010) recognizes the differences between Eastern and Western European associations. The former are characterized by dominance of trust limited to co-members which decreases generalized trust in non-members and consequently negatively influencing social tolerance development in general (ibid). Therefore, alongside structural social capital, it is also important to include the cultural dimension that is aimed at exploring individual types of associations or meso-level research.

The second structural aspect of social capital analysed includes the differences in readiness for individual action in society aimed at resolving a specific problem. This aspect was also shown to be partially significant in relation to the expression of social distance.

- Table 3

Respondents who are willing to be involved in the work of civil organizations are significantly more accepting of all ethnic groups. Bosniaks, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Slovenes and Serbs are accepted significantly more by those who are ready to sign a petition but refuse to work in political parties. Those who would collect money for resolving a social problem are significantly more tolerant towards Macedonians and Slovenes, and those who would organize some form of civil action are more tolerant towards the latter. Students who are also ready for civil action and new civil initiatives are significantly more tolerant towards Albanians. In terms of significantly greater acceptance of Croats, or the ethnic group the respondents belong to themselves, two assertions showed a significant difference. Those who reject the option *Writing to politicians* ($t=2.882$, $p=0.004$) tend to express bonding social capital more within the ethnic group of Croats. Also those who express greater closeness with their own ethnic group reject the activity *Contacting international institutions and pointing out a specific problem*

in society ($t=2.716$, $p=0.007$). The latter result seems logical with regard to bonding social capital since this activity could be marked as disloyal behavior in relation to one's own nation. Briefly, respondents who are oriented towards informal civic forms of participation in society are shown to be more tolerant than others, especially in comparison with those who are ready to be involved in the work of political parties. Political parties again stand out as organizations whose values may be more exclusive than inclusive towards non-members.

Our results are similar to those of Welzel et al (2005) who showed that there is a positive connection between tolerance and two forms of involvement in the community on the individual level. Our findings are similar to theirs concerning the widespread assumption that "membership in a voluntary organization is closely linked with desirable civic attitudes, such as political interest, support for democratic ideals and humanist orientations, more than participation in elite-challenging actions. In fact, participation in elite-challenging action is more connected with aspects of civic orientation than membership in an association" (ibid: 140). On a societal level, their results indicate that informal participation in comparison to the measure of membership in associations, is more strongly linked with "good governance" (Welzel et al: 2005, 140). Thereby the process of substitution of formal by informal forms of participation in the community is recognized as a possibility by Cigler and Joslyn (2002). They are critical of Putnam, who fails to see that formal organizations, as a form of gathering people with similar interests, are losing their dominance and influence in society, and that are being replaced by new forms of civic engagement. However, when examining the presence of this trend, Welzel et al (2005) state that these two forms of participation co-exist in post-industrial societies and both of their social influence is not declining despite the somewhat stronger growth of informal forms in the period 1980 to 2000.

In conclusion, the hypothesis about positive relationship between (in)formal social participation and ethnic social distance has been partially confirmed. The analysis set the respondents in the interplay of bonding and bridging social capital. The first is an attribute of ethnic groups and by nature is involuntary, adopted by primary socialization and exclusive. The second is found in intermediate groups such as civil society organizations that are inclusive towards heterogeneous membership.

Almost 50% of respondents are members of associations, but the expressed readiness for civil action in society is relatively modest. Moreover, overall social distance towards former Yugoslavia's ethnicities is relatively highly expressed. Also, membership alone, even multiple, does not indicate civiness in the sense of low expression of social distance. Hence, these data do not support Putnam's assumption of the importance of associational "density" for higher social tolerance. On the other hand, when the type of

association and informal elite-challenging actions are taken into account, the differences in acceptance level of former Yugoslav ethnic groups do arise, especially between those with and without the tendency for civic action. According to our data, both types of social engagement, formal and informal, are potentially useful for social tolerance development in Croatia. However, wider social context and value systems should be considered since they can define orientation of social actions. Hence, it is necessary to undertake further research, especially of informal engagement, taking into consideration the goals of the action, the cultural dimension and the wider social context.

ⁱ The values are characterised by: desirability drawn from human needs and the demands of the social environment, stability which ensures the necessary continuity in the development of the individual and society (although changes in society may cause changes in the importance of certain values or the entire system of values), hierarchical character, or the degree of desirability of a particular value, the impact on behavioural, as well as cognitive and affective components of the interaction of individual, social and historical circumstances, making them malleable in time and space (Ilišin, 2011).

ⁱⁱ The samples analysed from 1990, 1996, 2004 and 2010 are representative of the population in Croatia older than 18 years, whilst the sample from 1985 covers the active population (for more see in Sekulić, 2011: 45).

ⁱⁱⁱ Croatian society today is a combination of traditionalism and liberalism (ibid).

^{iv} "If we were to look at the number of officially nationally recognized national minorities and ethnic communities (22), Croatia, alongside Ukraine, could be seen as one of the most multi-cultural countries in Europe (Mesić 2003: 165-166). But the entire minority corpus accounts for a relatively modest 7.5 percent of the population, and it actually halved according to the census of 2001 in relation to the pre-war national, ethnic structure. The largest part of that reduction relates to Serbs, whose share fell from 12.16 to 4.58 percent of the population of Croatia. No other minority exceeds half of one percent (Mesić and Bagić, 2011: 11-12).

^v Sustainability Index of OCD for 2011

http://transition.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/reports/2011/Croatia6-25_FORMATTED.pdf

^{vi} It should be mentioned that on an institutional level the rights of national minorities are guaranteed by the Constitution of the RC and various laws such as the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, the Act on the Use of the Language and Script of National Minorities and the Resolution on Protection of the Constitutional Order and Minority Rights (Topić, 2009).

^{vii} According to Bogardus, social distance relates to the levels and degrees of understanding and the feelings with which persons experience other persons ... it is a simple means providing for an appropriate interpretation of various levels of understanding and feelings which exist in social situations (Banovac and Boneta, 2006: 28, according to Bogardus, 1925:299).

^{viii} According to Šalaj (2011) 48% of Croatian citizens are members of at least one association.

^{ix} Political parties are not in the true sense a source of bridging social capital since they assume a dominant vertical relationship of power, and less horizontal ties of cooperation.

^x Environment 7.6%, political party 5.4%, peacemaking organisation 5.1%, organisation for protection of human rights 5.0%, organisation for women's rights 1.9%.

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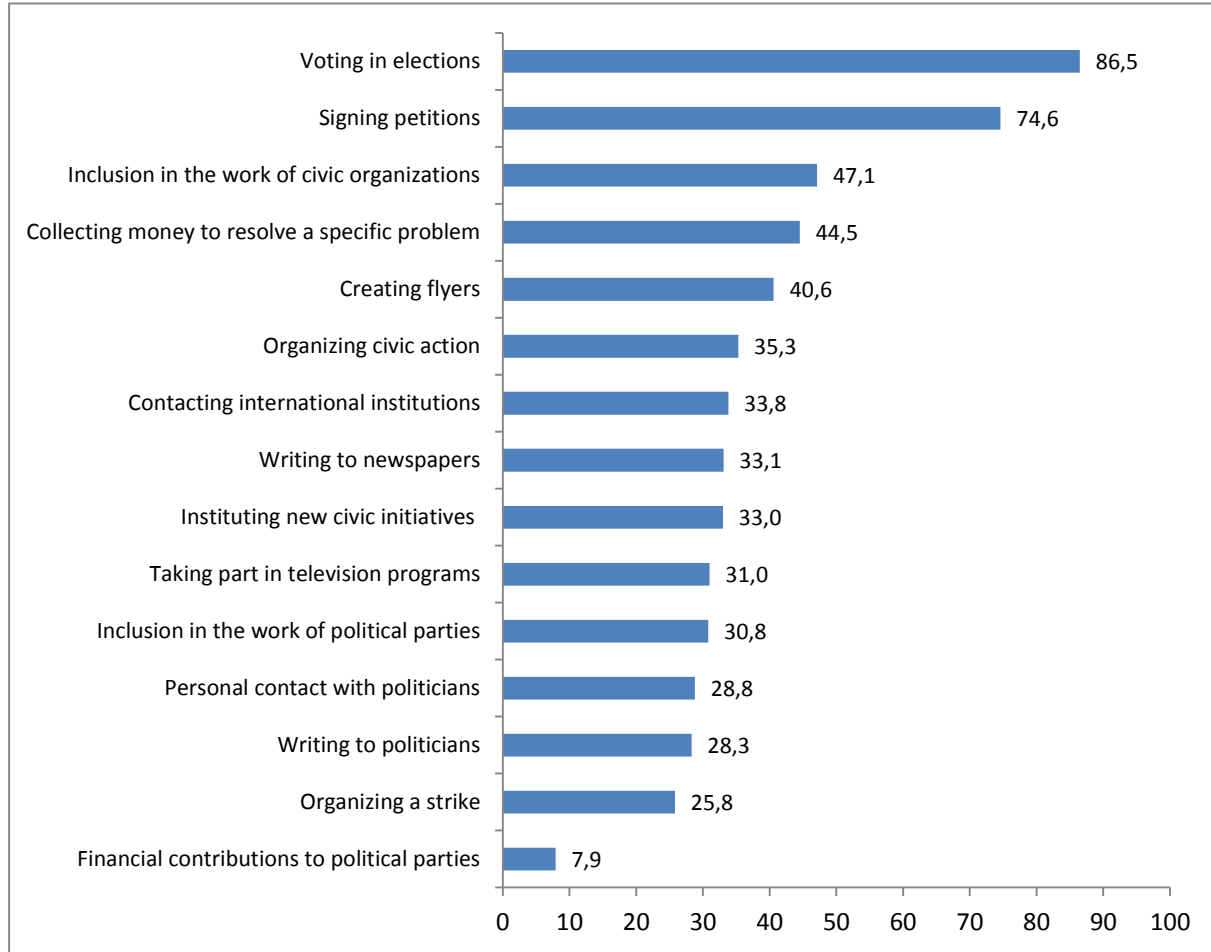
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Tables and graphs

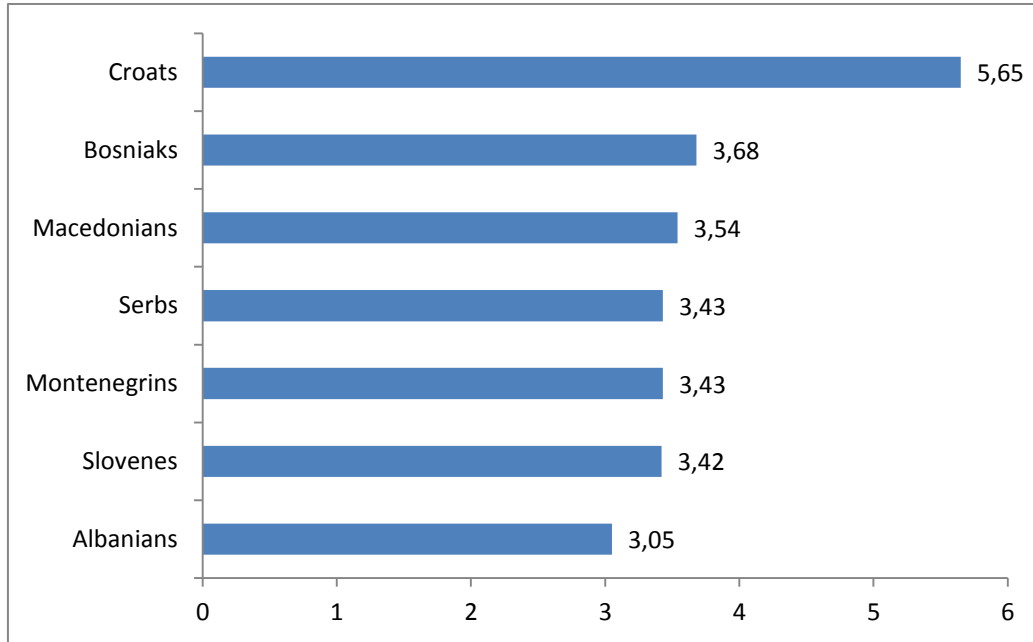
Table 1. The percentage of respondents in terms of the number of associations in which they are members or volunteers.

	Members (%)	Volunteers (%)
No organization	51.7	64.3
One organization	26.4	17.3
Two or more organizations	21.9	18.4

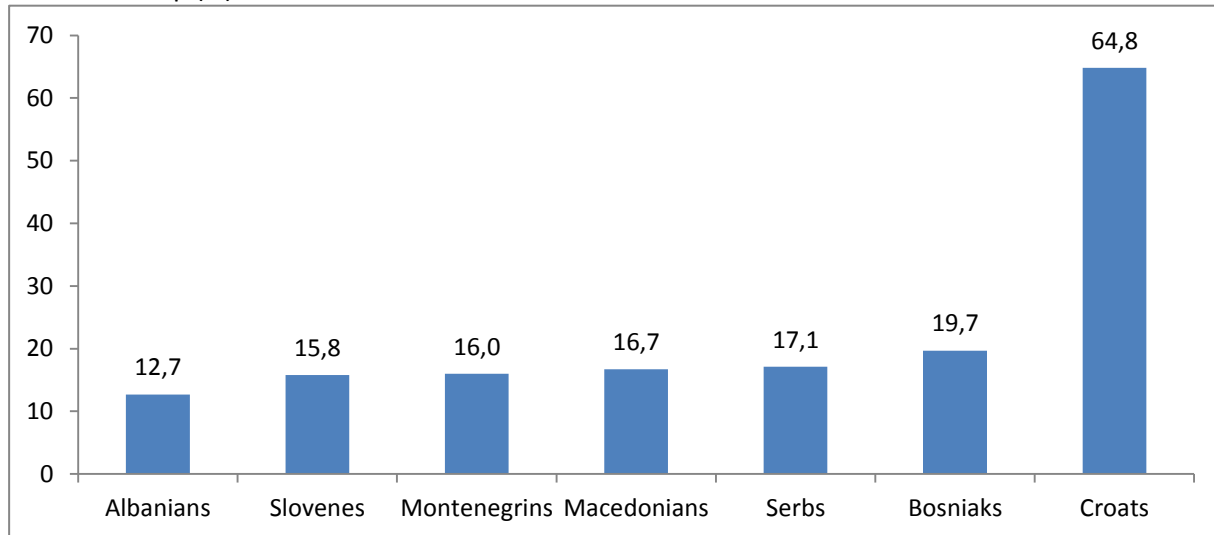
Graph 1: Readiness for participation in civic activities aimed at resolving problems in society (%).



Graph 2: Average social distance on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is the highest and 7 the lowest social distance.



Graph 3: The lowest level of social distance towards members of certain ethnic groups - readiness to be in close kinship (%)



Graph 4: The highest level of social distance expressed towards members of certain ethnic groups - acceptance of permanent residence in Croatia (%).

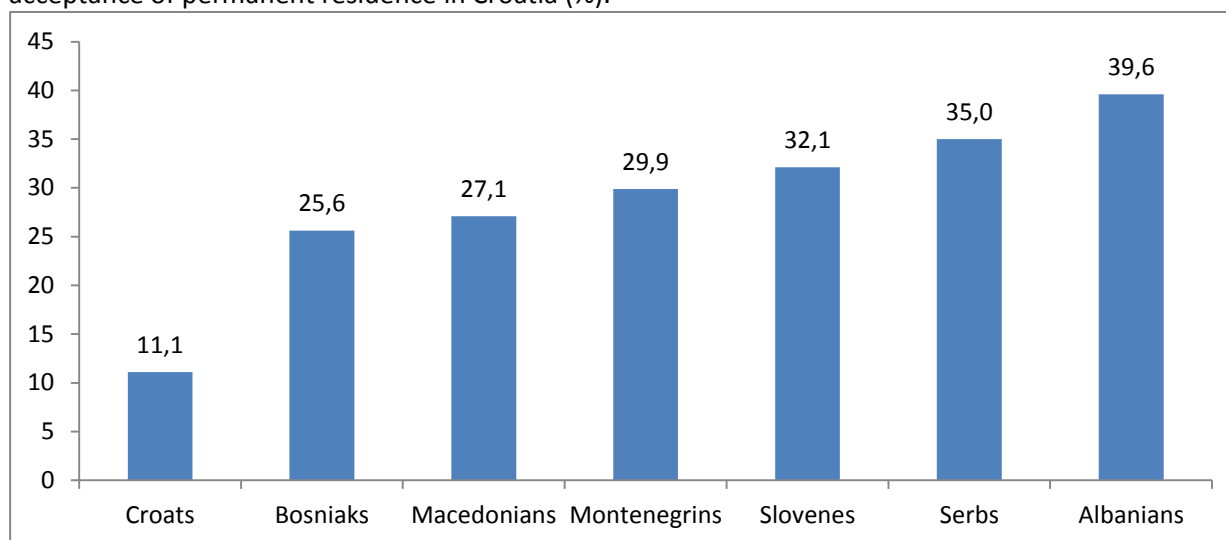


Table 2. Social distance towards ethnic groups in relation to membership in associations

	Social Distance											
	Albanians		Bosniaks		Montenegrins		Macedonians		Slovenes		Serbs	
Members of:	t	sig.	t	sig.	t	sig.	t	sig.	t	sig.	t	sig.
Student associations											-2.496	0.013
Cultural/artistic Groups							-3.282	0.001				
Sporting associations	2.470	0.009										
Political parties	3.500	0.001	3.035	0.002	4.307	0.000	4.073	0.000	4.418	0.000	4.090	0.000

Table 3. Social Distance towards ethnic groups in terms of readiness to take part in civil activities aimed at resolving problems in society

	Social Distance											
	Albanians		Bosniaks		Montenegrins		Macedonians		Slovenes		Serbs	
	t	sig.	t	sig.	t	sig.	t	sig.	t	sig.	t	sig.
Signing petitions			-3.391	0.001	-2.909	0.004	-3.348	0.001	-3.361	0.001	-3.391	0.001
Inclusion in the work of civil organizations	-4.750	0.000	-3.555	0.000	-3.481	0.000	-4.991	0.000	-3.802	0.000	-4.564	0.000
Collecting funds to resolve a specific problem							-3.015	0.003	-2.810	0.005		
Organizing civil action	-2.828	0.005							-2.450	0.007		
Initiating new civil initiatives or NGOs	-2.653	0.008										
Inclusion in the work of political parties			3.999	0.000	4.689	0.000	3.127	0.000	3.453	0.001	3.755	0.000