What Is a Good Citizen?

How and Why Romanians Think of Citizenship Obligations*

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Citizens in a democracy must, at a minimum, participate in political life and obey the laws of the state. Citizens in the "civic culture," Almond and Verba argued (1969, 29-30, 228-229), are expected to do more than this: to become well-informed, to be guided by reason, to be willing to work with others to achieve common goals, and to have a "cooperative" spirit with other members of the political community. The civic culture did not demand universal participation, but it was founded on what we now call "communitarian" sentiments (Galston, 2002; Putnam, 2000): People participated in public life through a spirit of trust and camaraderie with fellow citizens, not as simple "rational agents" looking out for themselves. They thus had a "thick" or expansive view of the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

Communist society emphasized social solidarity, but only in the service of the state. Citizens under Communism had "thin" obligations and responsibilities: "Good citizens" were expected to comply willingly with the state. The regime did everything it could to ensure that people did not have deep ties to many others. Howard (2003, 24) writes: "The Communist Party sought to monitor and control virtually every aspect of economic, political, and even social life." There was a divorce between public and private life: The public sphere was marked by conformity, obedience, and at best routine participation in associations controlled by the state. The private realm was marked by deep ties with a handful of trusted confidants (Howard, 2003, 25).

The Romanian experience was particularly severe: Nicolae Ceaucescu's totalitarian regime was "the most totalitarian in the Soviet bloc" (Dryzek, Holmes, and Chiritoiu, 2002, 194). When Communism fell in 1989 in Romania and elsewhere, optimistic analysts believed that people would rush to create a vibrant civil society, indeed a "civic culture" (Howard, 2002, 27).

However, the legacy of Communism was hard to shake off. People's expectations rose sharply, participation in elections was very high, but political reform seemed to promise far more than the new regimes could deliver. In many transition countries (including Romania), the "new" regimes were merely the old Communist parties renamed; even where alternative social movements took control (as in Poland), the economic shock of transition made democracy and civil society appear to be broken promises (Howard, 2003, 29; Sztompka, 1999, ch. 8) Romania had an "uninspiring...extrication from communism" marked by "lingering authoritarianism," with ethnic nationalism replacing Communism (Dryzek, Holmes, and Chiritoiu, 2002, 191). Romanian civil society remained particularly weak, with paltry levels of civic engagement compared to other countries, with low levels of trust, tolerance, and other measures of the "cooperative spirit" that underlies the civic culture (Badescu, Sum, and Uslaner, 2003). Citizenship in Romania, based upon civic engagement and cooperative sentiments, has not been transformed from the obedient culture of Communism to the participatory one of Western democracy. What, then, do Romanians (and others) think of the obligations of democratic citizens?

What Makes a Good Citizen?

I turn to a survey of Romanians conducted in 2001 as part of the cross-national Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID) project to examine what Romanians believe makes a good citizen.[1] The CID surveys asked people about eight possible criteria for being a good citizen. They fall into four general categories, ranging from the least expansive to the most demanding view of citizenship:

1) *Citizenship as a contract with the state* is the "thin" view of citizenship. Government provides basic services (including security) and people have similarly "thin" responsibili-

ties, including *obeying the law* and *paying taxes*. Citizens have a "condiment contract" with the state: They agree to obey the laws and pay the taxes if the government provides at least basic services (Levi, 1989; Uslaner, 2003b).

2) *Citizenship as participation* gives a greater role to the public. The weaker version of this perspective only demands that *citizens must vote*–and, even then, the call to the polls is more a moral exhortation than a legal requirement (such as obeying the law or paying taxes). Through elections citizens choose among alternative leaders, enhancing the legitimacy of the state. The stronger version holds that *citizens must be active in civic life*: an active citizenry can transmit demands more clearly than voters, whose message is often unclear (Dahl, 1956, 95-97).

3) *Citizenship as deliberation* is more demanding than citizenship as participation and more individualistic than citizenship as community. From this perspective, citizens must do more than take part in civic life. They must deliberate about what policies the state should follow–*citizens must have their own opinions*–and they must be ready to examine alternative points of view–*citizens must be self-critical*. Citizens are thus more than passive participants in public debates. They must do more than obey the laws and it is not sufficient to delegate debates over the state's goals to those who are most active. The good citizen must be more than active; she must be *proactive*, helping to shape the debate.

4) *Citizenship as community* is the "thick" view of citizenship. On this perspective, citizens share a common fate and responsibility for each other. This is a "communitarian" outlook on the rights and responsibilities of citizens to each other (Galston, 2002; Putnam, 2000). Citizenship is more than a linkage of people and their government. It reflects the bonds of

people with each other. This view is represented by assenting to the questions that *good citizens should show solidarity with each other* and that *they should think about the welfare of others*.

There should be most consensus on the "formalistic" view of citizenship as a contract with the state. After all, without basic compliance with the law, the alternative views of citizenship wouldn't matter much. In principle, we might expect decreasing agreement with each of the four components of citizenship, with the smallest share of the public accepting communitarian responsibilities. This is indeed the case for the two extreme categories, but we shall not see a monotonic decline across the four categories.

How do citizens rank these perspectives on citizenship? First, I examine how Romanians rate each perspective on citizenship and then compare their views with the full range of countries in the CID survey, both transition and Western countries. Then I turn to statistical models of each component of citizenship, based upon the frameworks underlying the four components.

Models of Citizenship

What shapes peoples' (especially Romanians) views on citizenship? The models I shall estimate are based on the two poles of the citizenship question. At one end, we see the rights and responsibilities of citizenship reflecting the connection of citizens and the state. At the other end, citizenship is based upon ties of people to each other.

If the demands of citizenship reflect the ties of people to their government, then we would expect that people would be more demanding of their fellow citizens if:

they have confidence in their governmental institutions; when government is performing well, the state can expect greater compliance with its mandates (Levi, 1989);

they believe that the institutions of the state (especially the courts) treat people fairly (Tyler, 1990); under Communism, justice was arbitrary and the transition to democracy has been marked by continuing corruption and the perception that justice is not equal (Uslaner and Badescu, 2004); if the laws are not enforced fairly, there is less compulsion to obey them; people who are more optimistic about the courts should be more willing to demand compliance to the state (Uslaner, 2003b);

they are satisfied with the progress of democracy and have faith in a democratic future; when people see a brighter future, obeying laws and paying taxes is an investment in the future; when people see democracy as a failed experiment, they have few reasons to give allegiance to the state.

If people base their expectations of citizenship on communitarian sentiments, they should be more demanding of others if:

they believe that most people can be trusted (Uslaner, 2002); generalized trusters (who say that most people can be trusted) are more connected to their communities and are more likely to give of themselves in a "communitarian" spirit–giving to charity, volunteering their time, and being willing to serve on a jury.

they have an expansive view of their community, tolerating people who are different from themselves (Putnam, 2000, 21; Uslaner, 2002, ch. 4); *the more expansive our view, the greater responsibility we should feel toward all of our fellow citizens;*

they participate in civic life by joining civic organizations, leading to greater confidence in their fellow citizens; an active civic life, according to the "social capital" thesis binds us to fellow citizens (Putnam, 1993, 111; 2000, 288; but see Uslaner, 2002, ch. 5);

There is controversy over another form of communitarian sentiment: Attachment to religion. Harris (1999) argues that religious values provide a moral foundation for people's ties to one another, and thus form a positive force linking us to our fellow citizens. Faith leads people away from materialistic concerns and is the foundation for many good works such as volunteering and charitable donations (Wuthnow, 1991). For Tocqueville (1945, 126), it was the foundation of "self-interest rightly understood," what we now call generalized trust. However, religion may be an alternative to generalized trust rather than the basis of such feelings (Putnam, 1993, 107; Wuthnow, 1999), especially among fundamentalists. In some transition countries, such as Poland, religion (the Catholic Church) acted as a buffer against communist absolutism and has been a positive force in generating communitarian sentiments (Sztompka, 1999, 131). In Romania, the church was more tightly connected to, even coopted by, the Ceaucescu regime (Stan and Turescu, 2000). Religion in Romania, then, may lead to less communitarian sentiments rather than more–but we cannot rule out the possibility that people who feel attached to a higher authority may also feel connected to their fellow citizens.

I shall estimate identical statistical models for the citizenship measures. To what extent are expectations of citizenship driven from above? Is citizenship based upon state performance and the fairness of governmental procedures? To the extent that government performance matters most, citizenship is a contract between the public and the state and *not* a set of bonds among the populace. If trust, tolerance, group membership, and religious values matter most, then citizenship expectations develop from "below," from society.

A top-down explanation bodes less well for the future of democracy than one based on civil society. Support for government is always contingent and can be withdrawn if the current

regime is unpopular. A strong civil society, as Almond and Verba noted four decades ago, is a stronger reed for democracy.

Yet, it would not be realistic to presume that *all* forms of citizenship have the same foundations. More formalistic criteria for good citizenship–obeying the law and paying taxes, to be sure, but also the obligation to vote and perhaps even being active in civic affairs–should be more strongly linked to evaluations of the government. More communitarian criteria–having one's own opinions, being self-critical and especially showing solidarity and thinking of others–should be more strongly linked to values such as trust, tolerance, and faith, as well as to ties to one's community. Group membership may be less important than trust, tolerance, and religious values. It is far from clear that group membership can lead people to trust people outside their own immediate circle (Rosenblum, 1998; Stolle, 1998; Uslaner, 2002, ch. 5).

Measures of the Variables

The CID surveys asked respondents to rank each of the eight measures of citizenship on a scale of importance from zero (not at all important) to 10 (very important).

The other variables I use are the standard measure of generalized trust: "Generally speaking, do you believe that most people can be trusted, or can't you be too careful in dealing with people?"[2] About a third of Romanians believe that "most people can be trusted." My measure of racial tolerance is a factor score of standard tolerance items –whether people would allow minority groups (Jews, Hungarians, Romani, and people of other races) to hold meetings and to live in their neighborhoods. The group membership question is a sum of membership in any of 28 associations. No Romanian joined more than 10 organizations and only 6 percent belonged to more than one group. Romanians belong to fewer civic groups than any other public

in the CID sample (though Russians and Moldovans are close behind), with participation rates less than 10 percent of those of the Dutch and Swedes. The religion question is a straightforward measure asking how attached people are to their religion.

Our survey asked Romanians how satisfied they are with democracy on a four-point scale (only 21 percent gave a positive answer). The Romanian survey also asked, following Tyler (1990), whether people think that courts treat all fairly (17 percent agreed) and whether they would be treated better, equally, or worse than others (32 percent said worse). There was a large number of governmental trust items in the survey: confidence in the parliament, the cabinet, the courts, the police, political parties, municipal boards, and civil servants. All of these governmental institutions formed a single factor and I use the factor score from this dimension here.

Each measure of citizenship is an ordered scale, not suitable for simple regression analysis. So I estimate the models by ordered probit analysis, a technique similar to regression analysis, but no so easily interpretable.

Probit coefficients have no simple interpretation. So I rely upon "probit effects," which measure the change in probabilitity from one category of the dependent variable to another *based upon changes in the values of the predictors*. For simple probit with dichotomous dependent variables (voting participation), changes in probabilities from one category to another are straightforward: There are only two categories (you voted or you didn't vote). For the citizenship evaluations, there are 11 categories and 10 changes in probabilities from one category to another. Fortunately, for *every* question, the modal response is "most important" (ranking of 10), so I chose the change from a ranking of 9 to a ranking of 10. The changes in probability will vary across the citizenship measures simply because of the distribution of responses. Three quarters

of all Romanian respondents give a score of 10 to the importance of paying taxes and obeying the law, while less than a quarter believe that it is equally critical for people to think of others.

Usually, we estimate the impact of an independent variable by estimating changes in probabilities at the minimum value of a predictor and at the maximum value of a predictor. However, several of the variables have badly skewed distributions. So I truncate these variables when estimating effects as follows: For the factor scores for trust in government and tolerance of people of different races, I exclude the top and bottom fifth percentiles. Only 20 percent of Romanians belong to *any* civic group, so I estimate probabilities for no groups and one group (rather than 10, the maximum). I truncate religious attachment to between scale scores of 4 (moderate) and 10 (strong) and age to between 18 and 75.

The ordered probit coefficients (and their levels of statistical significance) are instructive, but may be misleading. The coefficients include the extreme predictors of skewed variables, while the effects do not. The latter are more conservative–and more reliable.

Ideas about Citizenship

Romanians rank all eight components of "good citizenship" highly (see Table 1). They are more demanding than citizens in most other countries covered by the CID surveys:[3] For every measure, the average score is higher than for all Europe, the Western nations, and transition countries overall.

Table 1 about here

Romanians rank the "thin" demands of citizenship, paying taxes and especially obeying laws, most highly: Two-thirds of Romanians see these traits as critical, compared to a quarter of

the public in the West and just under half of the population across other transition countries. In nations where obedience to authority was the hallmark of the political system, it is hardly surprising that support for order would remain so strong. Yet, Romanians also give strong support to the more communitarian values of showing solidarity (though see below) and thinking of others, far more so than do citizens in other transition countries: 23 percent of Romanians rank thinking of others at 10, compared to just 15 percent of people in other transition countries (and 27 percent in the West).

Western Europeans are less concerned with order and more concerned with "thicker," more communitarian, demands on citizens. But transition citizens rank participation almost as highly as do Western Europeans and place a higher value on holding your own opinions (perhaps because for so many years they could not do so publicly). Romanians are more likely to say that they should think of others than most other nations (only Denmark ranks higher) and place a higher value on showing solidarity than citizens of any other CID nation. Only for being self-critical do Romanians rank below average.

In spite of low civic engagement, Romanians seem to maintain great expectations of their fellow citizens. Romanians see citizenship as demanding obedience, participation, and even a sense of communitarianism, even as trust and civic engagement remain low. This is a puzzle that calls out for explanation. What, then, leads Romanians to rank each component of citizenship highly?

The Models Evaluated

I present the ordered probits in Table 2 and the effects as detailed above in Table 3. The equations in Table 2 point to some rather surprising findings (subject, of course, to revision when

I examine the effects):

Tables 2 and 3 about here

Three variables seem to have significant coefficients across the entire range of good citizenship questions: ***trust in government, group membership, and attachment to religion.*** Higher levels of trust in government are associated with stronger demands on citizenship. This is powerful evidence for the view that citizenship reflects ties between the public and the state–shaping rights and responsibilities from above. However, there is initial indication that civil society matters too, with strongly significant coefficients for group membership. Group membership seems to shape demands that people be active, have their own opinions, and be self-critical. These are the the equations where group membership is most highly significant–and it is not surprising that people who are even minimally active would want others to be committed as well. Yet there are also significant coefficients for group membership on thinking about others, obeying laws, and paying taxes. Attachment to religion is significant on all citizenship measures except having your own opinions: This is not surprising, since one is not expected to challenge religious orthodoxy, especially in an Orthodox church. Attachment to religion seems to stimulate feelings of solidarity and concern for others, as well as obligations to the state.

The same variables shape both "thick" and "thin" conceptions of citizenship. There is little impact for generalized trust, beliefs that the legal system is fair, satisfaction with democracy, racial tolerance, or age. Where we do see some sporadic effects for trust and tolerance, it is for "thin" conceptions of citizenship–paying taxes and obeying laws–rather

than in "thick" views, where we would have expected feelings of social solidarity to have mattered more. There are sporadic significant coefficients for other variables (satisfaction with democracy, fairness of the legal system, and tolerance), but there is no coherent pattern of what matters where.

These findings are reinforced in Table 3, where I present the ordered probit effects (changes in probabilities from a value of 9 to a value of 10 for each of the citizenship measures). The entries in bold reflect statistically significant coefficients (from Table 2). Here we see that rather small effects of most variables, with the exception of trust in government institutions and in two instances attachment to religion. People who rank high on trust in government are 20 percent more likely to give the highest priority to showing solidarity and having their own opinions; they are five to 10 percent more likely to believe good citizens should obey laws, pay taxes, and think about others. No "communitarian" variable (trust in others, tolerance, attachment to religion, or group membership) leads people to place a higher priority on thinking about others. Only attachment to religion has a more powerful impact on the importance of showing solidarity. Trust, tolerance, attachment to religion, and group membership all shape attitudes toward paying taxes, but none these plays a strong role in more "communitarian" roles for good citizens.

The powerfully significant effects for group membership are reduced when I estimate ordered probit effects: Group membership does matter for having one's own opinions and paying taxes, but now the effects for other conceptions of good citizenship are minimal. Civic engagement in Romania *does not produce social solidarity, at least as expressed in conceptions of good citizenship*. The significant coefficients in Table 2 obviously stem from the atypical views on

citizenship of a handful of civic activists. Perhaps if there were many more civic activists, there would be a greater spillover from civic engagement to demands for the citizenry.

The story of Table 3 is that attitudes toward citizenship are largely top down, from evaluations of government performance. Attachment to religion also shapes citizenship goals, though with smaller effects. Religious devotion may instill a sense of citizenship that is stronger on obligations to the state (paying taxes) than it is on having your own opinions and being self-critical (not significant). There is a modest effect on thinking about others and a powerful impact on showing solidarity with others. However, the high levels of solidarity in Romania (strongest among the 13 nations in the CID sample), Slovenia (ranked second), and Moldova (ranked fifth) suggests that citizens in formerly Communist countries may not have interpreted the question in the same way that people in the West did. It may be a sense of having a collective fate *beyond individual control* rather than of a shared sense of social responsibility. Some evidence for this comes from the Romanian CID sample: Here we see that people who say that people get ahead by luck or connections have a significantly higher score on solidarity (8.74) than people who believe that hard work leads to success (8.23).

Reprise

The results I have presented offer a partial clue to the puzzle of why a society with low levels of trust, tolerance, and civic engagement has such high expectations for citizenship. Romanians seem to express the hope that *citizens should be involved in their society*–though they (and other transition citizens) place heaviest emphasis on *attaining a sense of order*. In post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe, tight government control has been replaced by chaos and privilege. Crime rates and levels of corruption are significantly higher in transition countries than

elsewhere in the world.[4] And transition citizens see the old elites as dominating social and political life, securing unearned wealth and still monopolizing power (Hayoz and Sergeyev, 2003).

Romanians and likely other people in transition countries see citizenship in instrumental terms. The rights and obligations of citizens stem from the performance of the state. Transition citizens still feel the sting of Communism and believe that they have been let down by the post-Communist governments. Citizens' obligations to the state are thus contingent upon the performance of the state–and not on the bonds people share with each other, either through democratic values (trust and tolerance) or civic engagement (of which there is little). Even demands for social solidarity such as thinking of others are more rooted in attitudes toward the state than to communitarian sentiments. Transition countries, and Romania in particular, are a long way off from the development of the social fabric necessary for a civic culture.

Sztompka (1999, 179-90) saw hope for civil society in Poland in the late 1990s as the economy revived, crime fell, and young people became the vanguard of a new social order. Does Poland offer a lesson, or at least hope, for Romania? Alas, we cannot be so optimistic. The generation that came of age after the fall of Communism is the *least* trusting, the *least* tolerant, the *least* civically engaged, and the *least* supportive of governmental institutions of any age cohort in Romania (Uslaner, 2003a). They are also the *least* likely to say that a good citizen should show solidarity, must vote, should pay taxes and must obey the law of any generation. They are *less* likely than people who grew up under Communism (but equally likely compared to people who came of age before Communism) to say that good citizens must be self-critical, or think of others. Young people *do* say that good citizens should be active in civic affairs–even as they have the lowest rates of participation of any age cohort themselves.

Uslaner, "What Is a Good Citizen?" (15)

Citizenship seems to matter to Romanians. However, until the state can fulfill its end of the "contract" with the public, it remains an unfulfilled ideal.

TABLE 1

What Makes a Good Citizen:

Views in Romania, All Europe, the West, and Transition Countries

	Romania Average	Romania % at "10"	All Europe Average	West Average	Transition Average
Show Solidarity	8.41	48.58	7.74	7.77	7.66
Think of Others	6.62	23.34	6.22	6.32	5.98
Self-Critical	6.62	26.22	7.11	7.17	6.97
Have Own Opinions	8.66	54.16	8.36	8.27	8.57
Must Vote	8.70	58.05	7.71	7.67	7.83
Be Active	6.00	25.71	5.60	5.64	5.49
Obey Laws	9.27	68.53	8.06	7.86	8.55
Pay Taxes	9.09	66.75	7.67	7.43	8.27

Source: CID surveys, computed by author.

TABLE 2
Ordered Probits for Good Citizenship Measures

	Show Solidarity	Think Others	Self-Critical	Have Own Opinions	Must Vote	Be Active	Obey Laws	Pay Taxes
Trust	.084 (.111)	-.009 (.103)	.054 (.104)	.138 (.115)	.106 (.109)	-.036 (.107)	.018 (.127)	.216** (.129)
Law Treats You Better	.045 (.081)	.053 (.076)	-.023 (.076)	-.013 (.084)	.083 (.087)	.023 (.081)	-.007 (.091)	.040 (.091)
Courts Treat Everyone Equally	-.155 (.137)	-.100 (.129)	-.178 (.130)	-.009 (.144)	.060 (.153)	-.331** (.135)	.308** (.170)	.165 (.168)
Satisfied with Democracy	.162** (.072)	.052 (.067)	.0002 (.067)	.059 (.075)	.008 (.078)	.048 (.069)	.020 (.082)	-.028 (.082)
Trust Government Factor	.153*** (.055)	.201**** (.052)	.188**** (.052)	.135** (.058)	.312**** (.061)	.372**** (.055)	.199*** (.065)	.138** (.064)
Tolerance of Other Race Factor	.070* (.049)	-.053 (.046)	.070* (.046)	.017 (.051)	.029 (.052)	.078* (.049)	.008* (.058)	.101** (.059)
Attachment to Religion	.118**** (.022)	.118**** (.021)	.069**** (.020)	.023 (.023)	.076**** (.023)	.052** (.021)	.077*** (.024)	.055** (.024)
Group Membership	.082* (.055)	.166*** (.052)	.307***** (.061)	.330**** (.079)	.085 (.067)	.280*** (.061)	.138** (.075)	.128** (.074)
Age	.003 (.003)	.0001 (.003)	-.001 (.003)	-.003 (.003)	.002 (.003)	-.006** (.003)	.007** (.003)	.004 (.003)
N **-2*LLR**	558 1726.816	556 2328.982	557 2348.744	559 1536.440	563 1457.328	522 2197.294	563 1144.196	564 1200.864

* p < .10 ** p < .05 *** p < .01 **** p < .0001
Entries are probit coefficients and standard errors; cut-points are omitted.

Uslaner, "What Is a Good Citizen?" (18)

TABLE 3

Ordered Probit Effects for Citizenship Models

	Show Solidarity	Think Others	Self-Critical	Have Own Opinions	Must Vote	Be Active	Obey Laws	Pay Taxes
Trust	.034	-.001	.003	-.007	-.002	-.001	.006	**.071**
Law Treats You Better	.037	.006	-.002	-.005	-.006	-.009	-.002	.027
Courts Treat All Equally	-.062	.006	-.011	.097	-.006	-.009	**-.018**	.053
Satisfied with Democracy	**.002**	-.009	.000	-.070	.090	.000	-.010	.028
Trust Government Factor	**.200**	**.087**	**.031**	**.218**	**.037**	**.031**	**.047**	**.075**
Tolerance of Other Race Factor	.088	-.010	-.003	.083	.010	**-.012**	.010	**.042**
Attachment to Religion	**.274**	**.046**	-.003	.162	**.046**	**.030**	**.016**	**.151**
Group Membership	-.002	.010	**.015**	**.046**	.010	**.015**	**.012**	**.103**
Age	.072	.000	-.002	.141	.000	**-.002**	**-.017**	.115

Entries are changes in probabilities from lowest value of independent variable to the highest value of independent variable, except for:
age, where the range is between 18 and 75;
group membership, set between no and one memberships;
the trust government and racial tolerance factor scores (set at the top and bottom five percentiles of the total distribution);
religious attachment (set at a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 10).
The effects are calculated for the modal category of each citizenship question (always "very important"). Significant coefficients are in **bold**.

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NOTES

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2. See Uslaner (2002, ch. 3) for a defense of this question. The CID surveys asked the trust question on a 10 point scale, but our study of Romania also asked (first) the standard dichotomy. This is what we use here.

3. The other countries in the CID surveys that are currently available are (with transition

countries listed first, then Western European nations): Russia, East Germany, Slovenia, and Moldova; Switzerland, Portugal, Denmark, West Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden.

4. Crime rates come from World Bank estimates of the rank order of robbery provided by Daniel Lederman and estimates of the rate of pickpocketing from the International Crime Victimization Survey; corruption measures come from Transparency International.