

10 Authoritarianism and Prejudice in Present-Day Hungary

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Introduction

The study of authoritarianism has a long history in different fields of psychology (such as psychoanalysis, clinical and social psychology) as well as in sociology. The foundation stone of modern authoritarianism research was laid by Adorno et al. in the 1940s in their celebrated and much criticised volume *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950), though the concept itself goes back to Freudian individual and mass psychology. The work of Adorno et al. resulted, among other things, in a major methodological tool, the F-scale (Fascism-scale) which was intended to measure authoritarianism, a *personality trait* which, according to the inventors of the scale, bore strong statistical correlation with ethnocentrism, antisemitism, a generalised hostility against outgroups and minorities, and, last but not least, with right wing, conservative ideological attitudes.

Fifty years have passed since the creation of the F-scale. Curiously enough, the F-scale and its underlying theory of authoritarianism have survived the last half-century, albeit not without challenging criticisms, alternative approaches, essential modifications and ‘deconstructions’ of the original theoretical concepts and methodological tools. This is, of course, not the place to retell the long history of *The Authoritarian Personality*, and the vicissitudes of its reception in various social science disciplines. (See for example Meloen, Hagendoorn, Raaijmakers, and Visser, 1988; Meloen, 1990; Stone, Lederer, and Christie, 1993; Samelson, 1993.) It is enough to say here, that the strength of the work by Adorno et al. lies not so much in their original formulations (whose validity has in fact repeatedly been falsified), but in the idea that a *systematic relationship* should exist between political attitudes and actions on the one hand, and the psychological structure of the personality, on the other.

The historical and ideological problems themselves implied in the controversial reception of *The Authoritarian Personality* have constituted an exciting intellectual puzzle well worth playing with. However, as the social and political transformations taking place in Hungary, and other Central and Eastern

European countries since the late-1980s, opened up new avenues for social research, it was tempting to seize the opportunity by introducing and experimenting with the concept of authoritarianism on the Hungarian social science scene.

This challenging endeavour became even more tempting when it turned out that prejudice and outgroup hostility, including antisemitism and anti-Gypsy attitudes, one of the closest correlates of the classical 'authoritarian syndrome', began to make serious inroads into Hungarian politics post-1989.

All these considerations point toward the relevance of studying authoritarianism and its correlations to political attitudes as well as to manifestations of prejudices in Central and Eastern European societies. Unfortunately, there is no long-standing tradition of authoritarianism-research in the region on which one could build. Not surprisingly, measuring authoritarianism was not a daily habit for social scientists in the countries of existing socialism (cf. McFarland et al. 1993). Opportunities for such research gradually improved after the advent of glasnost in Russia and the democratic transition in Central and Eastern Europe. As a consequence, a number of studies have been completed in latter two regions over the past few years in the domain of authoritarianism in the broadest sense. (For example, McFarland et al. 1993; Siber, 1991, Todosijević and Enyedi, 1997)

Hungarian studies on authoritarianism in Hungary

In Hungary, our team¹ has been involved in research on authoritarianism since the early-1990s. During this period we have conducted two surveys specifically designed to assess the importance of authoritarianism as a psychological variable in relation to other, social-psychological and sociological variables. The first of which was conducted in spring 1994 when we investigated the connections between authoritarianism, prejudice and political-ideological attitudes on a random sample of 1000 Hungarian citizens aged 18 and over². In the autumn of 1997, we conducted another survey for which we used specific samples, taken from two Hungarian towns: the relatively affluent city Sopron, close to the Austrian border, and Salgótarján, a city located in the crisis-ridden north-eastern region of the country. We questioned 400 people in each city in such a way that the respondents consisted of two groups: one of young people (16–17 year-olds), and one of their parents. Each group consisted of 200 respondents. This was not simply a repetition of the 1994 study; it was planned specifically to assess regional and age differences. In addition to these two surveys, we applied the F-scale several times in other surveys conducted by TÁRKI (the Social Science Informatics Centre) as part of the Hungarian

Household Panel.

Our studies on the relationship between authoritarianism, prejudices and political-ideological attitudes have yielded interesting data which seem to point to the relevance of the concept of authoritarianism in the present-day Hungarian society. These surveys have provided a rich database for the study of many other aspects of prejudice, political attitudes, and their connections to different sets of socio-demographic variables.

Authoritarianism was measured in these surveys by various forms of F and RWA scales, but a shortened, seven item version of the original F-scale was included in all of them.³ Each item was asked on four-point Likert-scale. For the computation of the score we replaced the missing values with the means, and computed the F-score as the mean of the seven items. The value one indicated an anti-authoritarian position and four represented the authoritarian pole. For the reliability coefficients for the seven item F-scale see Table 10.1.

Table 10.1 Reliability of the shortened F-scale in Hungarian surveys (1994–1997)

Year & Survey	Sample	Cronbach's Alpha
1994 RWA Survey	Nationally representative sample; Hungarian citizens aged 18+; un-weighted, N=1000.	0.74
1996 TÁRKI 'Tomorrow' Survey	Nationally representative sample; Hungarian citizens aged 18+; un-weighted, N=1000.	0.79
1997 6th Hungarian Household Panel	Nationally representative; Hungarian households. Questionnaires filled out individually by household members aged 16+; un-weighted N=2855.	0.80
1997 Youth and their Parents Survey	Random samples in two cities, in each 200 16 to 17-year-olds and one parent (mostly the father). N=800.	0.60 (youth) 0.79 (parents)

Results

Authoritarianism and political-ideological orientation

Of the controversies sparked by *The Authoritarian Personality*, one of the major points of debate was the relationship between authoritarianism and ideo-

logical beliefs or *Weltanschauungen*. While Adorno et al. originally hypothesised particularly strong connections between personality structure, hostile attitudes against outgroups, and conservative, rightist political beliefs, some critics advocated a more symmetrical approach to Left and Right in relation to authoritarianism. Influenced by the experiences of Stalinism and theories which equated fascism and communism under the term 'totalitarianism', a major trend in the reinterpretation of the concept of authoritarianism was to stress that this personality syndrome may be present with 'extremes' of Right or Left (see e.g. Altemeyer, 1981; Stone, 1980; Stone, Smith, and Lawrence, 1993).

Therefore, one of the main questions for us was to decide whether in a post-communist country like Hungary, we can detect any systematic relationship between authoritarianism on the one hand, and 'Left' or 'Right' ideologies on the other. This question seemed quite exciting because Hungary has a long tradition of right-wing ideologies, the impact of which were counterbalanced by the dominance of leftist ideologies during the decades of communism which must have strongly influenced the belief systems of at least two generations. The collapse of the Communist regime, in turn, disqualified many of the basic tenets of the once dominant leftist ideologies while legitimating rightist ones.

The result of our analysis⁴ of the correlations between authoritarianism and political-ideological orientation is published elsewhere (for the statistical results and discussion see Enyedi, Erős and Fábrián, 1997). In summary, we found that in 1994 the members of leftist groups in Hungary were placed somewhere between the liberals and the nationalist-conservatives. The Leftists, although characterised by a certain amount of prejudice and intolerance, lag behind the conservative Right in this respect. As far as anti-authoritarian attitudes are concerned, the liberals were the most anti-authoritarian, followed by the socialists, and then the extreme Right and the extreme Left who came equal third, and the conservatives were last. In general, leftists do not seem to be particularly authoritarian or anti-authoritarian.

The issues and values touched on by the authoritarianism scale seem important to the liberals and conservatives, and less so for the socialists. One interpretation is that the socialists middle-of-the-road position simply shows their indifference. In fact, this 'in-between' position corresponds well to the Socialist Party's strategy of the time. The Party tried to avoid political debates seen by many as 'ideological' or 'intellectual'. A neutrality which according to some contributed greatly to the party's 1994 election victory. Another interpretation would stress that the Socialist camp is composed of two, well distinguishable groups, one of them embracing tolerant values, the other rejecting them. But the phenomenon of left-wing authoritarianism seems to be less sig-

nificant than its rightist counterpart, taking into account the results of the 1998 parliamentary elections and the ideological correlates (xenophobia, national isolation, etc.) of right-wing authoritarianism.

The relationship between authoritarianism, prejudices and socio-demographic variables

In our survey we measured anti-Gypsy attitude, political antisemitism, and discriminative antisemitism with scales based on four-point Likert type items (see Fleck and Fábíán 1999). A higher score on every scale indicated a higher level of prejudice. We considered it important to make a distinction between political and discriminative antisemitic attitudes. The language of political antisemitism is a kind of cultural code in Hungary, which provides the individual with symbolic identity in the realm of politics by expressing his/her negative attitude toward modernisation. (Kovács, 1997) However, since the Holocaust, there are significant cultural inhibitions against open antisemitism; negative discrimination against Jews is rejected, at least in such semi-public situations as an interview.

We analysed a relatively limited number of socio-demographic variables partly to achieve clear-cut models and partly because our main goal was to contrast the effect of educational level with that of authoritarianism. In the following analyses, education was measured by most years of education completed. In addition to education, we included the net per capita income of the respondent's family and the respondent's age. To test for the potential non-linear effect of income and age, we included two transformed variables. A positive standardised linear-regression-coefficient (beta) for the transformed age or income indicates that middle-aged people are less likely to accept prejudices than the young or the elderly. If the coefficient is negative, than the joint distribution of being prejudiced and age forms a reversed U-curve, indicating that middle-aged respondents are more prejudiced (see Table 10.2 for the correlation matrix of the variables included in the analyses).

The most robust (negative) linear connection is between authoritarianism and educational level. Also, one can see that the F-scale correlates with the analysed dimensions of prejudice at a 0.3–0.4 level. The direct correlation of education and prejudices is somewhat lower at a -0.2–-0.3 level. A reversed U-shaped relationship can be observed between income and anti-Gypsy attitude variables. The positive correlation between the transformed income variable and anti-Gypsy attitude indicates that people who belong to the middle of the income ladder are more inclined to be prejudiced than the poor or the rich. Age correlates similarly with the analysed dimensions of antisemitism, but this is a rather weak connection.

Table 10.2 Zero-order correlations of authoritarianism with prejudices, and selected socio-demographic variables^a

	2 Anti-Gypsy attitude	3 Political antisemitism	4 Discriminative antisemitism	5 Per Capita Income	6 Income²	7 Education	8 Age	9 Age²
1	0.39**	0.31**	0.33**	-0.19**	-0.06	-0.48**	0.34**	0.09**
2		0.38**	0.37**	-0.16**	-0.10**	-0.31**	0.19**	0.11**
3			0.52**	-0.10**	-0.03	-0.15**	0.19**	0.07*
4				-0.11**	-0.06	-0.26**	0.18**	0.09**
5					0.79**	0.29**	0.05	-0.03
6						0.17**	-0.01	-0.04
7							-0.42**	-0.23**
8								0.18**

^a1994; correlations significant at: *=0.05 (two-tailed); at: **=0.01 (two-tailed); N=946

Table 10.3 Stepwise multiple linear regression of anti-Gypsy attitude, political antisemitism, and discriminative antisemitism on authoritarianism and socio-demographic variables

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables								
	Anti-Gypsy Attitude			Political AS			Discriminative AS		
	Beta	R ²	SE	Beta	R ²	SE	Beta	R ²	SE
	incrmnts			incrmnts			incrmnts		
Auth.	0.314***	0.150	0.494	0.281***	0.098	0.630	0.269***	0.110	0.697
Educ.	-0.149***	0.019	0.488	NS	–	–	-0.135***	0.014	0.692
Inc.	NS	–	–	NS	–	–	NS	–	–
Inc. ²	-0.061*	0.02	0.488	NS	–	–	NS	–	–
Age	NS	–	–	0.098**	0.008	0.627	NS	–	–
Age ²	NS	–	–	NS	–	–	NS	–	–
Adjusted R ²	0.171			0.106			0.124		
R	0.417			0.328			0.354		

* p<0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p<0.001, 1994 “RWA Survey”

The message coming from the correlation matrix and the multivariate models (Table 10.3.) is clear: authoritarianism is the main determinant of prejudiced attitudes regardless of educational level. Our previous analyses of anti-Gypsy attitudes (Fábián and Erős, 1996) supported this conclusion, our current results do the same for antisemitic attitudes. From the analysed independent variables in all three cases it is authoritarianism that has the most robust effect, and the bulk of the fit of the analysed models is attributable to the inclusion of authoritarianism, and is not due to the effects of educational level, income or age (cf. Billig and Cramer, 1990; Dekker and Ester, 1991). Of the income and age variables, the non-linear effect was verifiable only for age and then only in relation to anti-Gypsy attitudes. Respondents with mid-range incomes were more inclined to be negative toward Gypsies, than were those in the lowest and highest income brackets. It is questionable though, whether this correlation is not a result of the estimated four to five per cent of Gypsy respondents in our sample; and, as we have no information on ethnicity, the regression analyses also contain data from Gypsy respondents. It may be that their unfavourable income condition blurs the linear relationship between anti-Gypsy attitudes and income. However, were this methodological problem absent from the background of the identified relationship, then the negative attitude toward Gypsies could be interpreted as an exclusion technique used by the middle classes, or as a manifestation of the fear of losing one's status.

Of the socio-demographic variables, only age had a statistically significant effect on political antisemitism. Older generations tend to be more accepting of the reasoning behind political antisemitism.

What is significant in our results is that acceptance of political antisemitism does not correlate with educational level. As a matter of fact, more educated people may even be politically more antisemitic in reality, since they are likely to be able to better conceal their non-conventional opinions. This is the effect of communicative latency, which was explicitly shown in Germany by Werner Bergmann (1986), and examined in depth by András Kovács (1997) among Hungarian university students.

Further results and discussion

In order to understand exactly what we were measuring with the F-scale, we would have needed to employ a number of tools—interviews, psychometric tests, experiments, and the like. However, the F-scale's relationship to socio-demographic background variables and attitude-items (indicated below by zero-order correlation coefficients and by standardised beta coefficients from linear regression analyses) can also shed some light on the role of the phe-

nomenon measured by it.

In our study, the F-scale correlated significantly with the antisemitism scale (0.34). The relation of authoritarianism to negative attitudes towards outgroups was also discernible (0.3). The positive relationship was even stronger between the authoritarianism scale and the scale measuring anti-Gypsy feelings (0.39). These results indicate that—at least for correlations—the Adorno et al. model seems to work.

As additional hypothesis, we tested the relationship of authoritarianism to political orientation. The scale labelled anti-socialist political orientation had a weak but positive relationship to authoritarianism (0.16). We observed, however, a much closer link (0.45) between authoritarianism and some other political attitudes which expressed alienation from the society and the political system.

Authoritarianism seems to be much more embedded in the socio-demographic environment than the other phenomena measured by our attitude items. The F-scale is linked more tightly to the social status (0.51) than antisemitism (0.24), anti-socialism (0.08), outgroup-rejection (0.23), anti-gypsy attitudes (0.29), or alienation (0.4). We gained a very similar picture in the 1997 adult sub-sample, where all the attitude scales (antisemitism, anti-Gypsy feelings, perception of conflicts, leftist cosmopolitanism) lagged behind authoritarianism in the strength of their relation to social status. The only exception was the “satisfaction with life” scale, with a yet closer link to status (0.55) than authoritarianism.

Not only status but also religion has a stronger impact on authoritarianism (0.24) than on antisemitism (0.18), anti-socialism (0.08), outgroup-rejection (0.04), anti-Gypsy attitudes (0.12) or alienation (0.07). In 1997 the social status of the respondent’s family (0.32), together with the parents’ authoritarianism (0.43) were the most crucial factors in shaping the children’s authoritarianism.

The path model in Figure 10.1 shows the role of authoritarianism in the formation of xenophobia. Authoritarianism mediates the impact of status and religion to such an extent that the main route from these variables to xenophobia is not direct, it goes through the authoritarianism variable. While authoritarianism is strongly influenced by status and religion, it cannot be regarded as simply a manifestation of these two. The arrow going from authoritarianism to xenophobia indicates that authoritarianism’s link to xenophobia remains strong (0.35) even after controlling for religion and status (see Figure 10.1).

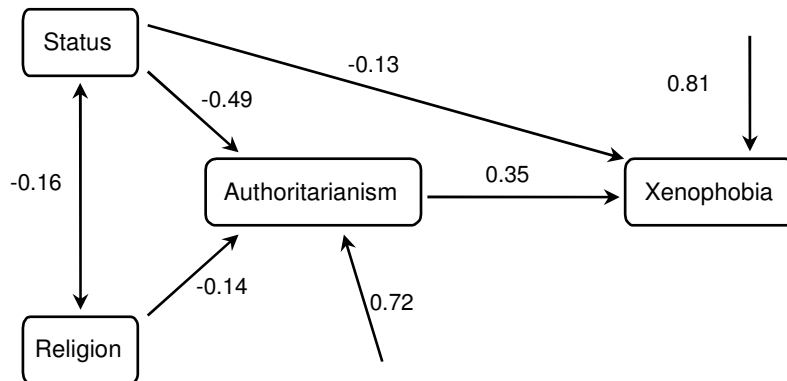


Figure 10.1 Path analysis of the data from 1994 with xenophobia score as dependent variable^a

^a Figures are standardised regression coefficients; relationships not significant at $p=0.05$ are not represented

The observed link between authoritarianism and anti-socialism raises the possibility that the F-score is, partly, a function of a (conservative) political orientation. A causal link between the two would, of course, contradict Adorno et al.'s interpretation, which is based on early socialisation theories. But in constructing a hypothetical causal-chain of influence, it seems more rational to place the political attitudes after, not before, the F-scale. Together, social status and religion explain 28 per cent of authoritarianism's variation. Entering political attitudes into the list of independent variables, hardly raises the explained variance by more than one per cent. If, however, one places conservative anti-socialism after authoritarianism, and conceives of the political attitudes as an intermediate variable between authoritarianism and the other variables, important chains of influence can be established. In the figure below we have used antisemitism as the dependent variable to illustrate the way that authoritarianism, anti-socialism and xenophobia work (see Figure 10.2). Figure 10.2 indicates that the development of antisemitism is somewhat different from that of xenophobia. Religion here plays a much more serious role. Political attitudes do not add much to the explanation of xenophobia, and the impact of anti-socialism is not significant after controlling for the other independent variables. This is not the case with antisemitism, for which the explained variance increases by three per cent after political attitudes are added to the independent variables. Figure 10.3 shows that a large part of religion's impact goes through political attitudes. Finally, it is possible to include xeno-

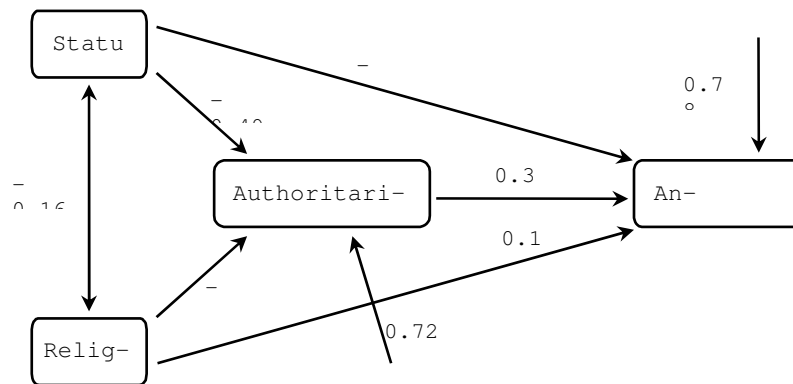


Figure 10.2 Path analysis of the data from 1994 with the antisemitism score as dependent variable: I

^a Figures given are standardised regression coefficients; relationships not significant at $p=0.05$ are not represented

phobia as a direct cause of antisemitism in the model (see Figure 10.4). It is possible to conceive a causal link between these two, in the sense that the respondent was first socialised to have a general suspicion against strangers, and only then applied these cognitive constructs to particular cases such as Jews. The sharp increase in the explained variance indicates that the relation between xenophobia and antisemitism (either casual or not) is indeed very strong: the original zero order correlation of (0.49) decreases, but stays high (0.37) even after controlling for all the other factors. Authoritarianism's effect, on the other hand, diminished sharply after xenophobia was introduced. The likely interpretation is that a large part of authoritarianism's impact on the level of antisemitism is not direct but in fact goes through the xenophobia factor. Religion retains a weak direct relation to antisemitism, but both background variables, status and religion, seem to work mainly via psychological and attitudinal factors and not directly.

Conclusions

The results shown underscore the importance of authoritarianism in determining political-ideological attitudes and attitudes toward outgroups. Authoritarianism as measured by our version of the F-scale has proved to be a strong predictor of right wing political and ideological views

as well as of prejudices against Jews, Gypsies and other minorities.⁵ Authoritarianism also strongly correlates with generalised outgroup hostility.

Our results, however, call for a more sophisticated and complex explanation of these correlations. As for the political-ideological attitudes, it is clear that in 1994 the liberal parties were able to mobilise mostly non-authoritarian voters, while the right wing and the extreme left attracted the authoritarian ones. However, this picture seems to have changed substantially since 1994. It seems possible that the extreme Left's appeal to the authoritarian voters is diminishing and the authoritarian citizens are attracted to conservative, right wing parties. As the 1998 election results show, the FIDESZ, one of the liberal parties, which in 1994 was the most attractive party for the less authoritarian respondents, also managed to successfully mobilise—at least temporarily—some segments of the most authoritarian right wing voters. It remains an open question how and why this rearrangement took place, and new studies are required to explore these and current changes in political-ideological attitudes and their correlation to authoritarian tendencies.

Figure 10.5 below from our 1997 survey may shed some light on this problem inasmuch as it shows that young people seem to be less favourably disposed towards certain outgroups (most notably, Jews and Gypsies) than their parents. This may suggest a growth of authoritarian potential among youth. The tendency of certain groups of young people toward greater expression of anti-Gypsy attitude was already detectable in the 1994 survey. This is a warning signal, emphasising the importance of looking at the role of intergenerational differences and socialisation effects in the development of authoritarianism.

As the analysis of our data suggests, authoritarianism is the main determinant of prejudiced attitudes, independently of the level of education. On the other hand, authoritarianism seems to be strongly embedded in the socio-demographic environment. Its function might be a *mediation* between socio-demographic factors and attitudes—strengthening or weakening the impact of the former to the latter. In this sense authoritarianism can be regarded as a social psychological construct which is neither simply embedded in an individual's personality structure nor merely a reflection of learned attitudes acquired in a particular social environment.

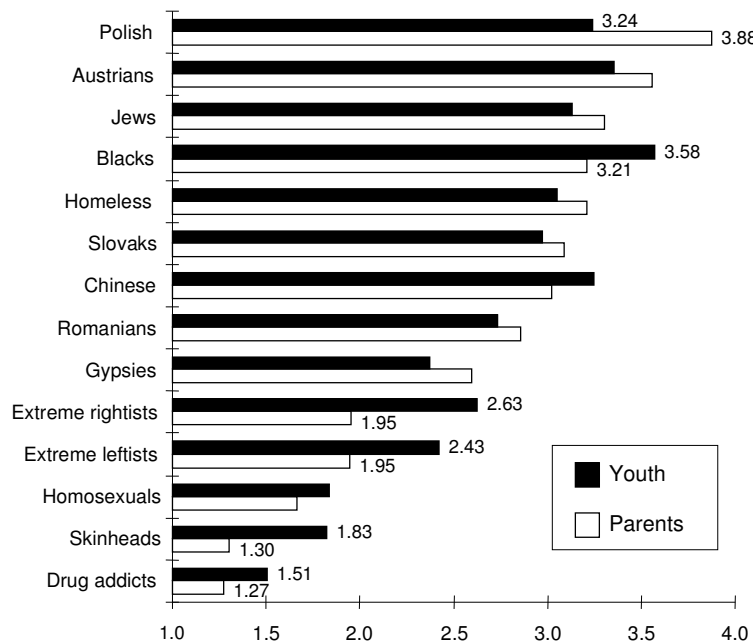


Figure 10.5 Ratings of outgroups by the youth and their parents (1997)^a

^a 1=not at all likeable; 5=very likeable

Source: Institute for Psychology, HAS-TÁRKI: The Youth and their Parents Survey, 1997

Endnotes

- 1 Zoltán Fleck and Fruzsina Albert also participated in the research.
- 2 The survey-documentation and data are available from the Hungarian data archive of the Social Research Informatics Center (TÁRKI) (see also: <http://www.tarki.hu>; Erős and Fábíán, 1995; Enyedi, Erős, Fábíán and Fleck, 1996; Enyedi, Erős and Fábíán, 1997; Fábíán, 1999). The 1994 Survey was called “RWA”, the 1998 “Youth and their Parents”.
- 3
 1. Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.
 2. Young people sometimes get rebellious ideas, but as they grow up they ought to get over them and settle down.
 3. What this country needs most, more than laws and political programmes, is a few courageous, tireless, devoted leaders in whom the people can put their faith.
 4. What the youth needs most is strict discipline, rugged determination, and the will to

work and fight for family and country.

5. Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked, and feeble-minded people.
 6. People can be divided into two distinct classes: the weak and the strong.
 7. Most people don't realise how much our lives are controlled by plots hatched in secret places.
- ⁴ The following data mainly refer to 1994, because a national random-sample is better suited to the analysis of structural relationships.
- 5 For further analysis of our data see Enyedi, 1999; Fábíán and Fleck, 1999, Todosijevic and Enyedi, 1997.

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