

“Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Sociology and Social Work

Habilitation thesis

Survey methodology and electoral behavior

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Abstract

In accordance with the provisions of the law (Ordinance no. 3121 from 2015, January 27th), the present habilitation thesis is divided into two major parts. The first part presents the main scientific results after I have obtained the PhD. This section includes career development and main directions of its development grouped into three broad areas: academic, scientific, and professional (private sector and NGOs). In the second part, I present the contexts in which I coordinated various research teams, in private and academic areas (grants won in national competitions) and a list of the main results from these activities. Here, I briefly describe the organization of the teaching-learning situations, I introduce principles underlying this process and I provide two examples of ways to support learning and research by presenting two syllabi (BA and MA).

The largest part of the thesis presents the main scientific results of the author. As shown in the topics addressed in these publications, my research interests are structured in three main directions: electoral studies, survey methodology and comparative analysis of survey data. The first area includes studies on the analysis and explanation of the election results in Romania (three books coordinated and over 10 chapters published), the relationship between values and politics (a book chapter on ideological self-positioning in Romania, a book chapter that discusses about political culture, political participation, and political choices of urban population, a book chapter on the relationship between economic crisis and support for democracy in Romania, forthcoming at Routledge), turnout estimation (two book chapters, a BDI paper), the relation between migration and turnout rate (one ISI paper published, two ISI papers in evaluation). The topic of survey methodology includes the analysis of non-response rate (total, respectively item non-response) (two BDI papers), the effectiveness of counter-biasing techniques in reducing self-reported turnout (ISI paper, forthcoming), and social desirability estimation using the item count technique (ISI paper). In my studies on the comparative analysis of survey data, I am interested in testing measurement invariance (ISI paper) and its practical applications (BDI paper, a book chapter). Summing up, in the last 10 years I have published four ISI papers, six BDI papers, a book as single author, a book chapter forthcoming at Routledge, over 10 book chapters with national publishers, and I coordinated three books on the subject of national elections. The

total number of citations of my papers according to Google Scholar is around 90, from which more than 10 are in ISI papers. The number of points obtained from citations, calculated according to the methodology, is 94.

In the last 10 years I have coordinated three grants, all of them won in national competitions: IDEI "Change and Stability in Romanian Electoral Behaviour: 2009-2014" 1498600 RON, 2012-2014; IDEI "Presidential Election Study - Romania 2009", 997871 RON, 2009-2011, CEEX "Political participation and social accountability for democratic governance in Romania. Citizenship in the perspective of EU integration ", 132100 RON, 2006-2008. In each of these research grants, I have collaborated with researchers at different stages of their career, from PhD students to professors from Romania and abroad. The collaboration was successful in most cases, as one can see from the research products obtained (ISI and BDI papers, books and book chapters, presentations at national and international conferences, databases, and questionnaires).

In the private (Metro Media Transylvania and Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy) and NGO sectors (OSF, EDRC) I have participated in a series of survey-based researches and I have coordinated several research teams. The main attributions were related to writing the research proposal, writing the questionnaire, doing the sample schema and extracting the sample, data analysis, writing the research report, and public presentation of the results.

Currently I am member of three research teams that are implementing cross-national comparative survey-based research in Romania: Comparative Survey of Electoral Systems (CSES), World Values Survey (WVS), and European Values Survey (EVS). In the past years (2007-2011), I was member of Romanian team that implemented GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) research.

An important part of my work in the last 10 years has been to design and to support courses at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work ("Babeş-Bolyai" University). At the undergraduate level, I teach two compulsory courses ("Methods and techniques of sociological research" and "The design and the practice of social research") and an optional one ("Electoral studies"). At MA level, I teach three courses: "Survey methodology", "Data mining techniques", and "Complex preferences analysis". In addition to classes held at the Faculty of Sociology, I taught at several schools of statistics organized by various institutions

(1998-2003, "National School of Statistics" organized by FSD, Department of Sociology and Department of Political Science, "Babeş-Bolyai" University; Summer School of Statistics "Measuring the social sciences", Bucharest, 2011, organized by The Society of Sociologists from Romania; School of Statistics, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, organized by the Faculty of Political Science, "Babeş-Bolyai" University).

So far, I have been taking part in more than 10 doctoral committees. As a result of these experiences I become aware of the activities involved in such activities, I have identified a number of issues that PhD candidates are facing, I provided scientific feedback in relation to issues of research design and statistical analyzes, respectively I provided useful comments for improving the PhD theses. I have done the same type of work in committees and mentoring doctoral work in which I was invited.

All these activities have contributed greatly to my training as a specialist in the field of electoral studies, survey methodology, and statistical analysis. Simultaneously, these activities helped me to develop skills in working with academic and professional teams. Among these I mention: the ability to understand the problems faced by early career researchers and identify solutions tailored to their knowledge and interests; ability to individualize workloads, to guide research interests and to learn to converge on issues; ability to mobilize small and medium sized research teams to achieve the proposed research objectives.