

## Ethnicization or de-ethnicization? Hungarian political representation in the Romanian parliament

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The main goal of the paper is to understand how substantive representation of minorities works through ethnic parties and what the relationship between substantive and descriptive representation is in this specific case. Focus on the traditional understanding of substantive representation is common when analyzing the representation of minorities and marginalized groups, but only a few studies look at the substantive representation of national minorities from a constructivist approach, and even fewer are centered on Central and Eastern Europe. The paper argues that besides ethnicizing their demands, representatives of minorities have a wide array of strategies to achieve their goals. Using the parliamentary representation of Hungarians in Romania as a case study, I show that the strategies chosen in ethnic claims-making are context-dependent: ethnicizing messages are used only in specific cases, while de-ethnicization is applied in debates thought to be important for their community. These are part of a bargaining process that help representatives to achieve their goals. Thus, the paper broadens the debate on substantive representation and has implications in coding, as most of the studies addressing the issue assume that descriptive representatives, in order to provide substantive representation, must ethnicize their demands.

**Keywords:** descriptive representation; substantive representation; ethnic parties; minorities; Hungarians in Romania

### Introduction

Minority political representation is a relevant topic from both a normative and an empirical perspective, as the behavior of minority political leaders, their claims and interests, or their relationship with majority political elites largely shape majority–minority relationships in a country. A large part of the literature on minority representation reaches back to Hanna Pitkin’s ground-breaking book, *The Concept of Representation*, in which she argues for adopting a *substantive* view in order to understand a representative’s actions, or to “judge his performance” (Pitkin 1967, 112). That is, instead of looking at the representative through what s/he *is*, one should focus on his/her *activity* and the *interests* that s/he pursues.<sup>1</sup> This differentiation initiated a debate on the relationship between the personal traits of a representative (descriptive representation) and his/her behavior (substantive representation). This distinction has been particularly relevant in the research on minority representation, as scholars try to respond to questions such as whether the descriptive

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representation of minorities is sufficient or necessary for the substantive representation of their interests (Mansbridge 1999; Bird 2007; Gamble 2007). Most of these studies, however, analyze the representation of minorities and marginalized groups in Western Europe and North America,<sup>2</sup> while only a few look into the substantive representation of national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe (Protsyk 2010; Protsyk and Sachariew 2010; Hodžić and Mraović 2015; Zuber 2015; Loncar 2016).

The main goal of this paper is to understand how the representation of minorities works through ethnic parties and what the relationship between substantive and descriptive representation is in this specific case. It takes a constructivist approach, arguing that research on substantive representation should focus more on the context in which representation occurs. By defining substantive representation as a set of discursive and political strategies that representatives choose from in order to formulate and pursue the interests of the group they claim to represent, it shows that in many cases not only does the explicit formulation of interest become substantive representation, but it is also influenced by the contexts in which the representative act occurs.

The analysis focuses on the activity of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), an ethnic party present in the Romanian parliament since 1990. The choice of Hungarian representatives, instead of representatives of all minorities in Romania, seemed proper from several points of view. First, Hungarians are the largest minority in Romania. They constitute about 6.5% of the population, and thus their claims-making capacity and influence are greater than those of other minorities.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, DAHR can be considered one of the most important political groups in Romania,<sup>4</sup> participating in elections since 1990 and being part of several governments since 1996. Second, DAHR is the only ethnic party in Romania that gains access to parliament by achieving the 5% threshold. Other minorities receive parliamentary representation through a positive discrimination mechanism that grants one preferential parliamentary seat per minority, if no organization of the respective community reaches the 5% threshold (Alionescu 2004; King and Marian 2012).

The paper addresses the following question: how are the interests of the Hungarian community constructed and presented by members of DAHR in the Romanian parliament, and how are substantive claims formulated in the case of Hungarians in Romania? Using content and discourse analysis, I analyzed the speeches of DAHR legislators delivered in the lower chamber of the Romanian parliament from 2004 to 2008. This was one of the most stable periods for minority politics for a couple of reasons. First, it was the last legislature when the Hungarian party had no Hungarian challengers in the parliamentary elections. After 2008, when analyzing the electoral and political strategies of DAHR, both inter- and intra-ethnic relations need to be considered, because the appearance of a new ethnic party strongly influenced DAHR's strategy (Stroschein 2011). Second, in 2008 the electoral law was changed from a proportional closed list system to a mixed one. Consequently, any analysis of the post-2008 period would have to take into account the influences of the electoral system.<sup>5</sup>

In this analysis, I show that Hungarian members of parliament use several discursive strategies to try to achieve their goals, including in certain contexts arguments presented in a nonethnic way. In their open political statements,<sup>6</sup> they formulate ethnic messages, while in their parliamentary debates they choose from a wide array of strategies – *consistency*, *useful contribution*, or *de-ethnicization* – that are part of a bargaining process and are chosen in order to connect with other lawmakers on issues that are seemingly less important for the party, in order to find allies for issues that matter most to them.

The case study also has several theoretical and methodological implications.

First, by analyzing Hungarian political representation in Romania from a substantive perspective, the paper offers a new approach to the issue. Most common analytical strands focus on Hungarian voting behavior and Hungarian ethnic parties (Stroschein 2011; Bakk and Székely 2012; Kiss and Székely 2016), or examine other types, actors, and fields of political representation of Hungarians (Biró 1998; Bakk 1999; Horváth 2002; Kántor and Bárdi 2002; Bochsler and Szöcsik 2013). Although both fields yield significant results, there are no answers regarding how Hungarian interests are constructed in the Romanian political sphere, or what is the general behavior of Hungarian representatives in the Romanian parliament.

Second, the contextual use of ethnicization or de-ethnicization by minority representatives brings an important contribution to the broader debate on substantive representation, as most studies addressing the issue implicitly or explicitly assume that descriptive representatives, in order to provide substantive representation, must ethnicize their demands. The case study I look at shows that descriptive representatives have a wide array of strategies to choose from: they can even choose seemingly paradoxical strategies (like de-ethnicization) to achieve their representative ends. Therefore, when looking at substantive representation, these types of deals must be considered as well.

Last, from a methodological point of view, the case study draws attention to the fact that the parliamentary actions of minority political actors cannot be examined independently from one another and over short-term periods, as strategies used in parliamentary activity are interconnected: cooperative strategies in nonethnic topics can be used for obtaining support for ethnic claims.

The first part of this article presents the most important literature on substantive representation and its relationship to descriptive representation in the case of minorities and ethnic parties, arguing that in the case of ethnic parties, the relationship between substantive and descriptive representation *per se* is not important, but the way ethnic party leaders formulate their discursive and strategic elements in pursuing the group's interests they represent is. In the second part, I lay down the methodology and clarify the process of data collection. I also make relevant observations on the structure and function of the Romanian parliament. In the third part, I elaborate on the most significant results of my analysis and I discuss the three discursive strategies used by DAHR in its parliamentary debate.

### **Substantive representation of national minorities: representation of Hungarians in Romania**

Minorities can achieve parliamentary representation through varied ways. Jelena Loncar in a paper focusing on substantive representation of ethnic minorities in Serbia presents three possibilities: (1) by running independently, and winning parliamentary seats on their own; (2) by creating pre-electoral coalitions with ethnic parties of the same or other minorities or mainstream parties; or (3) by running individually on the lists of mainstream parties (Loncar 2016). Beyond these there are two more possible cases, when minorities reach representation on the list of (4) partial ethnic parties or (5) other ethnic parties (Zuber 2015, 395).

Although in most of these cases descriptive representation of minorities is guaranteed, substantive representation will not automatically occur. Much of the literature contains examples that sustain the relationship between the two (Bird 2007; Gamble 2007; Minta and Sinclair-Chapman 2013; Saalfeld and Bischof 2013), while others question the linkage, arguing that descriptive representation does not always imply the substantive representation of minorities (Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996; Black and Hicks 2006; Loncar 2016). Examining this literature more closely, an important conclusion can be

drawn: the assumptions about the relationship between the two types of representation are conditioned by the chosen methods and the analyzed data. For example, as many of the scholars mentioned above point out (Bird 2007, 5–6; Gamble 2007, 422), in roll-call voting, party affiliation overwrites descriptive representation. Hence, women and ethnic minority representatives tend to vote in accordance with their other party members. However, in parliamentary questions (Saalfeld and Bischof 2013), parliamentary debates (Bird 2007; Celis 2008), or committee activity (Gamble 2007; Minta and Sinclair-Chapman 2013), the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation is evident, as minority legislators and representatives are more active in issues of minority rights and interests.

Most of this literature can be included in the third category, as it looks at women and ethnic minorities' representatives becoming candidates of mainstream parties. These studies define substantive representation as the explicit promotion of minority interests. They focus on cases with single-member constituencies in which the legitimacy of the minority representative is not directly linked to ethnicity and gender, since at the time of their election their ethnic identity or gender is of secondary importance.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in their case, substantive representation of the groups they descriptively belong to is also a declaration of identity, as they have a more general mandate than legislators from ethnic parties. Consequently, in these cases, the question of the link between descriptive and substantive representation is relevant because the representatives in question could disregard the groups they are descriptively part of. In other words, minority MPs who undertake to represent groups they are descriptively part of act as surrogate representatives<sup>8</sup> but still need to focus primarily on the (nonethnic) constituency they are accountable to.<sup>9</sup>

The logic of representation is different in the case of ethnic parties. First, in most cases, ethnic parties compete in proportional electoral systems. Second, if we define an ethnic party as “an ethnically based party [that] derives its support overwhelmingly from an identifiable ethnic group (or cluster of ethnic groups) and serves the interests of that group” (Horowitz 1985, 291), we can assume that the legitimacy of minority representatives comes from the minority group, most of the votes in their favor being cast by members of the minority. Furthermore, as Zuber hypothesizes, representatives of ethnic parties make stronger substantive representatives than those who achieve representation on other party lists or through interethnic coalitions (Zuber 2015). This hypothesis is backed up by Loncar, who argues that representatives of ethnic parties are more eager to tackle minority interests in their parliamentary activity than those minority representatives who reach parliamentary representation through mainstream party lists (Loncar 2016).

Ethnic parties are interesting from a constructivist perspective as well: they make a strong claim to group representation, they define the demands of the group in the political arena (in a way, they make the group politically salient), and they concurrently create the claim believed to be substantive and receive the support of the represented (Severs 2010, 414). This approach is different from Pitkin's formalistic approach, which uses a narrow definition of substantive representation. As Severs points out, in order to operationalize Pitkin's conception, a set of group interests needs to be identified, and their congruence with the representative's claims should be analyzed (Severs 2010, 416–417). Constructivist authors (Celis 2008; Celis and Childs 2008; Saward 2008; Minta and Sinclair-Chapman 2013) criticize this view, arguing that one needs to analyze the actions of critical actors, the process of claims-making, and the locations where these two occur (Celis et al. 2008). This has several consequences. First, it allows recognizing that multiple actors are involved in substantive representation (Celis and Childs 2008, 424). Second, by accepting that representation is about claims-making, one accepts that a group's interests are “argued

and interpreted” (Saward 2008, 95). Therefore, they cannot be defined objectively by the researcher; they are being constructed in the representational process. Third, by locating the most important places and fields where substantive representation of groups occurs, one can understand the chosen strategies in the claims-making process, because the locations where representatives act influence decisively the actors’ behavior (Celis et al. 2008, 105).

A constructivist approach, therefore, could help to discover more on the substantive representation of ethnic parties. As I will present in this paper, representatives do not need to formulate the interests and claims of the group in an explicit way – by choosing different discursive strategies in different situations or contexts, they still can represent their constituencies substantively. These actions would not be considered acts of substantive representation by Pitkin, yet they reveal a much more varied interest-pursuing strategy from a constructivist perspective.

A useful operationalization of the concept of substantive representation belongs to Audrey André et al. (cited by Severs 2012, 175). In their opinion, explicit and implicit substantive claims can be differentiated. While explicit claims specify the intentions of the representative and identify the represented group, implicit claims “do not mention the intention to represent anyone.” Nevertheless, the chosen strategies and “presentation of self” offer insights into the interests of the group the representative tries to represent. Explicit–implicit distinction is a useful tool for studying substantive representation, as it draws our attention to cases where discursive strategies and formulations are integral parts of the actions chosen by the representatives, and the substantive factor of representation emerges only at the outcome of decisions. Conversely, it would allow us to ask how the representation of minority groups through ethnic parties occurs, and what the main discursive and strategic elements in pursuing the group’s interests are.

### **Case study and methodology**

The first reading of draft laws in parliament is done in the committees of each house. Every bill is distributed to one or more committees, which formulate positive or negative opinions on the law and its amendments. The plenum of the two houses debates only the modified and reviewed version of each draft law. In the Chamber of Deputies, the initiators of the bill, a member of the parliamentary committees involved, one appointed member of each political group, and in some cases representatives participate in the debate. It is important to note that only discussions of the plenary sessions are recorded; usually no public records are taken of committee meetings. In addition to the plenary session and committee participation, deputies and senators are entitled to address written or oral questions to the government or to formulate interpellations. Furthermore, once a week they can make open political statements, that is, written or oral declarations about general or particular political issues. These statements usually are not related to the topics debated in plenary sessions, but often relate to issues concerning the group or county the deputies claim to represent.

When speaking in front of his/her colleagues, an MP can undertake three roles: he/she can (1) present the official opinion of a parliamentary committee, (2) represent the parliamentary group he/she is part of or the county he/she represents, or (3) can expound his/her own opinion.

In my analysis, I included only speeches in the last two categories, as in the first cases MPs are speaking not for the groups having elected them, but rather for the drafting committee they are part of. Their only role in these cases is to present the decisions and opinions of the committee. At the same time, because many of the comments made before the

plenum were strictly procedural and were related to parliamentary work, these were not included in the analysis either. Consequently, I selected 611 speeches of 22 DAHR legislators, of which 426 were delivered *during parliamentary debates*, while 185 were *open political statements*.<sup>10</sup> This distinction is important: while in the former case the topic of the intervention is determined by the debated draft law, in the latter case an MP chooses not only her/his own strategy, but also the topic of the intervention.

Alongside the selection of texts included in the analysis, another important contextual aspect of the parliamentary work of MPs is linked to these roles. As presented above, MPs have limited room for maneuver, as in most of the cases they speak in the name of the committee or party they represent, and only in some case they act according to their own agenda. In rare cases, such interventions can contradict their party's goals and strategies. Parliament's Organizational Rules favor a stricter party discipline, giving the opportunity for parties to control most of their members' speaking opportunities. In consequence, the rules act as exclusion mechanisms in the Foucauldian sense, enabling party-group leaders to control their MPs and to preserve the power relations within the group (Foucault 1971).

A telling example of this exclusion mechanism in action is found in the parliamentary debate on the Autonomy Statute of Szeklerland, a traditional region in Romania (Covasna, Harghita, and a part of Mureş counties) inhabited mostly by Hungarians. In the 1990s, one of the programmatic aims of DAHR was the territorial autonomy of the region. In the post-1996 period, as DAHR had become a stable member of the governing coalition, it was criticized by the (internal) opposition for dropping references to autonomy (Horváth 2002; Csergo 2007). Two members of the internal opposition at the time (Sógor Csaba and Garda Dezső, both members of the parliamentary group of DAHR) had introduced a bill on the autonomy of Szeklerland in 2005. The draft law was rejected by the Administrative Commission and later by the plenum as well.<sup>11</sup> In the parliamentary debate on the bill, even though the sponsors were members of DAHR who made a substantive claim on behalf of Hungarians, the leaders of the parliamentary group distanced the party from the initiative by emphasizing the initiators' exact role and status. "This is not a bill initiated by DAHR, and we cannot support it in its original form because it has many deficiencies" (Márton Árpád, parliamentary transcript, 27 April 2005).<sup>12</sup>

By formulating his opinion in first-person plural, the speaker makes clear that he speaks on behalf of all DAHR representatives, and by speaking in the name of the organization, he excludes the initiators from the parliamentary group of DAHR, symbolically depriving them of their status and legitimacy as representatives of the Hungarian community. Also, as a result of this mechanism, one can assume that MPs would rarely choose to speak from their own initiative and without the consent of the parliamentary group.

My analysis proceeded as follows. First, I used content analysis on a database in which each speech was coded by type, topic, and main argument. For each text that could not be included in a single topic, two codes were assigned. The last category (main argument) had two values: (1) references to Hungarian or constituency interest and (2) general references. A speech was considered of Hungarian or constituency interest if it referred to the Hungarian minority or minority rights, or to regions of Romania, counties, and settlements where significant numbers of Hungarians live. All other speeches were coded of general interest. Second, I conducted critical discourse analysis in order to locate linguistic structures and to analyze the purpose of the speeches and their political context. In this process, discursive strategies were identified that employ special types of arguments and linguistic realizations (Wodak 2009, 7–48).

### Discursive strategies chosen by DAHR in the Romanian parliament

One of the few studies attempting to use a constructivist approach to analyze substantive representation in a Central and Eastern European context was by Jelena Loncar. Using content analysis on parliamentary speeches, Loncar argues that substantive representation of minorities is more likely to appear in the case of ethnic parties competing alone in the elections. Their direct electoral accountability to minority voters affects their willingness and opportunities to act as substantive group representatives (Loncar 2016).

Using a similar method of content analysis for the Hungarian case in Romania, slightly different results emerge. While Loncar underlined the influence of ethnic parties on the behavior of minority MPs in claims-making and substantive representation, the content analysis of Hungarian MPs in Romania shows that substantive representation is not necessarily influenced by ethnic party membership (all of the analyzed representatives were members of the same ethnic party), but rather by the context of their political actions. As the results clearly show (Table 1), most of the minority interventions in parliament make no reference to Hungarian or constituency interests (410 interventions, 67% of total speeches), and there is a huge difference between interventions made in parliamentary debates and open political statements. In the former case, references to special interest can be found in 66 interventions of the total 427 (15.5%), while in the latter case 136 of the total 185 interventions (73.5%) mention the interest of Hungarians. Hence, it seems that MPs would ethnicize their messages in open political statements, whereas they would frame them in a more general way when speaking in parliamentary debates.

Considering the topic of intervention, Table 1 also shows that there are thematic differences between the two types of speeches. While in parliamentary debates Hungarian MPs intervene mostly on topics of general interest (domestic and foreign policy, economy, health and social issues, judiciary system, agriculture, and nature), in open political statements many interventions are on topics such as autonomy, minority rights, discrimination, regionalism, education, and culture. These issues are, according to both Hungarian voters and Hungarian politicians, closely linked to minority groups in general and to Hungarians in particular. In the program of DAHR, issues such as autonomy, discrimination, regionalization, decentralization, education, and culture are formulated as of Hungarian interest, while other topics are formulated in a general mode.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, when Hungarian voters are asked about the topics that Hungarian representatives should stand for, the same problems are enumerated. More exactly, as Tamás Kiss points out, Hungarian voters can differentiate between problems and issues they are generally concerned with (low salaries and pensions, employment, poor infrastructure, corruption, etc.), and the problems and issues they are interested in as members of the Hungarian community. When asked about the latter, the topics considered important are Hungarian language (higher) education, the representation of Hungarians (to fight for the rights of Hungarians), autonomy, infrastructure in Szeklerland, etc. (Kiss 2014, 22–23).

A further analysis of the speeches categorized according to themes and references to Hungarian and minority interests shows that in parliamentary debates the only topics where references to Hungarian interest dominate are regionalization and decentralization. In all other topics, even autonomy, minority rights, or discrimination, speeches are formulated mostly without clear references to Hungarians or Hungarian-inhabited constituencies.

In contrast, in open political statements, references to autonomy, minority rights, discrimination, corruption, or agricultural issues are framed as Hungarian or constituency interests. These types of statements criticize the current state of minority rights and introduce on the public agenda issues of ethnic discrimination or opinions on local, regional,

Table 1. Parliamentary speeches delivered by DAHR members by topic, type, and references to minority interest in the 2004–2008 period.

	Parliamentary debates		Open political statements		Total interventions	
	Hungarian or constituency interest	General references	Hungarian or constituency interest	General references	Hungarian or constituency interest	General references
Autonomy, minority rights, Hungarians	7	9	27	8	34	17
Discrimination, other minorities	9	15	19	1	28	16
Regionalism, decentralization	30	4	6	2	36	6
Education and culture <sup>a</sup>	10	71	4	3	14	74
Domestic and foreign policy <sup>b</sup>	5	58	7	6	12	64
Economy <sup>c</sup>	8	65	3	8	11	73
Health and social issues <sup>d</sup>	3	51	7	6	10	57
Judiciary system	0	38	8	3	8	41
Corruption	0	14	39	6	39	20
Agriculture, nature	3	43	56	4	59	47
Personal arguments, disputes, festive speeches	4	42	20	9	24	51
Total interventions	66	361	136	49	202	410

<sup>a</sup>Culture, media, civil society, education, research.

<sup>b</sup>EU (integration), bilateral and international relations, public administration, elections, security policy.

<sup>c</sup>Economy and fiscal policy, industry, energy policy, infrastructural development.

<sup>d</sup>Health and social policy, youth, sports, labor.



or national events that purportedly curtail the rights of national, ethnic, or religious minorities.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, considering the content analysis of the speeches, two strategies can be outlined. On the one hand, when speaking in parliamentary debates Hungarian representatives tend to present their cases without reference to the Hungarian minority, while in open political statements they formulate their messages in an ethnic way. From a Pitkinean point of view, one might argue that despite the descriptive representation of Hungarians, DAHR MPs do not seem to represent substantively their constituencies. Nevertheless, from a claims-making perspective, the two situations can be seen as different representation strategies chosen by *the same MPs*, which vary depending on the context and situation: MPs in their representational acts do not always emphasize their constituency interests, but rather adapt their discursive and representative strategies to the context.

Several discursive strategies were detected, which shows that an analysis of substantive representation of minorities requires attention not only to the explicit claims formulated in the speeches, but also to the chosen discursive strategies. These strategies are not chosen randomly, but arise from the political environment in which the parties function: majority political elites are suspicious of minority claims and often play the so-called Hungarian card to maximize their political support.<sup>15</sup> Hungarian representatives, when arguing about issues they think are important for their community, look for nonethnic framings, while when speaking on topics of their own choice they reify ethnic boundaries. The chosen strategy is contextualized by the function of the speech. While in the former case the goal of the interaction is legislative change, in the latter it is symbolical and political results.

### *Discursive strategies used in open political statements*

As the content analysis has shown, most of these declarations are about issues important to the Hungarian community or to the regions/cities Hungarians inhabit. Unlike the speeches delivered in parliamentary debates, open political statements make references to ethnic identities, both when taking a more critical stance toward governmental decisions that affect Hungarians, and when addressing Hungarian–Romanian relations. Furthermore, when delivering open political statements, MPs tend to formulate their claims in an explicit way. Most of the speeches included in this category use either the strategy of grievance or the strategy of good partnership.

Many interventions on topics related to minority rights, regionalism, or discrimination use a so-called *strategy of grievance*, through which Hungarian MPs underline the wrongdoings of Romanian authorities toward the Hungarian community, the constituencies they represent, or the historic region of Transylvania. Furthermore, the ethnic character of these injustices is underlined.

The authors of these statements (...) seems to know that it is better for us if we learn history and geography in Romanian. We will be happier if we do not have a university, we will be smarter if we do not think in Hungarian, and certainly we will sleep more deeply if we dream in a language other than our mother tongue. (...)

Does Mr. Hărdău not know that Hungarians pay taxes; and if we have a university for every 400,000 inhabitants, then we would have the right to at least three universities?! (...)

Does not anyone appreciate that we claim our rights in parliament, and when we go out on the street, we are “armed” only with candles and books? (Antal Árpád, parliamentary transcript, 4 April 2006)

The discursive structure of these interventions is very similar. First, the boundary between “us” (Hungarians, Transylvanians, Szeklers, etc.) and “them” (the Romanian authorities) is

constructed, then injustices are enumerated, and finally the claim of the constructed group is clearly stated.

Also, in many cases the examples are countered by references to European values, tolerance, and civilization:

Seems that the optimism and good faith of those days before the ceremony were in vain. Frankly, it gives me no pleasure to come back to that statement, since I was deeply convinced of the truth on which the statement was based.

On 15 March 2008, in a university city from an EU member-country, a 17-year-old student was brutally beaten by several followers of Noua Dreaptă, a neo-Nazi movement. (Kelemen Hunor, parliamentary transcript, 18 March 2008)

These types of statements have a dual meaning. On the one hand, the speakers create the link between the representatives and the represented, and reify the boundaries of the group on behalf of which they talk. On the other hand, they depict the imagined normality that would guarantee the integration of Hungarians as a group. The EU in these cases becomes not only the symbol of tolerance and diversity, but it also presumes a certain kind of norm of conduct that is not compatible with extremist behavior. Also, as Zsuzsa Csergo points out in her book on language policies, minority political elites hoped the EU would “internationalize” minority policy and enforce it in Romania (Csergo 2007, 76).

The second frequently used discursive strategy is the *strategy of good partnership*. The speeches where it appears formulate ideas on the Hungarian–Romanian relationship, underlining the necessity of good partnership and peaceful coexistence.

Have faith in us. Believe us, we do not want to steal Transylvania. We want to live here, on our homeland together with our Romanian, Roma, and remaining Saxon and Jewish friends. (Antal Árpád, parliamentary transcript, 4 April 2006)

In many cases, the strategy is used in festive speeches and runs parallel to the strategy of grievance. In the following example, a speech delivered by Garda Dezső on 15 March, the national holiday of Hungarians worldwide, the two (the strategy of good partnership and the strategy of grievance) appear at the same time.

The historian Liviu Maior, in his book titled *1848–1849. Romanians and Hungarians* stated the following: “In the field of interethnic relations, the Revolution of 1848 opened a wound difficult to heal, a split of society characterized by lack of communication and mutual understanding between the Transylvanian Hungarians and Romanians.

Unfortunately, even after 160 years, there is no communication between the two communities, neither on the minority rights of Hungarians, nor on cultural and territorial autonomy. (Garda Dezső, parliamentary transcript, 11 March 2008)

The strategy tries to contrast the injustices and challenges of the present with a desirable future built on the peaceful cohabitation between Hungarians and Romanians.

### *Discursive strategies used in parliamentary debates*

Three important discursive strategies influence most of the activity of Hungarian MPs in parliament: (1) de-ethnicization, (2) consistency, and (3) useful contribution. Of these, the first appears in references to issues that could be considered of minority interest, while the other two appear in a general context. From the claims-making perspective, the first seems more relevant. Nevertheless, the latter two are also important, as they help DAHR establish itself as a key legislative partner, thus increasing its chances of having an impact on policies that concern the Hungarian minority. Although they cannot be considered substantive representation, these strategies are important resources for the party in converting the claimed minority interests into policy outcomes.

*The strategy of de-ethnicization*

In many cases, DAHR MPs use technocratic arguments and policy-oriented language to approach controversial issues, which allows them to depoliticize minority-related demands and to reframe problems from a specific Hungarian–Romanian conflict to a more general one. This type of reinterpretation often allows minority and majority elites to find a compromising solution, and, one way or another, important minority claims are met.<sup>16</sup>

In parliamentary debates, the strategy appears when issues appear on the agenda that are strategically important for Hungarians or DAHR, or when the speaker can formulate an opinion that can be used to resolve conflicts between opposing parties. These latter interventions usually try to deflect the debate from personal and symbolic themes to more technical ones.

A characteristic example of the strategy is the debate on an amendment of the educational law that would allow certain subjects to be taught in multiple languages in the same class. A DAHR MP argues against it in the following way:

Let's say there's a Ukrainian-language school. For example, there is a decision that in the fifth grade certain subjects (...) can be taught both in their native language and in Romanian as well. The question is: when will Romanian, and when the language of the minority, be used? In what percentage?

(...) Please tell me how this type of teaching can be sorted out from a methodological point of view? I would say the introduction of a law of this kind would lead to one conclusion. They would learn neither the mother tongue nor the language of the state on a level that the initiator of the law would want (...) and where this type of bilingual education is introduced, the children will fail to learn even the curriculum. (Asztalos Ferenc, parliamentary transcript, 30 October 2006)

The speech can be divided into two parts. In the first part, the Hungarian representative speaks of the potential disadvantages not for Hungarians but for the Ukrainian minority. The second half of the text is a technical approach to the problem: the speaker demonstrates the absurdity of the amendment by presenting its negative impact on the educational curriculum. This intervention has several purposes. First, he tries to redefine the “us” and “them” polarization from a Romanian–Hungarian conflict to a broader majority–minority one. Second, by framing it as a technical problem, he further shifts this interpretation toward one rooted in general education policy and not identity politics.

This strategy can be observed in other cases as well. Depending on the topic of the debate, many of the speakers seek to create “ethnicity-free” discursive boundaries (city, village, students studying in their home country or abroad, the poor, the rich, etc.). A good example of this type of boundary creation can be found in the political argument formulated against a possible Romanian language exam in the diploma-validation process. In a first draft, all young people who earned their degrees outside Romania would have needed to take an exam in the Romanian language to have their diplomas recognized. Although this might have discouraged Hungarian young people from returning to Romania, DAHR MPs chose to argue against it in a nonethnic way:

*If we accept this idea*, our Romanian youth will find themselves in a really weird position: many of the graduate students do not earn their diploma in Romanian. When they come back from their four-year stay abroad, we assume that they do not know, or have forgotten, their mother tongue, the Romanian language? (Asztalos Ferenc, parliamentary transcript, 12 February 2007 – my emphasis)

Like the first case, by using first-person plural and by formulating the message in a specific and generalized way (“our Romanian youth”), the speaker tries to broaden the topic from a

Romanian–Hungarian conflict to one that affects young people who have chosen to study abroad, regardless of their ethnic origin.

The second type of de-ethnicizing strategy is typically used in conflicts between government and opposition, or government/president and the parliament, that carry symbolic or ideological weight for one of the Romanian parties in parliament. The main characteristic of the strategy is that it pulls DAHR outside these debates, showing it as the representative of public or civic interest. One eloquent example is the debate on the asset-declaration forms of civil servants, where DAHR MPs present themselves as rational actors in time of political conflict:

We made a couple of well-founded remarks on this issue, and when the forms were filled, it proved that we were right. The time for political statements must pass, and when a calmer moment arrives, we need to work on this law to get it in an acceptable form, in order for everyone to be able to fill them [the forms] in. (Márton Árpád, parliamentary transcript, 10 May 2005)

As the example shows, DAHR MPs present themselves as those who try to introduce a more pragmatic and rational discourse. They aim to create the impression that the Hungarian party is the only one that used common sense and can represent the interests of the citizens without being overwhelmed by the political battles inside the parliament.

In summary, in both cases de-ethnicization is used to achieve political integration. While the first approach is used to abolish ethnic division and polarization between the Hungarian and Romanian parties, the second aims to maintain the pragmatic and rational image of the party. It is important to mention that, in a significant number of cases, these two approaches are used together, to be separated only at an analytical level. Therefore, the “ethnicity-free” interest-pursuing discourse promoted alongside a pragmatic and rational discourse becomes an act of substantive representation as it tries to reframe the debate from a “Hungarian–Romanian issue” to a less emotionally loaded, more technically oriented one.

### *Strategy of consistency*

One of the most used linguistic strategies is consistency. Although the motivations behind this strategy are similar to those behind de-ethnicizing, in most cases its purpose is to search for parliamentary allies and to emphasize the reliability of DAHR. Furthermore, it appears in debates related to principles that are independent of party politics and public policy. Although apparently not linked to substantive representation, it helps us understand how minority representatives behave in contexts when no explicitly or implicitly formulated minority claims are at stake.

The strategy of consistency can appear in different contexts, but mostly in debates when voting intention is declared, since in many cases it coincides with the support of or opposition to legislation.

If ministers Vosganian and Adomniței had not adopted Anghel Stanciu’s four amendments, I would have been forced to bring up new arguments to support them. (...) But in this case I have only one task, to announce that the parliamentary group of DAHR remains consistent: they have fought for these four amendments until now, and they will continue to support them. (Asztalos Ferenc, parliamentary transcript, 19 December 2007)

These types of comments, in addition to providing the support of DAHR, also send a message to the legislation’s sponsors. This kind of collaboration reflects the alliance with Romanian parties and the support built between political groups, which sometimes is expressed openly as well. A good example of this open declaration appears in the debate

on a bill on the status of teaching staff, where the speaker for DAHR openly states his expectations of the party's parliamentary allies.

Of course, we will vote for the initiative, as we did in the committee. (...)

But the very fact that we have accepted this initiative (...) is a gesture on our part to those who have made this proposal. A gesture of friendship, with the hope that in the future we can partake of similar treatment. (Asztalos Ferenc, parliamentary transcript, 19 February 2008)

Consequently, the strategy of consistency is part of the bargaining process and provides assurances for partners that DAHR can be a useful ally. Also in some cases (e.g. the amendment of the law on the status of the teaching staff), DAHR MPs underline that they support initiatives that serve the interests of citizens. In other words, the strategy of de-ethnicization and the strategy of consistency almost reinforce each other:

We remain consistent and we are voting for the draft law in the plenum. Our decision is simple: it helps those people who work in education and are engaged in serious intellectual work. (Asztalos Ferenc, parliamentary transcript, 2 October 2007)

In such cases, consistency is none other than government support, reinforcing the government–opposition dichotomy and party politics in general. Therefore, when issues of non-ethnic interests are at stake, DAHR ceases to function as an ethnic party, and, as in the second form of the de-ethnicizing strategy, strengthens its bargaining relationship with the Romanian parties, and assures its political integration in the Romanian political sphere.

Another reading of the strategy of consistency would be that DAHR needs to prove its political loyalty. Indeed, at the beginning of every electoral cycle, both the Romanian parties and the Romanian media often accuse DAHR of having no principles, intent only on becoming part of the government and therefore willing to form a coalition with anybody, regardless of ideology or politics. With the help of this strategy, DAHR members try to counter these opinions and rebuild trust with their potential Romanian partners.

### *Strategy of useful contribution*

As seen in the previous section, in many cases DAHR attempts to cease to function as an ethnic party and is looking to achieve political integration. The strategy of useful contribution has similar objectives: by using it, DAHR MPs act for the “people” and the “country,” or emphasize their own contribution or mediation skills.

DAHR MPs deliver speeches and have opinions on a series of issues that represent no ethnic priority for the Hungarian community. In these cases, discursively speaking, rather than conceiving of itself as the substantive representative of Hungarians, DAHR acts on behalf of the whole population or the specific social segments concerned. A good example of this strategy appears in the debate on the draft law on copyright, when the speaker intervenes on behalf of the local record companies.

we do not want to hinder the law. (...) But the stakeholders have said that most CDs issued in Romania are sold at similar events [public events, town days, fairs] and this provision would reduce their sales by 50%.

Hence, according to this law, the Romanian music industry would be weakened. At most, we would make the work of Romanian artists more difficult. (Márton Árpád, parliamentary transcript, 11 November 2006)

In other cases, the speaker purports to express the opinion of the Romanian nation as a whole. In addition, the use of the first-person plural folds the Hungarian political group into the Romanian political nation as a whole. A good example of this appears in the debate on a regulation on support given to farmers.

*Something needs to be done in this area as well (...) We shouldn't be like some South American countries that leave most of their rural population without land.* (Garda Dezső, parliamentary transcript, 13 April 2006 – my emphasis)

The example shows that in topics with no symbolical load or that are not considered interests of the Hungarian community, DAHR can function like the Romanian parties. Although presumably members of the Hungarian community are interested in this topic as well, the wording clearly shows that the MP aims to represent the entire rural population employed in agriculture.

Another form of the strategy of useful contribution is used to highlight the role of DAHR in the imposition of laws and decisions that are considered important for the government or the whole country. This could mean emphasis on the party's participation in the drafting of legislation or its willingness to compromise during the legislative process.

It was not always easy, we did not always find the best solutions. As a result, we voted against the amendment or abstained in those cases where we felt there was a better solution. Nevertheless, we voted for this version of the draft in order to carry out one more step of the judiciary reform. (Márton Árpád, parliamentary transcript, 13 July 2005)

The chosen citation is typical of the strategy of useful contribution as DAHR MPs use it. The formulation implies both responsibility and professionalism, highlighting the contribution made by DAHR to the Romanian legislation.

### *Contextual differences in the case of the two speech types*

As shown in the previous sections, the discursive differences between open political statements and parliamentary debates can be explained by the contextual differences in the two types of interventions. While parliamentary debates have a direct impact on policy outcomes, open political statements do not have any direct result on policy, influencing power relations only from a political perspective.

A good example of the two types of representational acts in different contexts comes from DAHR MPs' strategies toward autonomy. As pointed out in the previous sections, in open political statements explicit but symbolic claims are formulated on this issue, while in parliamentary debates, as the topic cannot be represented in a de-ethnicized way, it is not tackled. These actions can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, as pointed out above, party leaders use their power granted by the Organizational Rules to control MPs, not allowing them to pursue goals not supported by the party. On the other hand, by willingly suppressing the parliamentary debate on issues not supported by other parties from the Romanian political sphere (e.g. claims for territorial autonomy in Szeklerland), they try to strengthen their bargaining position in other, more acceptable issues.

Consequently, open political statements in this case are symbolic representational acts aimed at those being represented, helping in the creation of the group and enabling the bond between the representatives and the represented, while speeches within parliamentary debates act as substantive representation, but rather implicitly.

### **Conclusions**

The Hungarian case study demonstrates that substantive representation can occur without a clear and explicit reference to the represented group or its claim and interest. The analysis shows how MPs can choose different strategies in order to perform substantive minority representation by moving the topic away from a conflicting Romanian–Hungarian

perspective toward something more universal, such as majority–minority relations in general, or migration, poverty, or the discrepancies between rural and urban areas. When no clear Hungarian interest is at stake (economic issues, internal and foreign policy, labor, judiciary system, youth policy, health and social policy, etc.), other discursive strategies are used (consistency and useful cooperation) that serve to downplay the ethnic label of DAHR and to help it reach out to mainstream parties, and to find possible allies on issues important to it. As DAHR receives most of its support from Hungarians and is labeled by both its own voters and other political actors as a Hungarian party, these strategies help the organization to move away from its ethnic roles and prove that it can act in the interest of the Romanian political sphere and society as a whole. In contrast, open political statements tend to reify ethnic boundaries and make references to minority rights, autonomy, and other issues relevant to Hungarian interests.

The case study draws attention to the fact that de-ethnicizing strategies do not necessarily constitute a lack of substantive representation, as they can be part of a wider substantive representation (and claims-making) strategy that includes both ethnicizing and de-ethnicizing elements, depending on the context. Also, it points out that looking at parliamentary actions in isolation misses the relationship between the chosen strategies in the case of ethnic and nonethnic issues. Representatives have a wide variety of strategies to pursue the formulated claims and interests they endeavor to represent. While in some cases MPs try to hide their descriptive representational characteristics, which could weaken their representative potential, in other cases, they formulate claims to ethnic representativeness, reifying the boundaries between minority and majority. Furthermore, when no ethnic claim is present, possible partnerships can be nurtured, which could be useful when the support of majority party members is needed.

At the same time, my analysis underlines a possible contextual interpretation of de-ethnicization. Discursive strategies that in one context can be considered substantive representation can in other contexts lead to an opposite outcome, and can even be used for intra-party purposes. A dilemma that needs further research may arise: if substantive representation goes beyond explicit claims-making and becomes context-dependent, how can substantive representation be established? Also, in order to understand these influences, several more contextual situations need to be analyzed and compared: the activity of smaller and larger minorities, minorities participating in governing coalition or in opposition, or the influence of the changing electoral law.


From a theoretical point of view, the presented case study illustrates that research on substantive representation should be more sensitive to contexts in which the representative act occurs. The examples show that in many cases, not only the explicit formulation of interests can be considered substantive representation, as the choice between explicit and implicit substantive representational acts is influenced by the contexts in which the representatives find themselves. Therefore, we should problematize the way we understand (and code) substantive representation. More emphasis should be placed on how the context of the representational act influences substantive representation, in order to understand how and why representatives choose their discursive and political strategies.

## Notes

1. Pitkin differentiates among four types of representation: descriptive, substantive, formalistic, and symbolic; however, the last two are less relevant from this paper's point of view.
2. See, among others: Bird (2007); Black and Hicks (2006); Gamble (2007); Minta (2012); Minta and Sinclair-Chapman (2013); Mansbridge (1999); Saalfeld (2011); Saalfeld and Bischof (2013).

3. According to the 2011 census, the second largest minority is the Roma (3.3%), all other minorities being under 1% of the population (See the results of the census – <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/>).
4. Although other Hungarian parties have appeared, none have managed to break the hegemony of DAHR on the national level, the party remaining the only Hungarian organization capable of winning seats in parliament so far.
5. The electoral system in the 2008–2016 period was mixed, with single-member constituencies and a proportional-like seat allocation system for parties that passed the 5% or an alternative threshold (see Székely 2009; Marian and King 2010).
6. Freely chosen written or oral declarations on general or particular political issues delivered in parliament once a week.
7. Although there could be some voters who voted for them exactly because of their gender or ethnic origin, this cannot be generalized to their supporters as a whole.
8. In the sense used by Jane Mansbridge, who refers to situations when a representative embraces the representation of people or groups from other districts (Mansbridge 2003, 524).
9. In a reversed logic, this explains why those nonminority MPs who represent constituencies with a large percentage of minority residents are more active when issues concerning the rights and problems of ethnic minorities are on the agenda (Saalfeld and Bischof 2013; Saalfeld 2011).
10. All the interventions can be downloaded from the website of the House of Deputies: <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/parlam/structura.fp?idp=5&cam=2&leg=2004&prn=0> – last accessed on 5 April 2017.
11. The parliamentary development of the draft can be downloaded here: [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl\\_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=6470](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=6470) – accessed on 5 April 2017.
12. All the transcripts are in Romanian and were translated by the author.
13. For details, see the program of DAHR (“Az RMDSZ programja” 2013).
14. See, for example, the intervention of Máté András Levente, who argues for the restitution of church properties (24 May 2005), or the speech of Toró T. Tibor on behalf of those who tried to organize an internal referendum on the autonomy of Szeklerland and were harshly attacked in the Romanian media (27 February 2007).
15. For a detailed presentation of the political environment in Romania, see Horváth (2002) or Csergo (2007). Although both these books are based on research from the 1990s and early 2000s, many of their arguments are still valid.
16. Despite its positive aspect, this strategy is not always successful. For example, in the 1996–2000 period, a central demand of DAHR was the re-establishment of a Hungarian language state university that was abolished in the 1950s. This claim was rejected by the coalition parties. In response, DAHR threatened to leave government. After difficult talks a compromise arose: the Romanian parties proposed the establishment of a multilingual Hungarian–German university called Petőfi-Schiller, which was accepted by DAHR leaders as well (Horváth 2002, 47–48). Although even a governmental decision was adopted on the issue, neither the multilingual, nor the independent Hungarian university has ever been established. The strategy of de-politicization helped in solving the political deadlock, but the minority claims were not met; thus, the action cannot be considered an act of substantive representation.

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