Bridging majority and minority perspectives of society – The role of social identity complexity/inclusiveness

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More complex and inclusive social identities lead to more openness towards outgroups; we investigated whether they can also predict a wider range of political attitudes on a sample of 767 youth from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo. In every country, we targeted the ethnic majority and an adversarial ethnic minority. We measured the perceived overlap between the national, ethnic, and religious groups to which one belongs (social identity complexity) as well as the number of people individuals identify with among those who share all, some, or none of their identities (social identity inclusiveness). Social identity complexity and inclusiveness predicted lower social dominance orientation, along with higher support for affirmative action - in both minority and majority groups. Similarly, in both groups, more complex/inclusive identities were related to a critical stance towards the society, e.g. lower trust in national institutions. However, some differences emerged: while minority group members with more complex/inclusive identities perceived less equality between groups, this was reversed in majority groups. Further, more inclusive identities were related to less political cynicism only among minority group participants. In sum, multiple identity parameters generally proved more predictive for minority group participants, in particular of attitudes related to the local socio-political system. Our findings suggest that fostering complex and inclusive identities could provide a common ground for bringing together majority and minority perspectives and building more cohesive societies.

Keywords: social identity complexity, social identity inclusiveness, minorities, social attitudes

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Short abstract (40 words): On a sample of 767 youth in four Balkan countries, we discovered social identity complexity and inclusiveness predict lower social dominance, more support for affirmative action and lower trust in institutions; they were more predictive for minority's than majority's attitudes.