

Support for Multicultural Rights in Bulgaria

Identification and ethnic diversity underlie support for multicultural rights: A multilevel analysis in Bulgaria

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Highlights:

- Antecedents of support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities in Bulgaria.
- Individual level: National identification positively related to multicultural rights.
- Individual level: Ethnic nationhood negatively associated to multicultural rights.
- Individual level: Anti-Roma prejudice negatively related to multicultural rights.
- District level: Ethnic diversity positively related to multicultural rights.

Abstract

Bulgaria is historically a multicultural society, composed of the Bulgarian (ethnic) majority and a number of ethnic minorities among which Bulgarian Turks and Roma are the largest. Both minority communities are stigmatized in contemporary Bulgaria, though to different degrees and for different reasons. Ethnic minorities' rights to preserve their culture, customs, and language are a topic of contentious debate. The purpose of this study was to examine individual- and context-level antecedents of the ethnic Bulgarian majority's support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities. Multilevel regression analyses were conducted with International Social Survey Programme ISSP 2003 data ($N = 920$ in 28 Bulgarian districts). At the individual-level, an ethnic conception of the nation and anti-Roma symbolic prejudice were negatively related to support for multicultural rights, whereas national identification was positively related to the support of these rights. Over and above individual-level effects, and in line with recent extensions of intergroup contact theory, the percentage of Bulgarian Turks within districts was positively related to support for multicultural rights. Importantly, support for multicultural rights was particularly high in districts characterized by ethnic diversity, that is, in districts with high proportions of both Bulgarian Turks and Roma. The beneficial effects of ethnic diversity and theoretical implications of findings are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Bulgaria is historically a multicultural society with established ethnic minorities. The population of almost 7.5 million of this South East European country is composed of the Bulgarian (ethnic) majority (84.8%, 2011 Census) and a number of ethnic minority communities among which Bulgarian Turks (8.9%) and Roma (4.8%) are the largest. The presence of the minorities varies strongly across the 28 districts of Bulgaria, for example in some districts there are no Bulgarians Turks whereas in others they are the numeric majority. The Bulgarian constitution forbids discrimination recognizing the right of ethnic minorities to preserve their culture and religion and to study and practice their mother tongue. Nevertheless, both ethnic minorities, but in particular the Roma, are discriminated against (ECRI, 2009; Mudde, 2005; Pamporov, 2009; Vassilev, 2004, 2010; Zografova & Andreev, 2014). Indeed, representatives of the ethnic Bulgarian majority and of Bulgarian governmental institutions have been opposed to claims put forward by ethnic minorities for the preservation of their culture (e.g., building monuments commemorating their history), to public religious displays by ethnic minorities and to broadcasting news in ethnic minorities' languages (see Naxidou, 2012). Thus, while Bulgaria is multicultural in demographic terms and according to the constitution, multicultural rights do not necessarily receive support from the national majority.

It is thus urgent to study factors that underlie support for multicultural rights in Bulgaria. Multicultural rights refer to rights of ethnic minorities to preserve their culture, practice their language, receive state support to preserve their traditions, and have state representatives and associations (see Verkuyten, 2009). As the antecedents of support for multicultural rights remain understudied, we build our rationales by drawing on literature

examining support for related concepts such as multiculturalism as an ideology (the acceptance and support of cultural diversity; van de Vijver, Breugelmans, & Schalk-Soekar, 2008), integration expectations (the belief that minorities should maintain their culture of origin but also endorse some aspects of the majority's culture; Bourhis, Barrette, El-Geledi, & Schmidt Sr., 2009), and assimilation expectations (the belief that minorities should abandon their culture of origin for the sake of the majority culture; Bourhis et al., 2009).

In this study, we examine the role of ethnic and national identification as well as prejudice as predictors of support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities. Moreover, we investigate how embeddedness in ethnically diverse contexts, where everyday interactions with Roma and Bulgarian Turks occur, shape support for multicultural rights. Thus we analyze how support for multicultural rights differs between districts as a function of the presence of ethnic minorities. Using 2003 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data, we adopt a multilevel approach to examine individual- and contextual-level antecedents of support for multicultural rights.

This study makes several novel contributions to the knowledge on interethnic relations in Bulgaria and to the literature on intergroup relations and support for multiculturalism. First, we investigate an understudied intergroup context (i.e., Bulgaria) where ethnic minorities have historically suffered prejudice, discrimination, and oppression, with the aim of detecting factors promoting support for multicultural rights of harshly stigmatized ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma and Bulgarian Turks). Research on intergroup relations has mainly been conducted in Western Europe and North America. Though attitudes toward ethnic minorities are frequently negative in post-socialist countries, these countries have received scant attention in mainstream social psychological literature (for exceptions, see e.g., Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2013). Second, we focus on antecedents of support for multicultural rights rather than on multiculturalism as an ideology, analyzing endorsement of *tangible* rights that are

topics of societal debate. Third, we use a multilevel approach to account for how the presence of ethnic minorities within districts relates to support for multicultural rights. Indeed, the presence of ethnic minorities varies massively between districts, making Bulgaria an exciting context for examining within-country variation in support for multicultural rights. On the one hand, ethnic diversity has been shown to promote intergroup contact (e.g., Schmid, Al Ramiah, & Hewstone, 2014) and therefore it should also relate to support for multicultural rights. On the other hand, ethnic diversity can elicit threat perceptions (e.g., Scheepers, Gijbels, & Coenders, 2002) and therefore be negatively associated with support for multicultural rights. We will assess whether in the Bulgarian intergroup context the presence of ethnic minorities within districts relates positively or negatively to support for multicultural rights. Furthermore, we investigate the effects of *ethnic diversity* by operationalizing it as the *joint presence* of two ethnic minority groups, rather than just the presence of one ethnic minority as frequently done in research.

1.1. Ingroup identification and symbolic prejudice as individual-level antecedents of support for multicultural rights

A number of studies have demonstrated that support for multiculturalism is related to ingroup identification. For national majorities, ethnic identification — a sense of belonging based on one's ancestry, cultural heritage, values, traditions, rituals, and often language and religion — engenders willingness to protect the ingroup's interests and advantaged position, and therefore negative attitudes toward multiculturalism (e.g., Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). Similarly, an ethnic conception of the nation implies that the national group has an essentialist core that is determined by ancestry and ethnic belonging (Brubaker, 1992; Kohn, 1944). Endorsing an ethnic conception of the nation also underlies negative attitudes toward immigrants and ethnic minorities (e.g., Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009; Wakefield et al., 2013). For example, among British citizens an ethnic conception of

the nation was related to lower support for multiculturalism (Heath & Tilley, 2005). Thus, both ethnic identification and ethnic conception of the nation should relate to opposition to multicultural rights.

National identification should relate to support for multicultural rights too (e.g., Verkuyten, 2009). To understand this relationship, it is necessary to distinguish between countries with a predominantly civic conception of the nation, where adherence to national laws, customs, and values are the core features that define citizenship, and countries with a predominantly ethnic conception of the nation, where citizenship is based on ancestry and belonging to the same ethnic group (Brubaker, 1992, 1996). In so-called ethnic nations, then, national identification is associated with negative intergroup attitudes (Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009), and consequently with low support for multicultural rights.

Support for multicultural rights is also influenced by attitudes toward the outgroups that are the target of these policies. Indeed positive outgroup attitudes have been shown to predict support for multiculturalism among the majority group (e.g., Verkuyten, 2005, Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006). Contemporary forms of prejudice (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Sears & Henry, 2005) are based on beliefs that ethnic minorities are responsible for their disadvantaged position and ask for unfair advantageous benefits together with the denial of ongoing discrimination. Such prejudice consequently underlies opposition to multicultural rights (e.g., Berg, 2013; Sears, Citrin, Cheleden, & van Laar, 1999). For example, in the United States anti-Black symbolic racism is consistently associated with reduced support for pro-Black policies and affirmative action (Sears & Henry, 2005).

1.2. Proportions of ethnic minorities and ethnic diversity as district-level antecedents of support for multicultural rights

While previous research on support for multiculturalism has mainly focused on its individual-level antecedents (for an exception, see van Geel & Vedder, 2011), recent

developments in the study of intergroup attitudes recognize the impact of living in settings characterized by the presence of ethnic minorities or immigrants.

Research on the effects of ethnic diversity on intergroup attitudes is driven by two main approaches. On the one hand, threat approaches (Blalock, 1967; Scheepers et al., 2002 for ethnic competition theory; Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009 for intergroup threat theory) argue that ethnic diversity elicits competition for resources and thus negative intergroup attitudes. On the other hand, extensions of contact theory (Allport, 1954; see Pettigrew, 2008; Schmid et al., 2014) suggest that contact opportunities offered by ethnic diversity increase intergroup contact and, consequently, reduce prejudice (Wagner, Christ, Pettigrew, Stellmacher, & Wolf, 2006). Research considering simultaneously the effects of ethnic diversity on contact and on threat has generally found support for the existence of both processes (e.g., Green, Fasel, & Sarrasin, 2010; Laurence, 2014; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010).

Whether diversity engenders contact or threat will depend on several factors. Temporality may determine whether contact or threat effects occur: When there is a long history of cohabitation between ethnic groups sustained contact is plausible, whereas recent arrival of ethnic minorities is more likely to foster threat perceptions (see Gundelach, 2014; Putnam, 2007). Moreover, whether one examines cross-national vs. within-country differences will influence the observation of threat vs. contact effects. As suggested by Wagner and colleagues (2006; see also Sarrasin et al., 2012), in cross-national comparisons the ethnic minority ratio can imply higher visibility of ethnic minorities in the media. Threat effects are plausible when ethnic minorities become targets of the negative societal and political discourse (e.g., Scheepers et al., 2002). Instead, analyzing small-scale geographical contexts within countries, for example districts, municipalities or neighborhoods, allows discovering contact effects (e.g., Huijts, Sluiter, Scheepers, & Kraaykamp, 2014; Schmid et

al., 2014; Wagner et al., 2006). For example, analyzing English neighborhoods, Schmid and colleagues (2014) showed that, both for the White British majority and for ethnic minorities, ethnic diversity was positively associated to intergroup contact, that was in turn related to reduced threat and increased trust. In this vein, Wagner and colleagues (2006) demonstrated that the percentage of foreigners within German districts was related to increased intergroup contact of German citizens with foreigners, and consequently with reduced prejudice. Indeed, everyday encounters actually take place and can be detected in small geographical contexts. Such encounters then increase knowledge about the ethnic outgroup and its members thereby reducing prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; see also Breugelmans & van de Vijver, 2004; Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver, 2008 for the relationship between knowledge about the outgroup and support for multiculturalism).

When contact effects occur, the presence of several ethnic groups, or demographical multiculturalism (e.g., Berry & Sam, 2013), may represent a more meaningful diversity experience than living in an area characterized by the presence of two ethnic groups, the majority and a minority for example. Living in ethnically diverse areas favors exposure to and learning about different cultures as well as intergroup contacts between members of different ethnic communities. These experiences are likely to challenge stereotypes (e.g., Crisp & Turner, 2011) promoting a less homogeneous view of outgroups in general. Ethnic diversity should also show to the majorities that the ingroup customs and habits are not the only possible way of living (so-called deprovincialization; Pettigrew; 1998).

2. The intergroup context in Bulgaria

Bulgarian Turks and Roma are the two largest ethnic minorities in Bulgaria. Although both ethnic minorities have been the target of prejudice and discrimination (Vassilev, 2004, 2010), their historical and current relationships with the ethnic Bulgarian majority are very different.

The term Bulgarian Turks refers to descendants of Turks who settled in Bulgaria during the Ottoman Domination, that is, the historical period from 1396, when Bulgaria was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, until 1878, when Bulgaria became independent as a consequence of the Russo-Turkish War. During the Ottoman Domination, Turks ruled Bulgaria and many Turks settled there, mainly in the cities. After Bulgaria's independence, laws and agreements protecting Bulgarian Turkish minority rights existed but their application was limited. During the communist regime after WWII, the policies concerning Bulgarian Turks and their culture were initially tolerant. From the early 1960s, pressure for assimilation progressively increased culminating in the Revival Process (1984-1989), when Bulgarian Turks were for example forced to change their names to Bulgarian names or to leave the country. After the fall of the communist regime (1989), rights of Bulgarian Turks were restored, although with opposition from part of the ethnic Bulgarian majority. Nowadays Bulgarian Turks have the right to practice their religion, and have education and newspapers and media in Turkish language; they also have their representatives in parliament. Bulgarian Turks still remain disadvantaged (Dimitrova, Bender, Chasiotis, & van de Vijver, 2013), but given their improved societal status in the last years, they are frequently seen by the ethnic Bulgarian majority as gaining too much power (Zhelyazkova, Kosseva, & Hajdinjak, 2010). Indeed, the relationship between ethnic Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks is still affected by the Ottoman Domination, with Bulgarian Turks represented in historical sources (e.g., school books and fictions) and seen by some ethnic Bulgarians as invaders and oppressors (Mudde, 2005).

Roma, in turn, settled in Bulgaria between the 13th and 14th century. Roma in Bulgaria are not a uniform community: There are several Roma subgroups differing in religion, language, culture, and customs. Throughout their history in Bulgaria, Roma have faced strong discrimination and intolerance, and have had poor living conditions, little access to education,

the job market, and health care. The communist regime also strongly pushed Roma to assimilate, obliging them to give up their traditions and customs and to abandon the nomadic life style. Their living conditions improved slightly during this period but, after the fall of Communism, Roma's living conditions deteriorated again (Dimitrova, Chasiotis, Bender, & van de Vijver, 2013). As in most European countries (e.g., Tileagă, 2006), Roma are the most stigmatized ethnic group, eliciting harsh antipathy among ethnic Bulgarians and being stereotyped as lazy, criminals, living on social aid, incompetent, and dirty (Bakalova & Tair, 2014; Pamporov, 2009).

Given the history of interethnic relationships in Bulgaria and the push toward assimilation of ethnic minorities during the communist regime, it is unsurprising that multicultural rights of ethnic minorities have faced strong opposition, especially from representatives of Ataka, a radical rightwing party (Naxidou, 2012). For example, the Ataka party (albeit with 4.5% of votes in the October 2014 Parliamentary elections) has in recent years carried out campaigns to collect signatures against broadcasting news in Turkish language, and also opposed to the erection of a monument commemorating the Turkish soldiers died during WWI in battles for the liberation of South Dobrich. Claims by the Roma community for their multicultural rights have been opposed to, like the proposal to establish a National Theatre of Roma in Sliven, a city in South-East of Bulgaria.

As the presence of ethnic minorities varies considerably between districts in the country, the current study will consider how the proportion of Roma and Bulgarian Turks in a district relates to support for multicultural rights. Indeed, Bulgaria is divided in 28 districts, which are the first level of administrative subdivisions of the country (Eurostat, 2011) "for implementation of regional policies and state government and for ensuring conformity between the national and the regional interests" (Bulgarian Constitution, Art. 142). This subdivision existed from 1959 until 1987, and was then reorganized into 9 larger provinces,

until 1999 when the 28 districts were restored. The complex history of intergroup relations and the disparities between districts call for examining the impact of district characteristics, and make Bulgaria a fascinating context for studying the relationship between ethnic diversity and support for multicultural rights.

3. Summary of hypotheses

With a multilevel design (Hox, 2010) using ISSP 2003 data, we analyzed simultaneously individual- and district-level antecedents of support for multicultural rights among the ethnic Bulgarian majority. On the individual level, we expected both ethnic identification (H1a) and ethnic conception of the nation (H1b) to be negatively associated with support for multicultural rights. Furthermore, as Bulgaria has been considered an ethnic nation like most of the Eastern European former socialist countries (Brubaker, 1996), we hypothesized that national identification also relates to opposition to multicultural rights (H1c). Symbolic prejudice should also predict opposition to these rights. Unfortunately, the ISSP 2003 survey contained only measures of symbolic prejudice against Roma, but no measure of anti-Bulgarian Turks prejudice. We expected anti-Roma symbolic prejudice to be negatively related to support for multicultural rights (H2). We further accounted for socio-demographic factors such gender, age, educational level, rural vs. urban residence, and perception of own economic situation. While typically gender and age effects are small or inconsistent, higher education, better economic situation, and living in urban areas are related to positive diversity attitudes (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010).

On the district level, we examined how the presence of Bulgarian Turks and Roma relates to support for multicultural rights. Districts are relatively small-scale contexts (mean population 260,000, Census 2011), where larger ratios of Bulgarian Turks and Roma within districts should provide opportunities for contact. Furthermore, Bulgarian Turks and Roma have lived in Bulgaria for many centuries and are historically part of the nation; therefore, the

ethnic Bulgarian majority should have had opportunities to develop contacts with them. We thus relied on intergroup contact theory and hypothesized that, on the district level, both percentage of Bulgarian Turks (H3a) and percentage of Roma (H3b) should be positively related to support for multicultural rights.

We expected ethnic diversity, more so than the mere presence of an ethnic minority, to be particularly relevant. Therefore support for multicultural rights should be particularly high in districts with high proportions of both Bulgarian Turks and Roma (ethnic diversity hypothesis; H4). In other words, demographical multiculturalism should predict ideological multiculturalism (Berry & Sam, 2013).

To rule out that our findings are spurious because of other district differences and that other district-level predictors impact support for multicultural rights in Bulgaria, we conducted additional analyses to ensure the robustness of our findings. We accounted for the percentage of unemployment, to control for the district economic situation (e.g., Scheepers et al., 2002). Indeed, Bulgarian districts differ in their economic situation, with some districts relatively wealthy and others considered among the poorest areas in Europe (United Nations Development Programme, 2002). We also controlled for the percentage of rightwing voters, to tap the impact of political climate (e.g., Sarrasin et al., 2012), and the percentage of immigrants, to check whether the presence of other outgroups, besides the ethnic minorities in Bulgaria, influences support for multicultural rights.

4. Method

4.1. Dataset and sample

We analyzed the ISSP 2003 National Identity Module in Bulgaria, including a country-specific Roma issues module. ISSP is a cross-national collaborative social sciences survey (<http://www.issp.org/>) with a different topic each year. The source questionnaire in the ISSP project (34 countries in 2003) is in English. Translation from English to Bulgarian was

done by the local ISSP team in collaboration with professional translators; translations were checked by experts, and no problems emerged during the translation phase (Scholz, Harkness, & Faaß, 2005). After pretesting, questionnaires were administered to a representative sample of the Bulgarian adult population as face-to-face interviews.

For this study, we considered only respondents who identified themselves as ethnic Bulgarians ($N = 920$). The sample was composed of 51.2% of females and 48.8% of males. Mean age was 51.18 years ($SD = 17.78$). Regarding education level, 0.3% of respondents reported having no formal education, 7.8% had completed primary school, 23.0% had a junior high school degree, 48.4% had completed higher secondary education, 19.3% had a degree above higher secondary education, and 1.2% had a university degree. Regarding community size, 19.1% lived in villages with up to 2,000 inhabitants, 26.2% in towns from 2,001 to 20,000 inhabitants, 22.9% in towns from 20,001 to 100,000 inhabitants, 19.2% in towns from 100,001 to 500,000, and 12.5% lived in Sofia, that is, a city with more than 1,200,000 inhabitants. The respondents were from the 28 Bulgarian districts, with on average 33 individuals per district ($SD = 24$, range 8-115).¹

4.2. Dependent variable

Support for multicultural rights was measured with seven dichotomous items. Participants expressed support (1 = *yes*, 2 = *no*) for six rights for ethnic minorities: establish organizations and associations for protection and development of their culture; print books and other editions/issues in their mother tongue; have newspapers, radio and TV broadcasting in their mother tongue; study their mother tongue in public schools; have their representatives in the state authorities; have their political parties and associations/societies. In the seventh question, respondents were asked to choose between two statements: 1) It is better for society if groups maintain their own customs and traditions. 2) It is better if groups adapt and adopt customs and traditions of the larger community.

4.3. Individual-level predictors

Ethnic identification was assessed with “How close do you feel to your ethnic group?” (from 1 = *very attached* to 5 = *not attached at all*) and national identification with “How close do you feel to Bulgaria?” (from 1 = *very close* to 4 = *not close at all*; see Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2013 for accuracy of single-item ingroup identification measures).

For the ethnic conception of the nation, we used three items that are relevant for distinguishing between the ethnic Bulgarian majority and ethnic minorities (see Latcheva, 2010). Participants rated how much having Bulgarian ancestry, being able to speak Bulgarian and being a Christian were important for being accepted as truly Bulgarian on a scale ranging from 1 (*very important*) to 4 (*not important at all*).

Symbolic prejudice against Roma was measured with three items, with a response scale from 1 (*completely agree*) to 5 (*completely disagree*). These items were: “Most Roma are as good workers as Bulgarians,” “If Roma were provided a chance to improve their lives, most of them would do that,” and “The government provides due attention and resources to Roma in the country” (reverse coded). The first two items tapped the symbolic prejudice dimension of work ethic and responsibility for outcomes, while the third item tapped the symbolic prejudice dimension of denial of continuing discrimination (see Henry & Sears, 2002).

Perception of own economic situation was measured with a list of 16 items, in which participants had to indicate whether they could (1) or could not (2) afford a series of consumer goods (e.g., phone), medical expenses (e.g., dentist), and free-time expenses (e.g., holiday away from home).

4.4. Data preparation of individual-level variables

Missing values on individual-level predictors and on the dependent variable were 4.9%. The data were missing completely at random (MCAR) as indicated by a non-significant

Little's MCAR test, $\chi^2(8069, N = 920) = 8065.91, p = .508$. Given that data were MCAR and the relatively small portion of missing data, we imputed missing data using the Expectation Maximization algorithm (Scheffer, 2002).²

Reliabilities, means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables at the individual level are reported in Table 1. Reliability of the multiple-item measures was calculated with Cronbach's alphas (α) for the measures with continuous response options and with Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR20) for the measures with dichotomous response options. Reliability of all the multi-item measures was acceptable or satisfactory, thus composite scores were created. Responses to the items investigating support for multicultural rights, ethnic identification, national identification, ethnic conception of the nation were reverse coded such that higher scores reflected higher levels of the assessed concept. Responses to items measuring perception of own economic situation were reverse coded too, so that higher values correspond to a better perception of economic situation. To ensure the estimation of precise covariance estimates in the multilevel analysis, we rescaled the support for multicultural rights items, the dependent variable, to obtain a score from 1 to 100.

Correlations between individual-level predictors and the dependent variable were moderate (Table 1), suggesting that all the scores were distinct constructs. While support for multicultural rights and anti-Roma prejudice were moderate, the adherence to an ethnic conception of the nation and national as well as ethnic identification were high.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

4.5. District-level predictors

Proportion of Roma and proportion of Bulgarian Turks within districts were based on 2001 Census data (<http://www.nsi.bg/Census/Ethnos.htm>). Roma are present throughout the districts, but their presence varies a lot ranging from 0.2% in Smolyan to 13.5% in Sliven. Proportion of Bulgarian Turks ranged from 0% in Montana and in Pernik to 62.5% in

Kardzhali representing the numerical majority in two districts. The outlier value of Kardzhali for the proportion of Bulgarian Turks (above $M + 3SD$) was replaced by the cut-off value in the analyses.³ District-level predictors were grand mean centered as interaction terms was estimated.

We further controlled our results for district-level percentage of immigrants, of unemployment, and of rightwing voters. The percentage of immigrants within districts ranged from 0.6% to 2.6% (Bulgarian National Statistical Institute BNSI, 2004, <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/6683/migration>) and the percentage of unemployment ranged from 3.9% to 30.4% (BNSI, 2003). The district-level percentage of rightwing voters, ranging from 5.6% to 34.0%, was based on the results of the 2005 Bulgarian Parliamentary Elections summing the percentage of votes for Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria, Union of Democratic Forces, and Ataka (data from the Central Election Committee, <http://results.cik.bg/pi2013/rezultati/index.html>). Grand means, standard deviations, and correlations between variables at the district level are reported in Table 2. Percentage of rightwing voters was strongly negatively correlated with percentages of Bulgarian Turks and of unemployment, whereas percentage of unemployment was positively related to percentage of Roma. However, percentage of Bulgarian Turks was the only district-level indicator that was related to support for multicultural rights, our dependent variable.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

5. Results

Support for multicultural rights varied across districts ($ICC = .126$), therefore multilevel regression analyses were performed (e.g., Hox, 2010) with MPlus 5.1 using maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR, Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2009).

5.1. Model building

To compare models and test whether district-level effects occurred over and above the individual-level effects, in the lower panel of Table 3, we examined step-by-step the improvement of the model fit, calculating difference in deviance ($-2 \times \log \text{likelihood}$, corrected with the scaling factor necessary for MLR estimations; Satorra & Bentler, 2001). Compared to the baseline model (Model 0), entering all individual-level predictors in Model 1 improved the model fit. The fit improved when adding district-level predictors in Model 2. The district-level interaction between proportion of Roma and proportion of Bulgarian Turks within districts (Model 3) further improved the model fit.

Multilevel regression models allow examining whether the different composition of districts in terms of socio-demographic and individual-level characteristics explain variation on the district level. Indeed, while Model 1 explained 5.9% of the district-level variance, the substantial increase in explained variance in Models 2 and 3 (which explained, respectively, 43.5% and 51.3% of the district-level variance) reveal that district characteristics predict support for multicultural rights over and above this composition.

5.2. Individual-level effects

Table 3 reports results of the multilevel regression analysis (see the upper panel for individual-level effects). Disconfirming our hypothesis, ethnic identification was unrelated to support for multicultural rights (H1a). As predicted, ethnic conception of the nation – perceiving an overlap between ethnic Bulgarians and the Bulgarian nation and giving importance to ethnic criteria for considering fully Bulgarian – was negatively related to support for multicultural rights (H1b). Unexpectedly, national identification was related to stronger support for multicultural rights (H1c). Finally, symbolic prejudice against Roma yielded a negative effect on multicultural rights in line with our hypothesis (H2).

Concerning socio-demographical characteristics, only the perception of one's own economic situation had an effect: The better the perception of one's own economic situation,

the stronger the support for multicultural rights. Gender, age, residence (rural vs. urban), and educational level instead yielded no significant effects.

5.3. District-level effects

Over and above the individual-level effects, the proportion of Bulgarian Turks within districts was positively related to support for multicultural rights of ethnic Bulgarian respondents (see the middle panel of Table 3 for district-level effects). The proportion of Roma instead had no effect on support for multicultural rights (Model 2). Our predictions were thus confirmed for the proportion of Bulgarian Turks (H3a), but not for the proportion of Roma (H3b).

The interaction term between proportion of Roma and proportion of Bulgarian Turks within districts significantly impacted support for multicultural rights (Model 3). We decomposed the interaction using simple slope analyses (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006). Figure 1 shows that in districts with a low proportion of Bulgarian Turks ($M - 1 SD$), the proportion of Roma was unrelated to support for multicultural rights ($b = -0.38$, $SE = 0.94$, $p = .68$), while in districts with a high proportion of Bulgarian Turks ($M + 1 SD$), the proportion of Roma was positively related to support for multicultural rights ($b = 2.55$, $SE = 0.84$, $p = .002$). Importantly, support for multicultural rights by the ethnic Bulgarian majority was thus particularly high in districts with high proportions of the two ethnic minorities. This confirms the ethnic diversity hypothesis (H4) demonstrating that ethnic diversity, more so than the presence of a single ethnic minority, increases support for multicultural rights.

INSERT TABLE 3 AND FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

5.4. Additional analyses

We further verified whether the revealed results patterns remained when accounting for other district-level predictors that may also impact support for multicultural rights. We added percentage of unemployment, percentage of rightwing voters, and percentage of

immigrants one by one in the models due to the low district-level N (Hox, 2010) and strong intercorrelations. Including these district-level controls to Model 1 did not explain variance of support for multicultural rights, and these variables were unrelated to support for multicultural rights. When included with the main district-level predictors, the significant effects of Models 2 and 3 remained unaltered.

Contexts characterized by both economic scarcity and presence of ethnic minorities may be particularly propitious for threat perceptions (Quillian, 1995). We thus accounted for the possible interaction between economic deprivation and presence of ethnic minorities and tested two additional regression models: In the first we added to Model 3 the district-level percentage of unemployment and the interaction term between percentage of unemployment and percentage of Roma; in the second we added the district-level percentage of unemployment and the interaction term between percentage of unemployment and percentage of Bulgarian Turks. These interaction terms did not contribute to explain variance and they had no significant effect on support for multicultural rights. The significant effects of Model 3 did not change.

Furthermore, the strength and even direction of the relationship between the proportion of ethnic minorities and support for multicultural rights can vary. The positive relationship may get weaker as the proportion of outgroup size, here Roma or Bulgarian Turks, increases (e.g., Wagner et al., 2006) or this relationship may become negative when outgroup size is particularly high (e.g., Forman, 2003). Therefore, we further tested whether the effects of percentage of Bulgarian Turks and of percentage of Roma within districts on support for multicultural rights were curvilinear. We added one by one the quadratic effects of percentage of Bulgarian Turks and of percentage of Roma to Model 2. While adding the quadratic effect of percentage of Roma did not increase explained variance, adding the quadratic effect of percentage of Bulgarian Turks improved the model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 920) =$

14.88, $p < .001$. Both the linear effect ($b = 0.96$, $SE = 0.25$, $p < .001$) and the quadratic term ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .017$) were significant. The relationship between the size of the Bulgarian Turkish population and support for multicultural rights was curvilinear with an inflection point of the curve at 38.64 (Berry, 1993). Thus the relationship between size of the Bulgarian Turkish population and support for multicultural rights was positive when proportions of the Bulgarian Turkish population were lower than 38.6%, and became negative once the Bulgarian Turkish population proportions were over 38.6%.

6. Discussion

In Bulgaria, relationships between ethnic communities have been characterized by prejudice and discrimination. Our study investigating individual- and district-level antecedents of Bulgarian majority's support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities extends previous literature on intergroup relations shedding light on the Bulgarian intergroup context that has received limited attention in social psychology (for exceptions on adolescents' collective identities in Bulgaria, see Dimitrova, Bender, Chasiotis, & van de Vijver, 2013; Dimitrova, Chasiotis, Bender, & van de Vijver, 2013).

We now discuss our results highlighting the contribution and reflecting upon the limitations of the study.

6.1. Individual-level findings: The contrasting effects of national and ethnic identification

Ethnic identification and support for multicultural rights were unrelated, disconfirming our hypothesis (H1a). Attachment to one's own majority ethnic group may in some cases only relate to positive ingroup evaluation and willingness for positive outcomes for the ingroup, but not imply negative evaluation of outgroups (for a review, see Brewer, 1999). Indeed, Wolsko et al. (2006) did not find significant associations between ethnic identification and support for multiculturalism among Whites in the United States. However, supporting H1b, an ethnic conception of the nation, that is assigning importance to criteria based on ethnic

belonging to determine nationality (Brubaker, 1992, 1996), was negatively related to support for multicultural rights. This result confirms the detrimental relationship between endorsing an ethnic conception of the nation and the willingness to exclude members of outgroups (e.g., Heath & Tilley, 2005; Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009; Wakefield et al., 2013). The modest correlation between ethnic identification and ethnic conception of the nation indicates that the constructs do not overlap further suggesting that identification may be unrelated to outgroup attitudes.

Given that Bulgaria has traditionally been defined as an ethnic nation, unexpectedly, national identification was positively related to support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities (H1c). This finding can be interpreted in light of the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), which proposes that the perception of ingroup and outgroup members as belonging to a larger, more inclusive group (in this case, citizens of the Bulgarian nation) is related to positive attitudes toward all the members of this group. Previous research has shown a wide array of positive outcomes for intergroup relations deriving from common ingroup identification (for a recent review, see Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009). We found that it was also related to support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities. This result is in line with previous studies in other intergroup contexts showing, for example, that national identification among Mainland Chinese is positively related to support for multiculturalism (Guan et al., 2011; for similar results in Canada see Berry & Kalin, 1995). Identifying with the nation may thus be a crucial component for building positive and harmonious relationships between different ethnic communities living in the same country, and an important characteristic of multicultural societies (see Berry & Kalin, 1995 for similar reflections about the Canadian context; Sibley & Ward, 2013 for New Zealand). Our finding thus underscores the importance of building an inclusive Bulgarian national identity, where the different ethnic communities represent the nation and the welfare

of all members of the Bulgarian nation is emphasized. Such an identity might be fostered by the mass-media and discourses of authorities and politicians by conveying a positive image of Bulgaria as a multicultural nation and by portraying cultural symbols of ethnic minorities as representing Bulgaria.

Recategorisation as a superordinate “we”, assumed by the common ingroup identity model, has been associated to assimilation expectations regarding minorities (Dovidio et al., 2009; Guimond, de la Sablonnière, & Nugier, 2014). As multicultural rights aim to foster maintenance of own culture by ethnic minorities, our findings point towards integration, instead of assimilation expectations. Insofar as ethnic conception of the nation and national identification were modestly correlated, our findings suggest that opposing links between ingroup identification and support for multicultural rights exist and depend on the dimension of identification under examination (exclusionist stances toward ethnic minorities related to an ethnic conception of the nation and inclusive stances related to national identification).

Moreover, the positive relationship between national identification and support for multicultural rights challenges the distinction between Western European nations with predominantly civic nationality criteria and Eastern European nations as mainly ethnic (see also Brubaker, 2004; Shulman, 2002). To challenge the assumption that Bulgaria is an ethnic nation, further post hoc analyses including a measure of civic conception of the nation criteria (not included in the results section) showed that while both civic and ethnic nationhood criteria are highly endorsed by ethnic Bulgarian respondents the endorsement of civic criteria is higher.⁴ Taken together, the findings of this article support recent theorizations that nationalism in Bulgaria is moving toward a civic form, which may have helped to avoid major interethnic conflicts in the post-communist period (Volgyi, 2007).

Anti-Roma symbolic prejudice was also negatively associated with the support for the rights of ethnic minorities to preserve their culture, customs, and language in Bulgaria (H2)

(see Sears et al., 1999; Sears & Henry, 2005 for similar relationships between symbolic racism and endorsement of policies supporting African Americans in the US). Though developed in the US, the notion of symbolic prejudice is also applicable beyond this context, here Bulgaria, and was negatively associated to support for multicultural rights. A limitation of the current study is that the ISSP dataset had no measure of symbolic prejudice or attitudes toward Bulgarian Turks. However, we expect that anti-Bulgarian Turks prejudice would have effects similar to anti-Roma symbolic prejudice.

Finally, the relatively low reliability of the ethnic conception of the nation and of the anti-Roma symbolic prejudice measures is a caveat of the individual-level predictors that needs to be acknowledged. This is likely to be due to the use of short scales (only three items) to assess these concepts (Cortina, 1993), which is frequent in large social surveys. Future research would do well in developing measures of anti-Roma prejudice and of ethnic conception of the nation that are adapted to the post-socialist context.

6.2. District-level effects: The importance of demographic multiculturalism

The proportion of Bulgarian Turks was positively related to support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities (H3a), although the relationship grew weaker in the districts with high proportions of Bulgarian Turks and then became negative at particularly high levels of Bulgarian Turkish presence. It is noteworthy that the actual proportion of Bulgarian Turks within districts was above the inflection point (38.6%) only in two Bulgarian districts, i.e. Razgrad and Kardzhali. The district-level proportion of Roma – the most devalued ethnic minority – was related to support for multicultural rights only in districts with also high proportions of Bulgarian Turks, providing only partial support to H3b. In line with the ethnic diversity hypothesis, support for multicultural rights was particularly high in districts with both Roma and Bulgarian Turks (H4). Our research thus demonstrates that demographic

multiculturalism, that is the presence of more than one ethnic group, favors multicultural ideologies (Berry & Sam, 2013).

Our results are more in line with contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 2008; Schmid et al., 2014) than with ethnic competition (Scheepers et al., 2002) and threat (Stephan et al., 2009) approaches. As suggested in the introduction, the occurrence of contact – instead of threat – effects may be due to the context under study. Ethnic minorities, although stigmatized, are part of the nation: Historical intergroup cohabitation may have played a central role facilitating contact. Furthermore, the examination of relatively small units of analysis allows detecting the effects of opportunity for contact between members of different ethnic communities (see Wagner et al., 2006). Institutional support for positive intergroup relations, one of the optimal conditions for contact (see Allport, 1954), can also favor contact over threat effects. Indeed, Bulgarian constitution forbids discrimination and guarantees to ethnic minorities the right to preserve their culture, language, and customs. However, ethnic minorities, and especially Roma, are frequently vilified by Bulgarian media and in some cases also by Bulgarian politicians (Naxidou, 2012). Thus, we cannot establish the valence of institutional support for multicultural rights in Bulgaria, and whether this played a role in promoting contact over threat effects. The complexities of institutional support for positive intergroup relations in Bulgaria deserve to be addressed in future research.

Our predictions regarding the beneficial effects of the presence of ethnic minorities were mostly confirmed for Bulgarian Turks. One must nevertheless keep in mind that the beneficial effects of the presence of Bulgarian Turks on support for multicultural rights were found until a certain Bulgarian Turkish population ratio, whereas when the proportion of Bulgarian Turkish population was particularly high threat effects occurred and consequently ethnic Bulgarians exhibited lower support for multicultural rights. Our hypotheses were instead only partially confirmed for Roma, because the proportion of Roma was related to

support for multicultural rights only in districts with high proportions of Bulgarian Turks. This might be due to the relationship between ethnic Bulgarians and Roma, that has always been conflictual and to the lifestyle of Roma that has never been accepted by ethnic Bulgarians (e.g., Pamporov, 2009; Zhelyazkova et al., 2010). Thus contact opportunities may result in only limited positive contact experiences. Furthermore, Roma are not a homogeneous community, but there are several Roma subgroups living in different parts of Bulgaria. Their relationships with the ethnic Bulgarian majority as well as economic situation and living conditions vary. Consequently the presence of Roma may elicit different reactions among the ethnic Bulgarian majority across districts.

Two other caveats regarding the accuracy of district-level percentages of ethnic minorities as indicators of ethnic composition in Bulgaria need to be noted. First, percentages of ethnic minorities are based on self-declared ethnicity in the Census. There may be a mismatch between self-declared ethnicity and ethnic belonging perceived by the others. For example, Ladányi and Szelényi (2001) showed that in Bulgaria a substantial proportion of respondents perceived as Roma by local experts and survey interviewers do not classify themselves as Roma. Second, there are also a number of smaller ethnic minorities in Bulgaria, such as the Pomaks (i.e., Bulgarians who converted to Islam during the Ottoman Domination), whose presence may impact the intergroup stances of the ethnic Bulgarian majority.

While we accounted for percentages of unemployment, of rightwing voters, and of immigrants, other factors may play a role in shaping support for multicultural rights in some districts. Support for multicultural rights was high in districts located in the North East of Bulgaria, such as Dobrich, Targovishte, and Shumen. These districts have historically had frequent economic exchanges and mobility of people between Bulgaria and Romania (Tomova, 2011). This may have favored acceptance of diversity, and, consequently, support for multicultural rights. The district with lowest support for multicultural rights, Yambol, is

instead characterized by massive emigration and aging of the population, factors that may engender low support for rights of ethnic minorities.

Although our results support intergroup contact theory, the dataset did not contain measures of intergroup contact, and thus we can only speculate that the beneficial effects of ethnic diversity are due to contact with and increased knowledge of members of the other communities (see also Biggs & Knauss, 2012). However, the growing literature showing that ethnic diversity is associated with intergroup contact (e.g., Schmid et al., 2014; Green et al., 2010) suggests that also in Bulgaria intergroup contact should be the process explaining the positive effects of ethnic diversity. Indeed, a recent survey on interethnic relations conducted in three Bulgarian districts shows that ethnic Bulgarians have to some degree daily and deep contact with Bulgarian Turks and with Roma, and that contact quantity varies across districts, with more contact in districts with higher proportions of ethnic minorities (Green & Zografova, 2014; see also Zografova & Andreev, 2014). Research conducted in other contexts (i.e., the Netherlands) showing a positive association between intergroup contact and support for multiculturalism (Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver, 2008; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006) further corroborates the interpretation of our findings in light of intergroup contact theory. Future research on the relationship between ethnic diversity and support for multicultural rights should however also include measures of contact, to detect its role in promoting positive intergroup outcomes.

Overall, the district-level results of our study call for desegregation within Bulgarian districts, which could be favored by means of institutional support. The findings further suggest the potential of contact opportunities and mixing in workplaces and schools for achieving harmonious intergroup cohabitation and tolerance for cultural differences. Although economic deprivation clearly remains the greatest barrier for wellbeing, positive interactions between groups and mutual respect should favor the well-being of all parties, of the majorities

but especially of the minorities. Our study focused exclusively on interethnic relations in Bulgaria, but we expect similar beneficial effects of ethnic diversity on support for multicultural rights in small-scale communities in other intergroup contexts characterized by historically long cohabitation of several ethnic or immigrant groups. This speculation needs however to be corroborated by future research.

7. Conclusion

Substandard living conditions of ethnic minorities, in particular of Roma, are a major challenge in post-socialist countries and negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities held by the national majorities and denial of rights contribute to maintaining this deprivation. To our knowledge, this is the first study examining individual- and contextual-level antecedents of support for multicultural rights in a post-socialist country, that is, Bulgaria. We have highlighted the importance of building an inclusive national identity for promoting positive intergroup relations between different ethnic communities living in the same nation, and detected factors detrimental for the support for multicultural rights, namely defining the nation in terms of ethnic belonging, and symbolic prejudice against the ethnic minorities that are the very targets of multicultural rights.

This study further contributes to literature on the beneficial effects of ethnic minority presence for intergroup attitudes. Ethnic diversity, instead of the presence of one ethnic group, yielded the most support for multicultural rights. Our findings call for the fostering of demographic multiculturalism by means of institutional support at least when the history of cohabitation is long.

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Footnotes

1. We also performed analyses removing districts with low numbers of respondents ($n \leq 10$). In these analyses, we did not consider the districts of Smolyan ($n = 8$), Targovishte ($n = 9$), and Razgrad ($n = 10$). Excluding these districts from analyses did not change the reported result patterns.
2. Performing the analyses without replacing missing values yielded the same result pattern.
3. Performing the analyses without replacing the value of the percentage of Bulgarian Turks in Kardzhali yielded the same result pattern.
4. For the civic conception of the nation criteria, we considered the items investigating the importance of feeling Bulgarian and the importance of respecting Bulgarian institutions to be fully Bulgarian ($r(918) = .38, p < .001$). The mean score of endorsement of civic criteria ($M = 3.62, SD = 0.48$) is higher than the mean score of endorsements of ethnic criteria ($M = 3.43, SD = 0.55$), $t(919) = 10.69, p < .001$.

Table 1

Reliabilities, Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Variables at the Individual Level (N = 920)

	Reliability	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	-	-	-	.06*	.01	-.12***	-.02	.04	.04	.08*	-.04	.00
2. Age	-	51.14 (17.76)		-	-.12***	-.43***	-.38***	.18***	.18***	.27***	.11***	-.02
3. Size of the community	-	2.80 (1.30)			-	.28***	.36***	-.06	-.07*	-.06	-.04	.07*
4. Economic situation	.87 ^a	1.46 (0.26)				-	.49***	-.06	-.08*	-.11***	-.08*	.07*
5. Educational level	-	2.82 (0.88)					-	-.05	-.07*	-.07*	-.08*	.04
6. Ethnic identification	-	4.61 (0.71)						-	.22***	.31***	.05	.02
7. Ethnic conception of nation	.63 ^b	3.43 (0.55)							-	.25***	.10**	-.10**
8. National identification	-	3.62 (0.62)								-	-.05	.10**
9. Anti-Roma prejudice	.66 ^b	3.40 (0.92)									-	-.28***
10. Support multicultural rights	.81 ^a	57.52 (31.92)										-

Notes. ^a Kuder-Richardson Formula 20. ^b Cronbach's alpha. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Variables at the District Level (N = 28)

	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Percentage of Bulgarian Turks	12.22 (15.43)	-	-.10	.30	-.69***	-.11	.45*
2. Percentage of Roma	5.02 (3.02)		-	.41*	-.19	-.08	.00
3. Percentage of unemployment	16.88 (5.62)			-	-.60***	-.08	.19
4. Percentage of rightwing voters	19.86 (5.65)				-	.09	-.18
5. Percentage of immigrants	1.68 (0.47)					-	-.14
6. Support multicultural rights	58.02 (13.82)						-

Notes. * $p < .05$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 3

Unstandardized Multilevel regression Coefficients and Standard errors for Individual and Contextual Predictors of Support for Multicultural Rights

	Model 1 Individual-level predictors		Model 2 Individual and district- level predictors		Model 3 District-level interaction	
Intercept	73.76	(13.09)***	66.07	(12.98)***	73.04	(12.84)***
<i>Individual-level predictors</i>						
Gender (1=male, 2=female)	-1.47	(1.82)	-1.24	(1.81)	-1.46	(1.78)
Age	0.02	(0.07)	0.04	(0.07)	0.03	(0.07)
Size of the community	1.49	(1.47)	1.83	(1.36)	1.58	(1.40)
Economic situation	7.51	(4.64) ^a	10.32	(4.80)*	9.47	(4.72)*
Educational level	-0.52	(1.37)	-0.58	(1.36)	-0.73	(1.37)
Ethnic identification	1.23	(1.69)	1.49	(1.72)	1.32	(1.72)
Ethnic conception of nation	-5.23	(1.78)**	-5.12	(1.82)**	-5.63	(1.84)**
National identification	4.57	(1.97)*	4.70	(1.98)*	4.62	(1.99)*
Anti-Roma prejudice	-9.43	(1.25)***	-9.44	(1.23)***	-9.59	(1.23)***
<i>District-level predictors</i>						
Percentage of BulgarianTurks			0.52	(0.15)***	0.67	(0.15)***
Percentage of Roma			0.92	(0.59)	1.08	(0.58) ^b
Percentage of Bulgarian Turks x Percentage of Roma					0.10	(0.04)*
<i>Variance components</i>						
Individual-level	819.36***					
% explained variance: individual level	10.55%					
District-level	125.44*		75.37*		64.98*	
% explained variance: district level	5.94%		43.49%		51.28%	
Corrected $\Delta-2*\log(\Delta df)$	82.06 (9)***		14.91 (2)***		10.80 (1)***	

Notes. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Standard errors are in parenthesis.

^a $p = .11$. ^b $p = .07$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

In Model 0, intercept is 57.72 (2.50)***; deviance is 8930.60; individual-level variance is 916.02***; district-level variance is 133.37**.

Figure 1. Support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities as a function of proportion of Bulgarian Turks and proportion of Roma within districts.

