Media framing and representation of inter-ethnic relations. A case study on the Babes-Bolyai University debate

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I. Introduction

It has been stressed by the studies done on this topic that the media represent a stage on which identities are being negotiated. In the Romanian case, after the system change of 1989, the media were also undergoing a transition period that was supposed to transform the old state controlled channels of mass communication into democratic and independent institutions. At the same time, the Hungarian minority in Romania was going through a process of defining its identity in the new democratic context.

After 15 years since the violent system change, most studies describe the media as being free out of the danger of political manipulation and have developed into a hybrid model that still is characterized by average professional standards and commercial imperatives. The paper will be a study about how this model of press deals with the issue of inter-ethnic relations and what are the mechanisms behind the decisions that are being made regarding this topic.

The current literature on media in transition societies have either focused more on cases where ethnic conflict have degenerated into violent clashes or studies the functions of the developing media in Eastern Europe in regard to the abstract concept of public interest. In the current paper I will break down this general notion and look on how the tabloidization, developing professional standards and media dynamics influence the representations and framing of the debate around the break-up of the multicultural Babes-Bolyai University. The study will analyze eight daily newspapers, seven from Bucharest and one from Cluj, all in Romanian language.

I will look into the issue of how much commercial potential do the topic of the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University has and what are the frames used to report on these events. The analysis will focus on the representations of the minority group and their demands in this case, the importance that the topic had on the agenda of the eight publications monitored and the mechanisms with which the representations of the two sides were constructed.

The first part of the paper debates the issue from a theoretical point of view. Departing from the debate about the potential that nationalistic myths have in transition societies, I will move to the studies on the post 1990 Romanian press and the question of which are the factors that influence media messages. Focusing on Gitlin's and Mazzoleni's studies of the media role in the definition of movements and identities, I will look at the media role of preserving the ongoing system.

The second part of the theoretical chapter will be focused on debates about the agenda-setting role of the media and how does framing influence the perceptions on social movements.

Although not the main focus of the current paper, I will also debate the internal dynamics of newsrooms and how topics of inter-ethnic conflicts are regarded inside the newsrooms.

The third chapter will present the current Romanian media landscape and its post 1989 development. The fourth chapter will indicate the variables on which the content analysis of the eight publications will be conducted.

The last part of the paper will start with a short history of the Cluj University and continue with the results of the analysis of the articles published on this topic in the two periods of analysis.

II. Theoretical Framework

II.1. The Marketplace of Ideas

Nationalist myths are created in order to emphasize the differences between ethnic groups and, at the same time, to create the means for one group to claim the territory, history and the institutions of the other group(s). This is achieved by exaggerating or inventing the threat that a group perceived as external poses to the nation, downplaying or ignoring the causes that led to the situation and not taking into consideration the costs of pursuing national goals. The nation is pictured as a common heritage that needs protection from the claims of other ethnic groups or individuals that do not share the same ethnicity.

Such myths are sold as advertisements for political support and the environment in which these ideas are circulated has a big influence on the way in which they are received and the importance they are attributed. Societies in which the system is changed and new democracies start to evolve are sensible to outbursts of popular nationalism¹. According to Snyder's and Ballentine's analyses, when the state monopoly of the media starts to break down, elites compete for public support. At this stage, when democratic institutions are not fully functioning, common values are changing. Subsequently, the state and the identities are redefined and nationalistic messages, employed by elites looking to rally mass support, have the potential to be very effective. The causes for this effectiveness derive from the fact that ideas are not debated in an open forum available to the whole public.

A well established marketplace of ideas assures that diverse views by different groups are expressed freely but also that all members of society have access to the debates. A segmented marketplace possesses the former characteristic, lacking the latter. Ideas expressed

¹ Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine base their study on the cases of Yugoslavia and Rwanda and conclude that unconditional freedom of speech can cause more problems in the incipient phases of incipient democratization.

in one segment fail to reach the rest of the public, or are spread through sources that distort the ideas.

Snyder and Ballentine argue that a highly segmented market of ideas creates the context in which nationalistic myths are more likely to appear. However, their analyses only look only at the political elites and their struggle for power, departing from the premise that they are the sole actors accountable for this situation. They mention that the organization of media institutions, the absence of proper media regulation and the weak professional training of the journalists also contribute to this situation, but only inasmuch media and journalists can not resist the attempts of control by the political elites. Another shortcoming of the approach of Snyder and Ballentine is that they explain nationalism as a linear series of events culminating in armed conflict. By taking into account only such scenarios, their analysis is elite-centered and obliterates other factors which can also have an important role in the democratization equation. In the early stages of democratization, as depicted by Snyder and Ballentine, media can also be seen as profit-making businesses. The breakdown of the centralized state controlled media creates the opportunity for media competition. Media development in early stages of democratization can be linked with several factors, and the role of the elites fighting for control is just one of them.

Snyder and Ballentine speak about the poorly trained journalists and the lack of media regulation but place these in a context dominated by powerful elites. Political actors are indicated as those responsible for the creation of nationalist myths and journalists are portrayed as not well equipped to fight against the nationalistic drive. However, this argument fails to explain a different scenario, where poorly trained journalists may employ nationalist myths in their reporting without being subjected to the pressures of political elites. The commercial potential of nationalism can be exploited by immature journalists in the same context of early stages of media evolution.

Assessing the specific ways in which nationalistic myths are employed by the media requires also an in-depth analysis of the way media had developed before, during and especially after the change of the regime, in the period where democracy values are being implemented and media also is subjected to a transition process. As several authors argue, during the early stages of democratization we cannot talk about 'democracy' and 'democratic values', but rather about hybrids of values. This period of transition is in fact a period of institution-building, renegotiation of the status of the elites etc.

Attributing to the political actors a high power of influencing the content of media messages is justified when analyzing cases like that of Yugoslavia or Rwanda, the hypothesis being validated by the unfolding of events. The same hypothesis loses its truth value in cases where a violent conflict did not erupt. Bringing additional variables and factors into the equation dilutes the powerful influence attributed to political elites and points to the situation where the overall result is more an interactions of several factors.

When speaking about the case of South-Eastern Europe there are several things to take into consideration, such as the ethnic composition of each country and the way media institutions were structured before the changing of the regime. The greatest part of the scholarship on the issue of media and nationalism brings into discussion the case of Yugoslavia and the role media had in the break-up of the federation and in the war that followed. As the same studies indicate in the first chapters, the media in Yugoslavia were very different from the media in other South-Eastern European countries. While in the case of Yugoslavia, the media were already divided when the break-up of the federation took place, in others countries in the region the change of the regime was the event which created the opportunity of the break-up of the state monopoly over the media².

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² Kemal Kurspahic, in his assessment of the role media had in the Yugoslav drama, points to the fact that ideas were not debated in a common forum because each republic developed its

Another noteworthy element is the ethnic composition of the countries in question and the power relations that start to consolidate on the internal level as well as on the international level. This relates to the issue of how profitable is for elites to play the nationalist card and if the media can be actually transformed into a propaganda machine.

At the same time, media are introduced to a new set of rights and possibilities. The freedom of speech is something that most journalists in South-Eastern Europe had not experienced for half a century. The state does not regulate any more the number of publications and their profile. Therefore, at least in theory, the premises for a pluralism of ideas and for the emergence of a forum open to the majority of the citizens are met. Political control and manipulation is one way in which the situation can be directed and, as argued earlier, this depends on several other factors.

Another characteristic of the South-Eastern European press, namely the lack of professionalism of the journalists, is brought forth by most studies on the topic. This alone can be a factor in subjective reporting on inter-ethnic relations and the under-representation of the issues concerning members of other ethnic groups. This variable does not influence only ethnicity-related topics and therefore is not addressed only from this perspective.

When speaking about media in newly established democracies, another aspect in need of further clarification is the concept of transition itself. What exactly do we refer to when speaking about transition periods and when does a transition period starts and, most importantly, when does it end? East European transition is defined as a switch from centralized economy to market economy, from an authoritarian regime to democracy, from a traditional society to an open society³. Transition is a time period when two systems co-exist, although they might contradict each other, and when the shape of the evolution starts to be

own media, which served as a propaganda machine for the nationalist leaders, and this was one of the preconditions for the rise of ethnic tensions.

³ See Bradshaw and Stanning, p.11.

visible. Therefore, it is fair to affirm that during transition, some aspects of the old regime are still functioning, while the characteristics of the new one, though known have not yet triumphed.

A difficult question is related to the duration of the transition period. It is clear when the transition starts, the moment when the old regime collapses, but to estimate when the transition period end is a matter open to subjective analyses. If we follow the definition of the concept of transition, the period when two contradicting systems co-exist, the transition ends when only one system, the democratic one, is governing. However, it is no easy task to establish when there is only one system ruling and when all the traces of the old authoritarian regime have disappeared. One way to answer this question is to identify some clear stages of the transition period, which have distinct characteristics.

In the case of the Romanian media, the period of transition was divided into stages by several authors, each studying post-communist media from different perspectives and providing different approaches to the issue. Mihai Coman states that according to the scome of the changes, there were two main periods: 1990-1992 was a time when the Romanian media was subjected to sudden radical and chaotic changes that influenced the whole media system and the period after 1992 was characterized by important, but predictable evolutions that took place gradually. Ion Dragan and I. P Lafrance looked at the behavior of the audience and argue that there were three stages that the post-communist media experienced: 1989-1990, the stage of live revolution broadcasting, 1990-1992, the stage when media disappointed their audiences and the period after 1992, when the public sphere underwent a reconstruction process. Valentina Marinescu appreciates that between 1990 and 1992, the new and the old regulations co-existed; in her view, 1992-1996 is the period when a normative structuring process was started and after 1996 the influence of previous regulations was beginning to be noticeable. From an economical point of view, Marinescu identifies just two

periods: 1990-1995 – a time when the state had a monopoly over the media and the post-1996 period, when media institutions became private companies.⁴ Neither one of these delimitations give us a clue about the end of the transition period. All authors agree that after 1996, there was a general change but they don't declare the last stage over. The period after 1996 is characterized as a period when elements of the democratic system started shaping the evolution of the media. A part of this 'unfinished story' delimitation consists of the fact that there is no clear standard Romanian media have to reach, or, in fact, there are too many standards and there is no common agreement on just one of them.⁵

Coming back to Snyder and Ballentine's article, one is right to say that their observations may be valid when it comes to the first stage of the transition process but they do not bring forth clear observations about the later stages of the process. If transition is the period when the old system is replaced by the new democratic one, some previously disadvantaged groups seek to correct that in the negotiation of their new status. The Hungarian minority in Transylvania was hoping that the change that took place in 1990 was an opportunity to renegotiate their status in the Romanian society, believing that the new leadership, which was supposed to be open to democratic values, would be interested to fundamentally change the Communist minority policies of.

As showed by the events that took place in the first months after the 1989 Revolution, the new leadership was not planning to replace the Ceausescu's bureaucrats who had dealt with the issue of minority rights. The push of the Hungarian minority for the separation of the higher learning system on ethnic grounds was a sensible issue which was not clearly regulated

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⁴ See Marinescu, pp. 102-103.

Another aspect of the problem is the fact that there is no sound guarantee that once the media rises above one specific standard, it won't fall below again. An example of such a case was the period before the 2004 general elections, when the ruling party managed to negotiate with several TV stations and newspapers the way its members will be represented in the news. Several international media organizations pointed to the fact that Romania had a biased media.

by states with an older democratic tradition. This push provided the new leadership to create myths of irredentist intentions of the Hungarian minority which were instrumented to create suspicions and fear among the Romanian majority.

The stereotype of the arrogant and insensible Hungarian was brought back to life by using a rhetoric containing stories about the oppressive ruling of Transylvania before 1918.⁶ In this respect, the characteristics of the old authoritarian regime were maintained and evidence for this is the fact that the first president of post-Communist Romania, Ion Iliescu, appointed in key positions in the public administration of Transylvania the same individuals that were in charge during the peak of Ceausescu's assimilationist policies, in the 1970s and 1980s. These individuals were useful for the new leadership, The National Salvation Front (FSN), aiming at the expansion of their authority throughout the country. Although in the beginning, NSF condemned Ceausescu's assimilationist policy, their need for the old political elites in the race for power proved to come first before the rights of minorities and their claims for solving the injustices perpetrated by the Communist regime. The nationalist rhetoric proved to be the solution adopted by the new leadership in order to escape the contradictory promises that it made.⁷

II.2. The Political Actors' Control vs. the Commercial Development of Media Enterprises

The debate around the factors of influence on media products is closely connected to the process of transition. The breakdown of the state monopoly over the media meant that journalists were now subjected to a new authority. In the old regime, the state authorities were deciding on the content of the news and they were the only actors able to regulate media products.

⁶ See Gallagher, p. 105.

⁷ Ibid. p.106

In the first stage of the transition period media developed against the background of the legacy of the communist media systems. For example, in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic there had been a category of media that opposed the Communist system, and to which Peter Gross refers to as clandestine media. Such mass communication channels were absent in countries like Romania, Bulgaria or Albania. This cleavage between the media landscapes from different countries from within the former Communist block influenced the way media were perceived by the public immediately after the fall of the Communist regimes. The existence of an anti-Communist media provided the journalists with a degree of legitimacy during the immediate period which followed the change of the system, while in the other countries, where such a kind of press was non-existent, journalists had to quickly find modalities for self-legitimization.

In Romania, this was achieved by adopting an anti-Communist agenda and advertising the media as a pillar in the rebuilding process of a democratic society. The strategy worked for the first couple of months, when journalists were seen as revolutionaries, martyrs and heroes, but just after a few months, the public turned against them, depicting journalists as liars. The reason for this development is that in the early 1990s, almost half of the newspapers in Romania were controlled by different political parties. The media failed to transform itself into a forum that people could address in order to find information. Instead it became a voice of the political factions involved in the struggle for power.

After 1992, the situation changed and the political control over the media was gradually reduced. By the end of the 1990s, there were several cases of politicians publicly presenting their dissatisfaction with the new way in which mass communication institutions

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⁸ See Gross, pg. 61.

were writing and presenting the news, protesting against the new diverse and pluralistic character of the news bulletins.⁹

One of the causes for this change was the increase of the number of institutions that interacted with media. Consequently, their individual power was diminished; the elites influencing the relation between the media and the political institutions became more unpredictable and so the gatekeeper-role of the media became less political. ¹⁰ The situation in which media were less dependable on political parties and were becoming profit-driven businesses also implied a growing dependence on the market.

One aspect in which the autonomy of the media can be measured is its diversity. In this aspect, the Romanian media had flourished in the 1989-2000 period. From 495 publications in 1989, Romania had approximately 1.800 by the end of the 1990s, which were focused on a variety of topics. This gives evidence of the existence of a variety of perspectives and interests that were being addressed. At the same time, it can also be a precondition for the existence of independent media. Accommodating a diversity of topics within a large number of publications makes it practically impossible for the state or for one political party to control all the messages disseminated by this large number of publications. This argument makes scholars who focused on the Romanian media case to affirm that the development which took place can be described as an extreme case of the Western model of pluralistic media. ¹¹

⁹ Being used with the situation from the first half of the decade, some politicians saw that it was impossible to control the messages disseminated by the media and even went so far as working on a project that would create a TV station to broadcast live the daily parliamentary sessions.

¹⁰ See Gross, pg. 82.

¹¹ Gross and Splichal argue that the evolution of the East European media contributed to the liberalization of the democracies in region, but, unlike in the cases seen in Western Europe, the Eastern European media lacked a "bona fide public service function" and journalistic professionalism.

Another indicator which gives an idea about the independence of a media system is the issue of ownership. However, in the Eastern European context, the assessment of the situation as being in one extreme or another proved to be difficult because of the fast changing context of the 1990s, Michael Gurevitch and Jay Blumler state that Eastern Europe proved once again to be an "overall cultural mix ... that will tend to fix the position of the media stand on [the subordination-autonomy] continuum."¹²

The independence of the media can be measured in the respect in which they have the capacity to employ criticism against the governing politicians. ¹³ The problematic word of this affirmation is "capacity". Is capacity understood as the theoretical freedom of speech, which is not impeded by any state authority, or does it also encompass the idea that journalists possess the professional skills necessary to construct useful critics?

There is a consensus that the Eastern European media were controlled by political parties in the first years after the Communist era. 14 This situation changed when the public refused to consume their products. So one could affirm that there a consumerist characteristic can describe the evolution process of the Eastern European media. During the period between 1989 and 2000 period the Eastern European press practically shifted from a party press to a commercial press.

The press does not exist beyond the economical situation of the respective country and it is important to stress the fact that the economic systems from the ex-communist Eastern countries were not fully market-oriented. Just like the rest of relevant domains, the media were acting motivated by economical reasons, but also by political, social, cultural, religious

<sup>See Gerbner, p. 263.
See Price, p. 6.
See Gross and Splichal.</sup>

and ethnic factors.¹⁵ A variety of motivations translates into a variety of media products, a diversity being often achieved by using different frames.

Having a partial political influence meant that the absolute political control of the media was not longer existent in the second half of the 1990s. The large number of publications and the more profit-oriented strategies adopted by media owners were the characteristics of media systems. These were more and more controlled by political actors. Peter Gross and Slavko Spichal argue that, in the Eastern European case, the emergence of commercial media was the phenomenon that contributed to the liberalization of the press from political control. Gross even goes as far as doing a theoretical comparison between commercial media and public service media. His conclusion is that there is no proof that the commercial media is less useful to a society than the public service type media. He argues that this kind of question is more confusing in the Eastern European context. He is right in this respect, because as other authors have agreed, the Eastern European media do not have a clear model to follow.

The transition process started in 1989 is the process that will dictate a pattern for the media in this region, in relation with political, economical and social transformations that take place at the same time. Gross states that the same situation that took place in the beginning of the 1990s in Romania, when the audience re-envisioned the status of journalists from heroes to liars because of the political propaganda content, can happen again if the commercial media will not offer credible and diverse news. He also believes that sensationalism and the infotainment phenomenon will not be able to hide the lack of credible and diverse news. Also, there is no clear evidence that this is the kind of news that the audience wants.

The auto-correcting characteristic mentioned by Gross works better in theory than in practice, as he does not take all the scenarios into account. The discontent of the public that

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¹⁵ See Gross, p. 197.

would trigger a change in the news reporting policies of the media presumes that the audience has the knowledge to differentiate between the wrong kind and the good kind of news. The fact is that in some cases the media is the only source of information about some topics and also people rely on the media for accurate information. In this case, the job of the audiences, namely to sanction the media when they fail to do their job properly, becomes more and more difficult. Instead of being corrected by the mechanism described above, these imperfections are integrated into the system.

There is a consensus about the idea that Eastern European media have managed to free themselves from political control at the middle of the 1990s and the motives that dictate the way media functions represent a mixture of different factors. Amongst the most important of them is the market, which led to the development of commercial media. The main focus of this paper is the construction of different representations of ethnicity in the context of a market-oriented media. What are the factors that determine certain types of representations is the issue that will be debated in the following chapters. Another important remark is the role that this topic plays in the overall development process of the Romanian post-communist media.

Peter Gross is optimistic about the evolution of media in the region, in the respect that he traced some events in which the audience sanctioned the media and thus triggered a change in the agenda of the press. He says that the audience has the potential to be "the judge, as well as the jury." Again, this is a conclusion that can be verified in a case where the final result was used in order to formulate the hypothesis. ¹⁷

¹⁶ See Gross, p. 216.

¹⁷ The same situation was encountered before the 2004 elections, and the public did not react to the situation in the same way in which it did at the beginning of the 1990s. An important factor that Gross does not analyze extensively is that in the first years of the transition period, the highly politicized media were held responsible together with the political leaders for the failures of the reform process, since the promises that were made to the public had an ambiguous messenger (politicians through the media, media elites, editorialists etc.).

Are the media representations diverse enough to facilitate change by presenting new ideas and creating debates? It is hard to answer this question and perhaps one should look for trends in this respect rather than analysis that show the characteristics of the Romanian media at one given moment. As mentioned above, the factors that influence this process are various: political, commercial and, also crucial to the interaction, personal beliefs of the journalists. Every individual who works for a press institution has an ethnicity, is more or less tolerant, and thinks according to various stereotypes, all of which determine the way he/she is going to do their work.

II.3. Media Behavior and Political Consensus

How are frames produced and where do they come from? How come that they are taken for granted by the audience without contesting them? The answers to such questions may shed light into the debate about how come news present certain topics in some manners, why do some groups appear as dangerous, different, desirable/undesirable etc., why are some movements considered as a threat for the entire system etc.

One set of theories trying to explain the above-mentioned phenomenon is journalists-centered and was developed by Herbert Gans. Gans states that the final product, the news article, is shaped by professional criteria developed by the journalists. They have developed an autonomous training network and the recruitment and promotion are regulated by rules developed by the journalistic community. Within this framework of professional principles, journalists had provided a definition for the concept of objectivity and all is subjected to the main goal, which is to serve the public interest through information. In order to achieve that, journalism should be separated from internal (news executives, publishers, advertisers) or

external (political, interest groups) pressures, or any other prejudices that journalists themselves might have.

Other theories are centered on the news organizations themselves. Some argue that the commercial imperatives of these organizations have a determining influence on the news, while others stress that the organizational structure of the newsrooms is the context which has the most influence on the final media products. One way to explain the phenomenon of framing would be to examine the way in which journalists choose to process vast amounts of information, select a part of them which are modified into what the audience perceives as the news. The issue at hand here is the routine adopted by journalists in order to make their selection and news-writing processes easier.

Other theories focus on aspects such as technological factors, economics or audience in order to explain the reasons that guide media framing. Presumably, a complete explanation of this phenomenon can be provided by combining the theories on all the above-emphasized factors. In the case of ethnicity-related topics, the ideological convictions of journalists as individuals play a decisive role. If we follow Ben Bagdikian's model of the three stages in the selection of news, we shall observe that this is a process in which the decisions are made inside the media institutions and that some decisions about how the event in question will be represented can even precede its actual unfolding. Bagdikian says that in the first instance, an editor decides whether a certain event should be looked at or not and determines the newsworthiness of the event. The reasons that theoretically should weight in this kind of decisions should be those of professional principles, but as it was argued above and in the precedent subchapter, there are numerous factors which interact at this stage. The second stage is a reporter's decision of what frame is worthy to highlight of the event in

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¹⁸ Studies that focus on the news institutions and the way their organization influences the practices of the journalists argue against the journalist-centered theory, according to which professional principles were the main factors shaping the news.

¹⁹ See Gitlin, p. 251.

question. The background, personal convictions of the journalists, as well as the salient potential of some frames play an important role in this stage. Although one journalist may believe that a certain ethnic group is discriminated against, it is possible that he/she will not argue this because he/she fears the way in which the environment will perceive such ideas. In the third stage, an editor decides how to treat and place the resulting story.

Through socialization and experience, media managers are committed to maintaining the existing system in its main aspects.²⁰ At the same time, they, as members of the corporate elite, have particular economic or political interests. The expectations of the public also play an important role in the overall results, since the audience is determining the power potential of a publication. The legitimacy of news-reporting relies in the fact that the audience believes that the reporters have autonomy over their work, and what they see is not just what is interesting, but most important, what it is true.

Since the pieces of news that are broadcasted have consequences, journalists can be subjected to pressures from different actors having the power to act upon them or their organizations. Gans notes that "...sources, journalists and audiences coexist in a system, although it is closer to being a tug of war than an actually functionally interrelated organism". According to this elaboration we can assume that there would be three directions of action, the end result being the interaction within them. Several scenarios unfold from this assumption, but it is also important to stress the fact that the interaction process takes place in stages. The journalists are the first to react and they are also the ones who decide the topic. Political actors react to the news and the audiences formulate their opinions also on the basis of the interaction between the political actors and the journalists.

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²⁰ Todd Gitlin explains how media owners and managers interact with decision making people from the political and economical elite. They belong to the same elite groups and depend on the going system for their status; p. 258.

II.4. Agenda-Setting in Ethnicity-Related Topics

Departing from Cohen's remark that the press might not be successful in telling people what to think, but it is effective in telling people what to think about, McCombs and Shaw's study pinpoints the fact that media may set the agenda for the people. The theory has been criticized on the basis that the conducted research was not proved by correlations, but only pointed towards similarities between the issues debated by the media and those described by the public as salient.

The media are the only connection between events that happen in the world and the representations of those events by individuals.²¹ If the media enable people to find out about events that are "outside their experience", media also have the power to direct attention towards certain topics.²² Media has a greater influence on the audience when there are fewer factors that can influence the situation. For example, the agenda of the public may be more or less dramatically influenced by the media, but personal experience, convictions and interactions can also determine the overall public agenda. When the latter factors are absent, the power of the media in setting the agenda for the public is even higher. People rely on the media for information and they set their agenda from the topics provided by the media. The overall amount of information is not accessible to the public, and therefore they can not judge for themselves which issue is more important than the other. Accepting the hypothesis of the agenda setting theory as valid implies that media can decide which are the salient issues for the public. These can evolve into politically salient topics and can influence convictions.

If the media report on ethnic relations extensively, the audience is reminded or informed of the ethnic composition of the society. Consequently, the audience would tend to think more about interactions between ethnic groups or simply between individuals with

²¹ See Pietila, p. 184.

²² See Ivengar and Kinder, p. 2.

different ethnic origins. It is right to affirm that the media are only one of the factors that influence the agenda-building process and there are few scientific evidences that measure exactly the share of influence that the media have amongst other factors. There are studies comparing the agenda-setting role of the process with national and local issues, and the conclusions show that on the national level, media are more successful in influencing the public agenda.²³ The underlying reason is that in local issues individuals also rely on alternative sources of information such as personal observations and interpersonal exchange of ideas and information. Adapting this scenario to the case where there is a high dependence on the media to provide information on topics which are outside the experience of one group, it is fair to say that there are substantial studies that show that media have a high impact on setting the public agenda.

Group representations elaborated by the media can represent the only source of information that a certain public has on the identity of a minority group. The debate on the break-up of the University in Cluj was available to the public in Bucharest or Constanta through the media. Without news reports on the events in which the professors of Babes-Bolyai University were involved, people in other parts of Romania would have far less chances of finding out about the debate and the events which generated it. If on the one hand parts of the audience were familiarized with the topic through the media, on the other hand, the information that the media provided were the only knowledge that part of the public had on the topic. The public is not the one deciding which events or which aspects of the debate are important, as this is the role of the media. If one event is mentioned briefly in a short piece of news, this also entails the degree of significance attributed by the public to the respective event. If one aspect is largely covered and discussed in the media, it will also become salient in the views of the public who have no other connection to the topic, except the press.

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²³ See Palmgreen and Clarke in McCombs and Protess, p. 116.

In analyzing the case of the Babes-Bolyai University, it is relevant to look at different levels of agenda setting. The one described above is referred to as issue-agenda setting. Attribute-agenda setting deals with transmission of attribute salience from the media to the audience members. ²⁴ By pointing the specific issue to look at, media can also influence the perspective with which people see the whole setting. The format of the media does not allow it to show the complexity of one issue and different characteristics are emphasized, certain solutions are proposed in regard to one issue. The audience not only sees the issues presented by the media as being salient, but it also assigns certain attributes to those specific issues. ²⁵

In order to operationalize the concept of attribute-agenda setting, we can employ Entman's framework which identifies four levels of an attribute agenda: problem definition, attributed causes, moral judgments or evaluations and proposed solutions. ²⁶ 'Problem definition; refers to the description of the actors and which are the exact effects of their actions; 'attributed causes' refers to the causes that triggered the event; 'moral judgments' means evaluating, establishing connections between the causes and formulating projections of their interactions in the future; 'proposed remedies' is the stage where solutions for the problem are being formulated.

The first two levels have more potential of actually influencing the public agenda. When it comes to moral judgments, it has been proven that the media have little influence over the evaluations or attitudes of the audience members. Media also have limited influence in influencing the adoption of one solution because some problems are too complex and have no quick solutions and also the public might prove to be not very open to the exact solution proposed by the press.²⁷

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²⁴ See Takeshita in McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, p. 22.

²⁵ Ibidum, p.23.

²⁶ See Entman, p. 53.

²⁷ See Takeshita in McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, p. 26.

Applying this framework to the case of the debate around the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University it is unfair to say that media can influence the audience opinion on what the appropriate solution might be or evaluating the causes and assessing their effects. The agenda-setting theory is not a comeback to the theory of powerful mass-media. Empirical researches on this topic show that people without strong ideas about the issue in question are the ones open to the agenda-setting influence of the press. Alternative ways of information such as personal observations and interpersonal communication also contribute to the diminishing influence of the media in setting the agenda for members of the audience.

II.5. Media Frames in the Social Definition of Movements and Identities

A certain issue can be framed by the media as a potential gain or potential loss.²⁸ The same story can be described by the media in different ways that can decide how the people think of regarding to that certain issue. Experiments done show that when an event is described as a potential gain, more people tend to agree with the course of actions, while the restating of the consequences as potential losses makes people disagree with the course of actions.²⁹ In both research cases, the choices offered were identical. The element with the potential to make the difference is the way in which the issue is framed. By focusing on some matters, while ignoring others, news reports influence the standards according to which the actors involved are being judged. The audience members formulate their opinions about groups, identities, behaviors, political actors etc. by assessing their performance on the issues emphasized by the media.

Most articles do not present a political figure by mentioning all the past references of him/her, all of his/her accomplishments or all of his/her failures, weak points and strong

²⁸ Ibid, p.23

²⁹ See Iyengar, p. 12.

points, all comprised in a medium-sized feature. It is the same with ethnic groups, movements or institutions which are the focus of a journalistic material. When the news reports emphasize one issue, the audience may formulate their opinion about the actors involved by evaluating them in that respective matter, not on their overall performance. The studies on the way media frames are perceived by the audience members show that readers adjust their opinions on a specific issue to be consistent to their overall evaluations of that specific topic. For example, if an individual considered the Hungarian minority in Transylvania as a group which seeks to secede from Romania, the reports on the attempts to break-up the Babes-Bolyai University will enforce his/her previous believes. An individual for whom the members of the Hungarian minority are Romanian citizens with the same rights as the members of the majority, sharing the common goals of preserving the multicultural heritage of Transylvania will regard the debate about the break-up of the University in Cluj as the action of some extremists which do not have the same intentions as the majority of Hungarian ethnics living in Transylvania and therefore will not judge the whole group based on the claims made in this case. This phenomenon is referred to by Iyengar and Kinder as 'projection'. The suddent is a pour properties of the projection of the projection of the projection of the projection of the projection.

Based on the format of the presentation, Iyengar classifies the news stories in "episodic" framing and "thematic" framing. The episodic frames can be case studies or event-oriented news that focus on concrete issues and connect them with public issues. Thematic news frames present a more general context and report on the general outcomes or the conditions that led to a certain result. The difference between the two kinds of news identified by Iyengar is that episodic frames point to events to illustrate issues, while thematic framing presents general evidences.³² Because of the special characteristics of the media, such as space limitations, commercial reasoning and resource management, episodic reports are more

³⁰ See Iyengar and Kinder, p.70.

³¹ Idem

³² See Iyengar, p. 14.

present than thematic coverage. Concrete acts and breaking news are given priority because of several reasons: thematic reports are more time consuming and more difficult to undertake; by presenting more episodic news, the journalists implicitly argue that they are presenting the reality and this way they are less susceptible to charges of journalistic biases. Another reason is that, even if the necessary resources and time were available, some topics would not be suitable for thematic reports because the information is very hard to obtain or because there is no concrete overall evaluation.

An in-depth analysis of the case of separate universities on ethnic bases would take more space than some publications are willing to allocate to this issue. Due to commercial imperatives, press managers may decide that reports that are event-centered are preferable to thematic stories that transfigure the debate into a more general context, evaluate the conditions and make assumptions about potential solutions. Compelled by their format and profile, most daily publications are predominantly dedicated to episodic reports.

Unlike agenda-setting, framing has a bigger influence on decision outcomes. Concentrating on one or another side of the story, the wording in which the question is posed has an influence on response patterns. The same events can be described by employing different frames, which can alter people's views and responses to the topic. The break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University can be described as a loss for the Romanian majority or a gain for the Hungarian minority and according to the used frame, each ethnic group will react in accordance with their expectations. Another way to report on the debates would be to pose the question of the break-up from a historical point of view, since, until 50 years ago, the Romanian and Hungarian universities were two different institutions. As the analysis will show, the most common frame employed was that of describing the Babes-Bolyai University as a common heritage of all Romanian citizens and to describe those that questioned this fact as irredentists. It is not the aim of this paper to debate this aspect; the main focus is to look at

how the media employed episodic or thematic framing and which were the most used frames in reporting on this topic. As Iyengar notes:

Framing should be particularly significant as a determinant of choice when the choice problem involves politics. Political issues are typically complex, political discourse is ambiguous, and levels of public knowledge about and interest in politics are low. [...] The studies (on framing) have shown that unobstrusive alterations in the wording and form of survey questions produce dramatic variations in opinions. ³³

The issue of the University in Cluj also stands for an ambiguous and complex problem since it relates to minority rights, an issue which is yet to be clearly regulated by national laws. One can also assume that the history of the Babes-Bolyai University is not familiar to the majority of audience members. In this case, although it was politicized on several occasions as the press analysis will show, it is not the inclination towards one party or another which is influenced, but attitudes, identities and ethnical representations.

Episodic framing may create the context in which not the main problem is brought forth to the audience, but in which the nature and details of the event are emphasized. Ideological stances of the actors involved are less mentioned than the sheer characteristics of the event which is the center of news report. The effects of priming, just like the ones of agenda setting depend on the message, as well as on the nature of the audience. If agenda setting was highest among audience members who had little or no other connection to the topic except the one provided by the media, framing has been proven to also influence those who are familiarized and involved in the topic.³⁴ If effective agenda-setting meant that the media command the viewer's attention, news frames may influence the audience's evaluation of that particular topic.

In his analysis of the New Left movement in the 1960s, Todd Gitlin concludes:

³³ Ibid 13.

³⁴ See Iyengar and Kinder, p. 95.

... mass-media are, to say the least, a significant social force in the forming and delimiting of public assumptions, attitudes, and moods – of ideology, in short. They sometimes generate, sometimes amplify a field of legitimate discourse that shapes the public's "definitions of its situations", and they work through selections and omissions, through emphases and tones, through all their forms of treatment. 35

II.6. Ethnicity-Related Topics – inside the Newsroom

Until now, media was referred in this thesis as being a monolithic actor. The focus was on the kinds of influence that it was subjected to and to the kinds of influences it is capable to produce. There were occasions on which the behavior of the media was also explained by its institutional design. At this point I will debate the interactions that take place inside the newsroom and how these kinds of events may contribute to the overall result.

The newsroom is similar in its organization with other institutions. It needs raw materials (information) to be transformed into products (news) that are ready to be sold to the public. The characteristics of the product shape the processes that take place inside the newsroom. Media products have a very short life span (most information are newsworthy for only one or two days) and, like any other product, there has to be a demand for them (in this case, the demand of the public, its interest in the news). Media institutions are also involved in competition and this is why they produce news regularly and in an efficient way.³⁶

For journalists, the information available is made up of events "that make the news" and facts not relevant from their point of view. At the same time, journalists have the conviction that they are only providing "a mirror of the reality." They see events as independent of their will and actions, distinct in their unfolding from the news reporting

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³⁵ See Gitlin, p. 9; the author argues that certain social events can not be analyzed without neglecting media's influence on the whole issue, since they can occasionally be the ones who are responsible for generating the issue in question or influencing the course of events in some degree.

³⁶ See Coman 2003, p. 37.

³⁷ Idem.

process (events have started and/or are even finished by the time journalists are reporting on them) and self-evident by their nature through their unexpectedness and importance. They also believe that their objective reporting is not influencing the meaning of the event. This sounds more like the description of a scientific way of reporting, because in reality, journalists are not reproducing the reality, but search for news, for events which are worthy for the public and hold some kind of importance. Because not all events have those characteristics, journalists have developed some definitions for the ones they are interested in and have focused on identifying those particular kinds of events. Because there is a huge amount of information that journalists have to process and filter, routine practices have emerged which are used to identify the topics and events which are newsworthy and to reproduce those information into journalistic texts.

The commercial aspect of media institutions is also the reason why, like in most other institutions, inside the newsrooms there is also a hierarchy and routines which are reproduced to ensure the continuation of the journalistic production processes. In the hierarchy of the newsrooms, the role on deciding which story is newsworthy belongs to the editors, which are referred to as "gatekeepers". They are the ones who first decide the areas in which the journalists should look for events that have the potential to make it into the news. At this stage they can also point to which aspect of the story should the reporter look at, which frame should be transformed into a news report. Gatekeepers are the ones who decide which of the articles make it into the newspaper and what position do each of them occupy. This process is also guided by routines and principles of what is and what is not newsworthy on which gatekeepers have the monopoly. They decide what a great story is and they reward it by according it more printing space and a better position in the layout of the newspaper page. In

³⁸ Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 31.

³⁹ Eric Neveau, 1996, *Sociologie des mouvements sociaux* (Sociology of social movements). (Paris: La Decouverte, 1996), 12.

^{à0} See Gitlin, p. 260.

this process, the public is absent and the public's assessment of what is interesting and about what does it want to see more is not taken into consideration. Theoretically, the gatekeepers should guide their decisions according to the interests and needs of the public, but, given the commercial imperatives of the media, they look to make the news themselves interesting for the audience.

Since the public is not the one deciding which article should make it into the news and which one is of less importance, the prestige of the journalists is decided by the gatekeepers. They are the ones deciding who is a good journalist, judging by the standards which they impose. In this case, the journalists do not have to convince the public that their story is important and newsworthy, because it takes no part in this decision. It is the gatekeepers which need to be persuaded that one topic is more important than the other, that one article should make it into the front page of the newspaper.

The newspapers which will be analyzed in the fifth chapter have their headquarters in Bucharest, with the exception of *Gazeta de Cluj*, which is a local daily publication, based in Cluj. The newspapers based in Bucharest are distributed throughout the country as national daily publications which include topics that are relevant for people in all regions of Romania. But the nature of their institutions is not congruent with this statement. Most of them have between 50 and 250 reporters based in Bucharest and correspondents in other parts of the country. Some may have one or two reporters based in Cluj, while others rely upon news agencies for information from other locations other than Bucharest.

The scenario is that every day, in the newsroom of one of the publications based in Bucharest, there will be at least 50-250 articles, depending on the number of reporters each newspaper has, which are written by journalists in Bucharest and it is fair to assume that the majority of them are about events that take place in Bucharest. The correspondent from Cluj has to convince the editor who is in charge for deciding which articles will be published that

his/her story is more interesting and more important than other articles wrote by journalists in Bucharest. As mentioned above, it is not a question of deciding between the reality in Cluj and the reality in Bucharest, it is about the noteworthy subjects journalists find in Bucharest and the ones they find in Cluj. As argued in the previous subchapter, an event centered article from Cluj has more chances of being published, since not all the journalists from Bucharest will manage to write materials focused on episodic frames. In other words, an article about a sensational, shocking, unexpected or ceremonial event, written by the correspondent in Cluj has more chances of being published than an article focused on a thematic frame.

Although it is not the purpose of this paper to measure how the above-mentioned scenario influences the reporting on the debate around the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University, it is definitely a factor influencing the reporting process and it is worth taking it into consideration when speaking about the representation of the topic in the press.

III. Romanian media development after 1989

III.1. The history of the post 1989 Romanian press

Unlike other countries from the former Communist block, Romania did not have a clandestine press prior to 1989. Peter Gross describes the Romanian press before the system change as a "Marxist-Leninist kind of organization of a dogmatic nature worth of the 1950s". 41 The existing state press was disseminating the views of the ruling party, leaving no space for free ideas and diversity. This implied that after the violent change of the regime, it needed to legitimize itself to the people and to openly express its new democratic orientation. Studies that focused on the first steps that Romania took in the transition process also focused on the evolution of the media, but there are no actual theories that can speculate about the mechanism of transformations from a totalitarian kind of press to a democratic press.⁴²

If in 1989, there were approximately 500 publications, out of which 36 were dailies, in just one year, the number reached 1.500.43 In 1998, 4.958 were published and out of that, 2.137 had nationwide and 2.187 had local and regional distribution. This is also considered to be the peak period and after that, the number of publications decreased. In average, 414 new titles were launched every year.44

This chaotic evolution of the Romanian print press can be attributed to a series of factors:45

a. There was a demand for reading materials which can be explained by the fact that there was a censorship prior to 1989 which meant that the available readings were also

⁴¹ See Gross, p. 52. ⁴² See Coman, p. 22.

⁴³ See Petcu Marian, "Romanian Quality Press under the Sign of Maturity" available at http://soemz.euv-frankfurt-o.de/media-see/qpress/articles/mpetcu.html

⁴⁵ See Coman, 2003, p. 79.

regulated by the state. People saw in newspapers and magazines cheap and quick sources of information, entertainment and opinions.

- b. There was a large number of topics which could be debated following the 1989 system change. The relatively agitated political and social life of the 1990s also sparked new events and discussions that were in search for a forum of debate. Another factor which contributed to the development of the print press was the fact that investments in TV networks were low and in this situation, newspapers were credited with more influence.
- c. Production costs were low.
- d. State regulation was practically absent at least in the first half of the 1990s and media enterprises were regarded as a mean to quickly accumulate large capitals, since financial regulations were not implemented properly.
- e. There were no professional standards and the idea that anyone could be a journalist created a large, cheap and easy to recycle work force.

To these reasons, Marian Petcu also adds the existence of certain titles maintained by their owners although they were not profitable, but served as tools for self-defense; some publications were launched on the market just as an experiment, to see if they could find a category of readers. 46

III.2. The Romanian media landscape

The journalistic discourse of the new free press had developed quickly from a passionate style marked by opinions to a more information-driven style and less politically engaged. This was also a response to the more and more critical and selective characteristics of the readers.⁴⁷ In the mid 1990s, several tabloid publications were launched and other

⁴⁶ See Petcu, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Idem.

newspapers decided to change their profile from an opinion-type of press to one oriented to news in brief and sensational topics. As This change took place in a very small period of time, compared to similar evolutions in other European countries, and it encompassed the majority of daily newspapers. There was no clear distinction between tabloid publications and quality newspapers. Some editors considered themselves "opinion leaders", but they agreed on publishing morbid articles and other sensational stories which they believed would increase the circulation of the publication they worked for. Immediately after 1989, the newspapers that were considered the voice of the Communist Party rapidly became known for publishing political debates and opinions. Once again, the same publications suffered a rapid transformation, turning over night into tabloids that favored sensational topics, allocating less printing space to political news. *Libertatea* and *Jurnalul National* are examples of these kinds of publications that today allocate about 10 percent of their printing space to political news and debates. These are also the publications that have the highest circulation out of all Romanian dailies, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations in Romania (BRAT).

The tabloid type press is accused by press analysts and academics in Romania of not serving the needs of the public and not contributing to the definitivation of the transition process in the country. The tabloidization process has lead to a journalistic type of discourse that presents minor topics as important subjects, promotes stereotypes, weakens the public's need for information and ignores topics that are of large public interest.⁵²

There is no study to name the exact profile of the existing daily newspapers in Romania. The underlying reason is the constant change of media owners and editors. Also, as argued above, the indicators on which such an analysis should be done are not relevant in the

⁴⁸ See Coman, 2003, p. 72.

⁴⁹ See M. Vasilescu, 2001, p. 51.

⁵⁰ See Coman, 2003, p. 72.

According to BRAT, in December 2006, *Jurnalul National* was selling approximately 99.532 copies and *Libertatea* 257.890 copies per day.

⁵² See Coman, 2003, p. 74.

Romanian context. Most publications want to live up to the reputation of quality newspapers and therefore try to keep at least the appearances that can be used to argue for that. Since some publications publish both sensational and quality articles, it is hard to put it into one category or another. The layout of the newspaper is not a more helpful indicator either since several publications have opted for the tabloid format, due to commercial, but did not change their profile. There is an agreement that in Romania the line between tabloid and quality press is blurred (Coman, Gross, Petcu, Roventa-Frumusani), but there is no clear separation of the two categories that have proved valid for a period longer that two-three years⁵³.

There is also a huge cleavage between the regional newspapers and the dailies with nation-wide distribution. This can be observed in the number circulation of the most successful regional daily paper, *Gazeta de Sud*, which publishes only 30.000 copies each day, about 10 percent of the circulation of *Libertatea* (according to BRAT). Regional and local newspapers are less influential because a part of them are run by local politicians and are used as a tool for self-defense against the authorities.⁵⁴ They are rarely cited as sources by the central daily newspapers and have an overall bad reputation.⁵⁵

III.3. Media logic and news production

Romanian press shares some characteristics with the rest of the East European press, described by Peter Gross as the hybrid model that evolved after the fall of the Communist

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⁵³ The case of the daily Bucharest based *Evenimentul Zilei* is relevant for this discussion since in 1994 it was credited for being the first successful tabloid in Romania; after the year 2000 and to the present moment it has the reputation of a quality newspaper, reputation which was established by the conflicts that the journalists had with the former owners that tried to interfere in the editorial decisions.

⁵⁴ For a more detailed picture of the Romanian media landscape, see http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/romania/

The analyses in Chapter V will show that the seven national daily newspapers analyzed did not use regional publications as a source not even once in three months, in the topic of the University in Cluj.

regimes; building a free press according to the democratic Western model of press on the ruins of the totalitarian press has lead to a process in which some stages were skipped and others were being consummated a lot faster than in the Western cases. Gross concludes that Eastern European media transmit political information, a thing which is different from teaching democratic values.⁵⁶ Whatever informational, educational, opinion-forming or agenda-setting role the media might fulfill, it is done by accident or it is a coincidence.⁵⁷ The commercial imperatives combined with the lack of professionalism make the Eastern Europe media often contribute to increasing rather than decreasing intolerance toward opposing parties, beliefs and preferences⁵⁸.

The two theoretical types of media, "elite media" and "tabloid media" tend to reflect differently the domestic cultural climate: the elite media tend to be more aligned with the status quo, in terms of their support for mainstream political parties; tabloid media are more likely to provide sympathetic coverage to movements which challenge the status-quo, and they focus on personality traits of actors involved, entertainment values and the details of the conflict, but more on the level of gossips, than at the level of serious analysis. ⁵⁹ Media implement their typical productions techniques and routines in covering events, apply certain explanatory frames and impose a certain definition that eventually develops into the socially diffused identity of a movement or a politician. ⁶⁰

McLeod and Detenber aver that "the media are more likely to be critical when there is elite conflict within the power structure. [...] Alternatively, when elite conflict is limited, as in

⁵⁶ See Gross, p. 162.

⁵⁷ idem

⁵⁸ Ibid 163

⁵⁹ See Mazzoleni, p. 8.

⁶⁰ Ibid 11.

the case of international conflicts and domestic challenges from outside the power structure, media support for the status quo tends to be strong."⁶¹

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⁶¹ See McLeod D. M. and Detenber B. H., 1999, "Framing effects of television news coverage of social protest", Journal of Communication 49 (3), p. 5

IV. Methodology

To answer the question how do the majority group media construct representations of ethnic relations in Romania, I have chose to analyze how the case of the debate around the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University was reported in two episodes of the event: October 2005 – when CIB organized its first actions and made public its agenda of breaking-up the University in Cluj and establishing the Bolyai Hungarian University; November, December 2006 – when the vice president of CIB attempted to install plaques with inscription in Hungarian throughout the campus of the University. These actions resulted in his dismissal and the renewal of the debate about the structure and profile of the Babes-Bolyai University. In the first episode, it was the student demonstrations organized by CIB that brought the topic on the agenda of the media, while in the second episode, it the actions of Hantz Peter that sparked the debates again.

The corpus of the research is comprised of the articles published on this topic by seven dailies from Bucharest, with nationwide distribution, and one local daily newspaper from Cluj. The publications from Bucharest represent the titles with the highest circulation in Romania and represent a varied selection of profiles, from newspapers that openly declare themselves tabloids to others that refer to themselves as quality newspapers. As the analysis will show, some of the newspapers are tabloids, others distinguish themselves as quality newspapers, but the most are in between the two categories, oscillating from one into the other category, judging by their articles. The daily newspaper from Cluj also serves as a control unit, to compare the agenda of the publications in Bucharest with the one of a local newspaper. The reason behind the selection of eight titles is to come up with a description that can be attributed to the general trend of the Romanian print media. There are differences between the

ways in which each publication chose to cover the events in question, as the analysis will show, but there are also some common features that all publications share, as the analysis will show.

The content analysis will include ten variables. The first one would be the actors mentioned in the article. This will show to what degree was the topic politicized and to what degree it was pictured as a conflict between ethnic groups. The second variable will follow the unnecessary mentioning of ethnicity, by which I mean the cases when ethnicity is mentioned, but not connected to any other fact, it has no information value. The third variable is weather the actions mentioned in the article are attributed to the entire ethnic group. This will show to what degree the journalists generalize opinions, behaviors and to what extent they describe the debate as a conflict between the whole ethnic groups. The next variable will determine if the item analyzed is event oriented or thematic, presenting a more general view of the issue. This will show to what extent do the media go into an in-depth analysis of the topic and to what extent is the debate pictured through reports on events. Another variable is the way in which the debate is portrayed, are there more articles that show the point of view of those who want to break-up the University, more reports including the points of view of those that want to keep the current structure, or articles that include both kinds of opinion.

The next variable will identify the arguments that are brought against the break-up of the university. Although it is beyond the control of the journalists the way in which some politicians or academics motivate their opinions, the journalists have the option to call on several kinds of sources, from different field of expertise that can look at the debate from several points of view. The seventh variable refers to the share of fact and opinion that can be found in the reports on the topic.

The next variable will identify if any information on the history of the institution is being mentioned or if there is a reference made to the internal regulations of UBB. This is an

important aspect of the debate, since the current Babes-Bolyai University changed the dominant group that had the power of decision over the institution, four times in the last 150 years.

The ninth variable is the size of the items. I considered any article that has less than two paragraphs or four phrases a short article, those between four and nine phrases – medium size articles and those that had more than nine phrases – large articles.

The last variable will identify the frames used in reporting on the topic and which are the most used in reporting on this topic.

V. The Case of the Babes-Bolyai University Debate

V.1. The History of the Babes-Bolyai University

The post-1990 debates about the status of the University in Cluj and the multicultural arguments that are framed in order to argue for the solution proposed by one side or the other should be critically analyzed, taking into account the history of the institution. The first higher learning institution in Cluj, a Jesuit college, was founded in 1603 at the same address where Babes-Bolyai is today. However, the modern history of the University in Cluj starts in 1872, when a Hungarian University was founded under the Austro-Hungarian dualist regime and was named "Ferenc Jozsef University" in 1881. In 1919, after the unification of Transylvania with Romania, most of the professors who taught in Cluj moved to the University of Szeged, while a new Romanian university was founded in Cluj, called "Universitatea Romana a Daciei Superioare" (Romanian University of Upper Dacia). In 1940, the Hungarian University returned to Kolozsvar (rom. Cluj), following the Vienna Arbitration that unified the Northern part of Transylvania with Hungary and the Romanian University was exiled to Sibiu, a city in the Southern part of Transylvania, that remained part of Romania. It returned to Cluj in 1945, and it co-existed with the Hungarian University renamed "Bolyai University" until 1959, when the two institutions were unified under the name "Babes-Bolyai University", under Communist rule. In 1984, the name of the University was changed into "Universitatea Cluj-Napoca" (University of Cluj-Napoca) and structures providing education in Hungarian were almost completely eliminated.

The history of the University shows that the institution served as a marker for the dominant ethnic group. Since Hungarians and Romanians interchanged the respective

positions during history, the same practice of exiling the non-dominant was implemented by both ethnic groups.⁶² A second pattern was the one encountered in the period 1945-1959. when the a Hungarian University and a Romanian University co-existed in a form of monoculturalism presupposing the existence of two separated cultural words in the same social order, peace being guaranteed by the strict ethnic delimitations of the institutions. The third pattern is the scenario that was created by the Communist regime, when institutional and cultural assimilation was implemented by the dominant group. This was the background against which the new status of Babes-Bolyai University would be negotiated after 1990. The Hungarian minority in Transylvania saw in the restoration of Hungarian institutions that functioned before in its history a way of asserting its identity. The re-establishment of cultural markers such as the Hungarian university in Cluj were looked upon as symbols of the new desired status, that of "partner nation". 63 Hungarian efforts for building an autonomous system of institutions also created internal differences and two sides were created within the Hungarian community: the cultural center in Cluj and the peripheries represented by the elites in Szeklerland (hun. Szekelyfold). Based on the idea of the ethnically more "pure" nature of the regions they represented, the elites from Szeklerland managed to obtain the establishment of private colleges in Oradea (hun. Nagyvarad) and Miercurea-Ciuc (hun. Csikszereda), which enjoyed financial support from the Hungarian State.

In 1996, the situation changed, when the political alliance winning the Romanian elections, which also comprised the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, announced an educational law that would also guarantee the development of education in minority language. Each side saw the concept of multiculturalism differently. Romanians were arguing for its implementation within the current structure of the Babes-Bolyai

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63 Idem

 $^{^{62}}$ See Magyari-Vincze Eniko, "Battlegrounds of Identity Politics: Nationalising Universities in a Multicultural Context," available at

http://magyari-vincze.adatbank.transindex.ro/belso.php?k=44&p=5587

University, while Hungarians thought that multiculturalism could be achieved by establishing a separate Hungarian higher learning institution. The credibility of the proposed Romanian Project decreased because it advocated for a university in which lines of study in Romanian, Hungarian and German would coexist. The inclusion of the Germans in the picture did not please the Hungarian leaders, which saw in the establishment of a Hungarian university a way to rectify the injustices that the minority suffered during the Communist regime. They agreed to the project only with the condition that autonomous Hungarian departments would be established and they would have proportional representation in the academic administration. The document emerged from the debates of the Academic Senate stated the multicultural character of the university, but did not consider the Hungarian proposal for separate departments. The issue became more politicized when the Rector of the University in Cluj, Andrei Marga, was appointed Ministry of Education.⁶⁴ A new proposal was drafted by the Government in 1998 which launched the idea of creating a Hungarian-German multicultural university. This idea was accepted by the Hungarian leaders as a viable solution, but Marga expressed his disagreement with the project, although it was drafted by the Government of which he was part of.

Following these heated debates, the situation at the Babes-Bolyai University began to stabilize. There were improvements made to the Hungarian line of study and the Hungarian Faculty managed to achieve higher academic positions. In the academic year 1997/1998, the "numerus clausus" for Hungarian students was defined at 500 (13 percent of the total number of students). In the academic year 2005/2006, 18 percent of the students were learning in Hungarian; the Hungarian-language specializations increased to more than 50 at the B.A. level, and to more than 20 at the M.A. level.

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⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid

The politics of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania was developed within the triangle composed by them, Hungary and the Romanian state. After the call made by Viktor Orban in 2004 in which he called the Hungarian minority in Transylvania to fight for its autonomy until 2007, because afterwards they would have to wait for another 20 years for another opportunity, the Bolyai Initiative Committee was founded in May 2005 and it announced its clear goal, the re-establishment of the Bolyai University.

V.2. Chronology of Events: October 2005; November-December 2006

This sub-chapter will present a list of the events that took place in October 2005 and November-December 2006 and were connected to the debate around the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj. Most of the events were organized by the Bolyai Initiative Committee (CIB), which was founded in May 2005. It did not need very long time to make its existence felt on the local and international level and they benefited from the administrative and logistic network of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania, an organization presided by Laszlo Tokes.⁶⁶

On the 17th of October, 2005, CIB organized public demonstrations in four Transylvanian cities. In Cluj, a crowd of 300 people gathered in front of the university with candles and inscriptions requesting the break-up of the current existing institution and the reestablishment of the Bolyai University. CIB did not make a secret out of its views or its actions. Following these events, Romanian politicians, leaders of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, politicians from Hungary, academics, European politicians and other public figures stated their opinions regarding the demonstrations that were organized and the debate about the status of the Babes-Bolyai University.

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⁶⁶ Ibid

This episode was followed by several reclamations made to the National Council for Fight Against Discrimination (rom. Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminarii), in which the members of CIB pointed to the fact that, within the campus of university, there were no plaques with inscriptions in any other language than Romanian. The complaints were overruled and in February, 2006, CIB sent a letter to the Romanian president, Traian Basescu, the Romanian prime-minister, Calin Popescu-Tariceanu and to the president of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, claiming the establishment of an autonomous Hungarian university. The letter was signed by 80 renowned scientists, some of them winners of the Nobel Prize. In the following months some of the scientists redrew their name and signature from the list of requests made by CIB. Despite the international lobby, neither the letter nor the agenda of CIB were mentioned in the last Accession Reports issued by the European Commission in 2006.

At the beginning of November, 2006, the vice-president of the CIB issued a statement warning that if the leadership of the Babes-Bolyai University does not install plaques with inscriptions in Hungarian, they will proceed to do that without the consent of the University. On the 22nd of November, Peter Hantz installed approximately 20 plaques with inscriptions in Hungarian, throughout the campus of the university. As a response to that action, the Senate of the Babes-Bolyai University excluded both vice-presidents of CIB, Peter Hantz and Lehel Kovacs from the academic body of the institution. On the 28th of November, the two professors were officially dismissed from their positions by the Senate of the Babes-Bolyai University. On the 1st of December, the two pro-rectors of the Hungarian line at Babes-Bolyai University resigned from their positions and motivated their gesture as a sign of protest to the Senate's decision to dismiss Peter Hantz and Kovacs Lehel. Also unsatisfied with the decisions taken in the case of the two vice-presidents of CIB, the dean of the Reformed Theology Department, Buzogany Dezso, and the program director of the Hungarian Literature

track, Egyed Emese, resigned from their positions on the 2nd of December. On the 7th of December, protests were organized by several student organizations who demonstrated in Cluj against the decision to dismiss Peter Hantz and Kovacs Lehel.

V.3. Characterization and Profile of Publications

The volume of articles that will be analyzed in the following sub-chapter consists of the news published by seven daily newspapers based in Bucharest and one daily publication from Cluj. The titles published in Bucharest have nationwide distribution, while the one from Cluj is a local newspaper. The newspapers from Bucharest are: *Adevarul, Cotidianul, Evenimentul Zilei, Gandul, Jurnalul National, Libertatea* and *Romania Libera*. The daily publication from Cluj is *Monitorul de Cluj*.

There is no available official description of the newspapers mentioned above, except the standards by which the respective publications describe themselves. The reason behind the lack of objective information about the daily newspapers cited above is the constantly changing editorial policies of the journalists working in Romanian media. Several publications from those cited above changed their editorial policies a few times in the last five years. ⁶⁷ In most cases, the factor deciding the radical change of the publication's content and style was the change of ownership, a scenario that can be identified in the case of *Cotidianul*, *Libertatea*, *Romania Libera*. Other factors involve the commercial imperatives which were behind editorial decisions to make some newspapers more attractive for the public, like in the case of *Jurnalul National*.

⁶⁷ For example, *Evenimentul Zilei*, which was regarded as the first successful tabloid in Romania (see Coman 2003, p. 73), now has the reputation of a quality newspaper. *Libertatea* is a publication that was regarded as a quality newspaper and changed its format to become the most prestigious tabloid in Romania. *Gandul* has a relative short history, since it only exists for two years, but has a team of journalists who worked together for almost 15 years. *Cotidianul* is a publication that was drastically transformed in 2005, when its ownership changed.

One trustworthy source that indicates the average number of copies that each daily newspaper sold daily is the Audit Bureau of Circulations in Romania (BRAT)⁶⁸. For a detailed account on the circulation of each publication analyzed, please see Appendix 1.⁶⁹

V.4. Content analysis

V.4.a. The Display of Collected Data

The two episodes in the debate around the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University differ by the events that sparked the discussions. Romanian print media responded differently to the events from several points of view: the printing space allocated to the topic and events, the frames used to describe the subject and the agenda that they adopted.

In October 2005, the eight daily newspapers published a total of 26 articles on the issue of the public demonstrations organized by CIB and the topic of the break-up of the University in Cluj (*Romania Libera* – 5, *Libertatea* – 1, *Jurnalul National* – 2, *Gandul* – 2, *Evenimentul Zilei* – 10, *Cotidianul* – 2, *Adevarul* – 2, *Monitorul de Cluj* – 2). *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Romania Libera*, the publications that published more articles than the rest of the newspapers analyzed, devoted their stories to debates about the status of the University and presented arguments issues by politicians or other public figures or journalists stated their own opinion on the issue. It is important to stress that the topic did not produce any editorial in none of the eight publications analyzed. *Evenimentul Zilei* did publish one article in which it presented opinions issued online by the readers, but it only presented extreme views that

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⁶⁸ BRAT is also the organization that provides data by which companies that want to buy advertising space in the print press, guide their decisions.

⁶⁹ All the publication are listed in the chart, with the exception of *Monitorul de Cluj*, which is not audited by BRAT and declared, following just its own count, that it sells at least 10.001 copies every day.

argued for or against the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University using nationalistic messages that were composed in the name of the entire ethnic group.⁷⁰

The rest of the publications only reported on the event of the demonstrations organized by CIB, without bringing into discussion the topic of the status of the University in more than two articles, per publication. The actors mentioned in the stories were predominantly academics. In nine, out of the 26 articles, the sole actors mentioned were academics, while in other six articles, the actors mentioned were politicians. Eleven articles presented the various points of view of academics, politicians and official statements of institutions. Evenimentul Zilei presented in seven articles the views and opinions of academics and students, while other two focused just on the opinions of politicians. One article identified the actors of the action as being the whole ethnic group.

Out of 26 articles, in eight of them, the ethnicity of the actors was mentioned without this fact bringing any additional information. On several occasions, representations like "Hungarian protesters", "the Hungarian students" were used without connecting the mentioning of ethnicity to any other issue. If they were protesting, they were often labeled as Hungarians and being part in the protests was enough to identify one's ethnicity. With one exception, all the references to ethnicity were made when speaking about members of the Hungarian minority.⁷¹ There was no mentioning that involved "the Romanian students", nor was any politician, academic or any other public person whose opinions were cited, introduced by using the adjective "Romanian".

In nine articles, out of the 26, the actions of the demonstrators, views of the members of the Bolyai Initiative Committee were attributed to the entire Hungarian ethnic group. Cleavages within the ethnic group, regarding the issue of the University in Cluj, were not mentioned. Although some articles did mention the views of other ethnic Hungarians that did oppose the

 70 See "UBB, discutata online" (eng. UBB, debated online) in *Evenimentul Zilei*, 20.10.2005. 71 The exception is the article "UBB, disputata online", published by *Evenimentul Zilei*, on 20.10.2005.

break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University, they were not referred to as part of the larger Hungarian group, but emphasized as separate individuals that opposed the will of the Hungarians.

In five (from the total of ten) of the articles published by *Evenimentul Zilei* on the topic in October, 2005 the actions or ideas about breaking-up the University were attributed to the entire ethnic group.

The same kind of representation can be found in the two of the five articles published by *Romania Libera* on the topic.

In describing the protests of organized by CIB in October 2005, in Cluj, episodic framing was preferred to thematic news. Event oriented frames were used in 15 out of the 26 articles. Thematic news were published by *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Romania Libera* (Evenimentul Zilei – 4, Romania Libera – 4), in the days that followed the protest to present the debate from several points of view, with comments gathered from people from both sides.

Evenimentul Zilei focused on the opinions of the Hungarian leaders, a frame which was present in seven out of the ten articles published. Romania Libera used the frame of the DAHR politicians that opposed the pblic demonstrations and the agenda of CIB in four out of the five articles the newspaper published on the topic. The frame which was dominant in the reporting of the other publications was that of ethnic Hungarian students protesting, although some academics opposed the action.

In nine articles there were presented only opinions against of the break-up of the university, in three arguments for the break-up of the University, while in 13 articles had both kinds of opinions. *Evenimentul Zilei* published five articles in which it presented both sides of the debate, two in which only the arguments in favor of the break-up appeared and three in which just opinions against the ethnic separation of UBB were mentioned. *Romania Libera*

published articles that only presented the arguments against the break-up of the University in Cluj. The other publications had reports that presented the opinions of both sides⁷².

In the cases when opinions or declarations that took a stand against the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University, most employed argument was that the actions of CIB were contradicting European values and practices or were not open to multiculturalism. Other mentions include the extremist nature of the actions taken, the fact that UBB has a working structure and separating the University in Cluj would translate into fewer advantages for both lines. Only one article, published in *Gandul*, made reference to the OSCE guidelines and the existing Romanian laws. Although the arguments presented are not the opinions of the journalists, the journalists have the oportunity to choose which opinion to state. The subject was not tackled from a legal point of view, since only one article made reference to the Romanian legal framework. Politicians and academics from Babes-Bolyai University were the only sources that journalists used in their reports.

Out of the 26 articles published in October 2005 by the eight newspapers on the topic of the University in Cluj, only four of them also included the opinion of the journalist. This ratio is also inclined towards the presenting of facts because most of the articles were event oriented and none of them debated the problem from the journalist's point of view.

The debate that was going on about the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University was presented mainly through the events that took place in October 2005 and through the opinions of politicians, public spokesmen and academics. In only one article there was a reference made to the OSCE guidelines concerning the issue of minority higher education and only one mention to the history of the University was made, mentioning the period after the Second

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Monitorul de Cluj – two neutral articles; Cotidianul – one neutral artical and one that presented arguments against the break-up; Gandul – two neutral articles; Adevarul – two neutral articles; Jurnalul National – one neutral article and one that presented the arguments in favor of the break-up; Liberatatea – one article with opinions in favor of the break-up.

World War, when the two separate institutions functioned independently until 1959, the moment that they were unified into Babes-Bolyai University⁷³.

In terms of length, *Evenimentul Zilei* published eight large articles, one short and one medium; *Romania Libera* published three medium size articles and one short article; *Jurnalul National* published two short articles; *Gandul* published one large and one medium article; *Adevarul* published two short articles; *Libertatea* published one short article; *Cotidianul* published one large and one medium article; *Monitorul de Cluj* published one medium and one large article.

In November and December 2006, a total of 57 articles were published by the eight newspapers analyzed, on the topic of the events that took place at the Babes-Bolyai in Cluj. In most of the cases the actors mentioned in the articles were academics, since the event oriented articles were predominant. In three of the articles publishes by *Gandul*, the actors mentioned were politicians, while in the other six articles, the actors were academics. *Evenimentul Zilei* published ten articles in which the actors were academics, four in which the actors were politicians, two in which the actors were institution and one editorial that spoke about entire ethnic groups. *Romania Libera* published two articles in which the actors were academics and another one which involved the entire ethnic group. *Jurnalul National* published only one article on the topic, in which the actors were individuals. *Cotidianul* published seven articles in which the actors were academics and one in which the actors were politicians. *Adevarul* published three articles in which the actors were individuals and two news in which the actors were politicians. *Monitorul de Cluj* published 14 articles in which the actors were academics and one in which the actors were politicians.

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 $^{^{73}}$ In the article "radicalii maghiari cer dezmembrarea UBB", published in Evenimentul Zilei, on 18.10.2005

Out of the total of 56 articles published, in nine cases the ethnicity of the actors involved was mentioned without being connected to another fact or being a key element of the story. In seven articles, the actions mentioned were attributed to the entire ethnic group.

In 29 of the articles, both sides of the discourse were represented, while nine of them only presented opinions that accused the actions of the two Hungarian professors; in 18 articles there were presented arguments and opinions that defended the actions of the Hungarian professors.

In the articles in which the actions of the two Hungarian professors were framed as the wrong way to act, the arguments most often presented were that their actions were of some radical behavior, they were acting against European values and militating for inter-ethnic hostility. In only four articles out of the total of 56, the actions of the two members of CIB were catalogued as against the Romanian laws and against the regulations of the University.

Out of the articles analyzed, only eleven also included the opinions of the journalists, while the rest of 45 were focused on the facts and statements of actors involved.

The eight publications analyzed focused their reports on the events that brought again the topic of the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University into discussion, the attempt of Peter Hantz to install plaques with inscriptions in Hungarian throughout the campus of the University. Little attention was given to background information such as the history of the University or the legal framework that deals with this issue. Only two articles made reference to the University's internal regulations. Only three articles mentioned the European similar contexts and how the issue of higher learning in the language of the minority was solved in those cases.

⁷⁵ The articles in question were both published by Monitorul de Cluj: "Placute bilingve la UBB" on 9.11.2007 and "Razboiul placutelor" on 24.11.2006.

⁷⁴ The articles in question are "Razboiul placutelor", published by Monitorul de Cluj on 24.11.2006 and "Separatistii vor placute bilingve" published by Adevarul, on 9.11.2006.

In terms of length, *Gandul* published four large articles, two medium articles and three short articles; *Adevarul* published for short articles and one medium size article; *Cotidianul* published two large articles, five medium size articles and one short article; *Jurnalul National* published only one short article; *Romania Libera* published three large articles; *Evenimentul Zilei* published nine large articles, four medium size articles and three small articles; *Monitorul de Cluj* published 11 large articles, three medium size articles and one short article.

V.4.b Interpretation of data collected

The eight publications that were analyzed provided varied representations of the two episodes that brought into the debate the question of the break-up of Babes-Bolyai University.

While in the first part of the monitoring period (October 2005), the topic did not seem very appealing for most of the publications analyzed, the second episode (November-December 2006) was more present in the agenda of the eight newspapers. This fact is obvious by comparing the total number of articles published, 26 in October 2005 as opposed to 56 in November and December 2006.

Another indicator of the analysis followed the unnecessary mentioning of ethnicity. According to the count, in October 2005, in eight out of 26 articles, ethnicity was mentioned without being connected to another fact, while in November and December 2006, the same thing was done in nine cases out of the total of 56 articles. This served as a tool to differentiate the two ethnic groups. Ethnicity was mentioned when the respective individuals would argue for a change and in this context it was made clear that he/she is of Hungarian origins. In the first part, it was enough to take part in the demonstrations to be labeled as Hungarian. Politicians or academics of Hungarian ethnicity that expressed their opinions

against the break-up of the University in Cluj were presented as "the Hungarian professor" or "the Hungarian politician" to emphasize a connection between their opinions and their ethnic belonging. If a Romanian politician or a public person was presented as in favor for the demands of CIB, his ethnicity was not mentioned. This can work as a mechanism to establish a series of stereotypes for the ethnic minority, context which is enforced by the emphasis which was put on the exceptions, cases in which ethnic Hungarians argued against the break-up of the University. Expressions such as "the Hungarian radicals", the "Hungarian protesters" or "the Hungarian extremists" were used without specifying which individuals were targeted.

The fact that the majority of the articles were event centered and those articles that were thematic were using only two or three different frames to approach the topic may lead to the conclusion that the conflictual potential of the topic was more appealing to the newspapers analyzed 77. Very few articles mentioned the history of the university, which is paradoxically especially in the context that the existing situations was also encountered on three other occasions in the history of the institution. Romanian laws and the guidelines of international organizations were arguments that did not find an important position in the agenda of the journalists reporting on the topic.

One is correct to say that extensive coverage was guaranteed to politicians that represented the Hungarian minority and to academics from Babes-Bolyai University. This only led to a situation where various contradicting ideas were expressed without having some authorities to set the standards for what was extreme, what rights were rightfully claimed. The majority of persons which were cited had a connection with the case and their opinions were not

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⁷⁶ One example would be the article "Mircea Toma: Atitudinea UBB este jenanta", published by Monitorul de Cluj, on 29.11.2006.

Peter Gross argues that whatever function the Romanian media fulfills is actually a coincidence, rather than an intended result. The media in Romania do not serve the public interest at the moment, although this is the intended goal of some publications; see p. 162.

entirely objective: Hungarian politicians, Hungarian professors, Romanian academics etc. Having public figures which were not implicated in the topic and speaking about the issue of the University in Cluj was almost absent in the reporting on the eight publications which were analyzed. The issue was described as a tug of war in which politicians and academics from UBB took place, and references to legislation or valid opinions of public figures that were not involved were rare.

A significant part of the articles had titles and leads that suggested conflict or ethnic mobilization against the institution; however, in most of the cases, the articles also contained quotes and opinions that presented both side and their arguments. The title and the first two phrases only had the role of getting the attention of the reader, making the article to stand out, making it sensational. The debate was often portrayed as a "war", influenced by "actions of rebels" or even more superficial, as "Hungarians against UBB".⁷⁸

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⁷⁸ These are key words and expressions that could be found in a considerate part of the titles used; "Magyars against UBB" is a title of an article published by *Evenimentul Zilei*, on 20.05.2005.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

When looking at the representations of ethnic groups and events that involve inter-ethnic debates, it is important to emphasize that in the Romanian case, the media are not driven by manipulating political actors anymore. The factors that have the potential to influence this kind of topics are the tabloid character of most Romanian daily newspapers, the mixed model of tabloid and quality publications and the representations it creates and the average professional skills of the Romanian journalists.

As the analysis showed, the topic of the University in Cluj was present in the media in more event-oriented articles then thematic ones, that would present a general overview of the problem. Even when thematic types of frames were used to report on the debate, the sources used were politicians and academics that were connected to the matter. There was no effort to expand the thematic frames in order to include historical arguments or European guidelines on the issue ⁷⁹. Another issue worth mentioned is the fact that the sources used by journalist to report on the topic were only the politicians and academics that were each involved to various degrees in the unfolding of events. There was only one article in which a well known journalist and activist was asked to state his opinion regarding the way in which the actions of the CIB members was responded by the University Senate. This trend in the choice of sources goes to show that the conflict character of the debate was exploited. The opposing views of the sources used was more important in the choice journalists made than the authority and the overall view they could provide the public in order to better understand the debate. This is supported also by the fact that the legal interpretation of issue was only mentioned in six articles out of the total of 82.

⁷⁹ Historical arguments and European guidelines were mentioned in only five articles out of the total of more then 80 articles that were published on the topic. There were several references made by sources that were cited to European values and similar practices but the arguments were not further explored.

The representation of the ethnic minority was constructed by the mentioning of the ethnicity of the actors or the groups involved, even if this information was not connected to any other aspect of the story. The protesters were not referred to as students, but "the Hungarian students"; the two professors that were dismissed after they tried to install plaques with inscriptions in Hungarian were referred to as "Hungarian radicals" or "Magyars against UBB". Some times the actions of the two professors, the agenda of CIB or the stand that the student protesters took in October 2005 were attributed to the entire Hungarian ethnic group, without specifying that there are also ethnic Hungarians that have different views or opinions. The same practices were not employed when reporting on Romanian individuals of groups of Romanian students.

In most cases, the debate of the break-up of the Babes-Bolyai University was framed as the destruction of an institution and the establishment of the Hungarian Bolyai University, without making any reference to how would the Romanian University evolve afterwards.

Articles that mentioned the multicultural profile of the Babes-Bolyai University outnumbered those that spoke about the debate if the Romanian state is obliged to guarantee the Hungarian University a separate institution of higher learning.

There were also differences between publications in the way they framed the topic and the importance they attributed to the events. Tabloids like *Libertatea* and *Jurnalul National* only published one, respectively three articles on the topic in the combined period of three months. 80 *Evenimentul Zilei* was the publication that had the most articles published on the topic.

The present study is also an additional argument to sustain the affirmation made by Peter Gross that spreading political information is different from spreading multicultural values.⁸¹

⁸⁰ *Libertatea* is the newspaper that has the highest circulation in Romania and *Jurnalul National* occupies the second position in this ranking.

⁸¹ See Gross, p. 161.

Whatever informational, educational, opinion-forming or agenda-setting role the media might fulfill, it is done by accident or it is a coincidence.

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Appendices

Title of publication	Average number of copies sold per day in <u>October</u> 2005	Average number of copies sold per day in <u>November 2006</u>	Average number of copies sold per day in <u>December</u> 2006
Adevarul	34.794	26.577	27.72
Cotidianul	No data	15.374	15.534
Evenimentul Zilei	71.288	63.996	69.341
Gandul	38.6	32.873	33.282
Jurnalul National	86.434	95.945	99.532
Libertatea	263.534	278.643	257.89
Romania Libera	62.817	56.292	54.727
Monitorul de Cluj	Declared selling at least 10.001 copies per day, following publication's own count		
CEU			

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations in Romania (BRAT), available at $\underline{www.brat.ro}$