Achievement, Happiness and Trust – Hungary's Location on the Map of Cultural Values

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Abstract: The goal of this paper is to determine the aspects of achievement, happiness and trust in Hungarian society in the light of cultural values. Analysis is based on results from the European Social Survey, European Values Survey and surveys completed by the Hungarian Social Research Institute. Results show that the concepts of achievement, happiness and trust are interdependent and key factors for both individual and social development. The concepts are defined by the cultural value systems in Hungary and serve an important role in individual and societal motivation for success. Results could be used for future comparative research between Hungary and other countries, as well as comparing these notions as a whole in order to determine individual motivations in different cultural contexts.

Keywords: happiness; trust; achievement; intercultural communication; European Social Survey

1. Introduction

In the second decade of 21st century one of the most popular and up to date matters concerns the concept of successfulness and motivation for success. It is widely discussed what frames these notions, mainly because of their impact on one's everyday activities and further aspirations in life. Some researchers consider success equivalent to achievement (Ivanova, 2012, p. 175), while others suppose a broader meaning connecting notions like happiness, trust, motivation, income, education level, etc. (Sokolova, 2013; Székelyi et. al., 2005).

The notions of success, achievement, trust and happiness in Hungarian society remain vitally important for researchers in sociology and cultural studies, as well as anthropology. This paper aims at summarizing basic aspects of Hungarian cultural and societal values according to intercultural communication, summing up opinions from sociological studies on happiness, trust and success and attempting to describe the aspects of and connections between the above mentioned notions.

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2. An Overview of Hungarian Cultural Values in 21st century

Several different viewpoints on Hungarian cultural values will be examined in this chapter of the paper. The analysis focuses on the comparison between different theoretical paradigms about cultural values and how they explain the characteristics of Hungarian culture. This chapter will summarize the cultural dimensions established by E. Hall, F. Trompenaars, G. Hofstede, GLOBE project and R. Inglehart's world cultural maps.

The first cultural dimensions in intercultural communication were established by E. Hall – the views of time and context. Cultures are categorized as monochronic if their perception of time is linear and structured, and polychronic if they perceive time as something that can be filled with many simultaneous activities. Context category represents the way people use language and speech – if explicitness is the key for understanding between individuals, the culture is low context (we do not need the context to understand the message). If people use implicit messages for communication, high context culture is present (we need cues from the environment and context of speech in order to receive the message successfully). According to different studies Hungarian perception of time is mostly monochronic (they value punctuality) (Sokolova, 2014) while the country can be considered a medium context culture (people are afraid to show their achievements to the others because of negative reactions – this leads to hiding or implicitly representing individual achievement) (Fülöp, 2009).

Next group of cultural values is Hofstede's 6-dimensional classification. Some researchers argue the validity of Hofstede's concepts (Ali et al., 2008) as well as the authenticity of the scores in each countries' profiles (Falkné, 2014). Hungarian scores according to *Country Comparison* section in Hofstede's web-site (http://geert-hofstede.com/hungary.html, 30.05.2015) are the following: power distance - 46, individualism - 80, masculinity - 88, uncertainty avoidance - 82, long-term orientation – 58, indulgence - 31. Contrary to this data some sources include different scores (Falkné, 2014): power distance - 19, individualism -11, masculinity - 17, uncertainty avoidance – 83. A plausible explanation for these significant differences could be non-representative samples, age differences, current socio-political environment and its perception among respondents. According to author's prior work on notions of successfulness it could be estimated that important personal qualities are "achievement, assertiveness and self-expression which are often intertwined with respect for authority and external powers, and a need for strong leadership to fight these powers. Hungarians belong to the so called "masculine" cultures, where ambition and persistence are highly valued […]" (Sokolova, 2014). The low score in indulgence dimension on the other hand represents tendency for pessimism and cynicism as well as general dissatisfaction with life. (http://geert-hofstede.com/hungary.html, 30.05.2015) So, a

necessary comparison between several more classifications of cultural dimensions may shed more light on these controversial scores.

According to Trompenaars' cultural dimensions Hungarians tend to be mainly universalistic, achievement-oriented (although ascription orientation is also evident because of the importance of social networking and status for individual success), language use is specific even though sometimes there are diffuse tendencies too, neutrality is typical, future orientation to time is prevalent, as well as outer-directed approach to business (Hidasi & Lukinykh, 2009 – p. 2-7) (Falkné, 2014). This confirms that Hungary is a low context masculine culture, with monochronic views of time and high individualism rates. Yet, this does not explain the high score of uncertainty avoidancve dimension (avoiding risk-taking activities).

The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project examines the inter-relationships between societal culture, organizational culture, and organizational leadership in 61 countries since 1993. (Falkné, 2014)

As a result nine cultural dimensions were established:

"*Power Distance:* The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally.

Uncertainty Avoidance: The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events.

Collectivism I: (Institutional) The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.

Collectivism II: (In-Group) The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.

Assertiveness: The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others.

Gender Egalitarianism: The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality.

Humane Orientation: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others.

Future Orientation: The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviours such as delaying gratification, planning and investing in the future.

Performance Orientation: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence." (Falkné, 2014)

Methodology combines qualitative and quantitative methods and distinguishes between „as is" (a practice in its current state) and „as should be" (a practice the way it is desired by respondents). According to this classification Hungarian culture is hierarchical, has indvidualistic tendency as well as collectivistic practices (loyalty to friends, family and informal groups at work), gender egalitarianism is high (femininity), assertiveness is low (femininity). Results in Future Orientation, Humane Orientation and Performance Orientation show that Hungarians are long-term oriented. (Falkné, 2014) „With these results Hungary belongs to the Eastern European cluster of the GLOBE with Albania, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Poland, Russia and Slovenia [where] we can find large power distance, strong family and group collectivism […]." (Falkné, 2014)

This classification ends with the work of political scientists Ronald D. Inglehart and Christian Welzel who have concluded (based on data retrieved from World Values Study) that cross cultural variations all over the world can be categorized into two dimensions (as explained in the WVS official web-site) - **"***traditional values versus secular-rational values* and *survival values versus self-expression values***.**" (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp, 30.06.2015)

A global cultural map was created in order to show a country's score and its location on both dimensions. "Moving upward […] reflects the shift from traditional values to secular-rational and moving rightward reflects the shift from survival values to self–expression values." (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp, 30.06.2015)

Classification of values is explained as follows:

"Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority and traditional family values. People who embrace these values also reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook.

Secular-rational values have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. These societies place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable. (Suicide is not necessarily more common.)

Survival values place emphasis on economic and physical security. It is linked with a relatively ethnocentric outlook and low levels of trust and tolerance.

Self-expression values give high priority to environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality, and rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life." (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp, 30.06.2015)

Cultural regions on the map are determined by the most wide spread religion in each country.

According to waves 4 and 6 of WVS Hungary's location on the map fits within the Orthodox and Catholic cultures, where the country is classified as a Catholic culture closest to or at the border with the Orthodox community. This can be attributed to data showing Hungary as a moderately survival culture that shares secular-rational values. Orthodox countries are characterized by highly survival culture with secular-rational values, while Catholic cultures share secular values parallel with self-expression beliefs. (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp, 30.06.2015)

In conclusion to this chapter we can summarize the classification of Hungarian values according to the above mentioned theoretical paradigms:

Table 1. Hungarian Cultural Values according to Hall's, Trompenaars', Hofstede's, Inglehart's and GLOBE's Classifications

Hall	Hofstede	Trompenaars	Inglehart	GLOBE
Monochronic views of time	*Individualism*	*Universalism*	*Moderately survival culture*	*High Power Distance*
Low context (Specificity)	*Medium power distance*	*Neutral orientation to work*	*Secular-rational values*	*High Uncertainty Avoidance*
	Masculinity	*'Achieved status' orientation*		*High In-group Collectivism*
	High Uncertainty avoidance	*Pragmatism*		*Medium Institutional Collectivism*
	Restrained culture	*Outer orientation*		*Medium Assertiveness*
		Future orientation		*High Gender Egalitarianism*
				Medium Humane Orientation
				Medium Future Orientation
				Medium Performance Orientation

The table shows the similarities and differences between all classifications. Similarly most show that Hungarian culture values *the same rules* for all members of the community (universalism, low context, secular-rational), has *low levels of trust* and thus *avoids risk-taking* activities (high uncertainty avoidance, survival culture), *plans ahead in time* (long-term orientation, future orientation,

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monochronic time), *pragmatic* (pragmatism, performance orientation, restraint), *achievement* oriented (assertiveness, achieved status, individualism, neutral orientation to work), values *informal relationships* (gender egalitarianism, femininity, in-group collectivism).

Dimensions that do not match completely are masculinity/femininity and individualism/collectivism. This contradiction may be clarified if we use a different perspective in the analysis and presume that these dimensions show different aspects of the same phenomenon. A probable reason for such results could be the main concept of questions included in the surveys as well as what indicators are supposed to be measured, how and in what context. Author's hypothesis is that cultural context of the survey, cultural background of respondents and their *different understanding* of surveys' questions may have influenced their answers. There are studies, including author's, that have concluded that Hungary shares individualistic and masculine values to a larger extent – a phenomenon represented in Hungarian political life, too.

3. Happiness, Life-satisfaction and Trust

This chapter analyses results from the European Values Study and Hungarian Social Research Institute about perceptions of happiness, life-satisfaction and levels of trust. The 2008 edition of EVS examines attitudes to life-satisfaction and happiness all over the continent. According to different sources life-satisfaction could be defined as satisfaction of one's life in general or its certain aspects like quality of life, living conditions, health status, social status, job availability, etc. It has been verified that most of the time life-satisfaction does not correspond solely negatively or positively to its aspects – if one's living conditions are not favourable, the individual might still feel highly satisfied with life, especially when other aspects are positive. (Rosta, 2010, p. 19) Highest satisfaction levels are present when the individual can take the most control over an aspect of life-satisfaction. For instance, satisfaction of family life is mostly rated higher because it can be chosen and controlled by the individual. (Rosta, 2014, p.20) Unlike some external conditions (neighbourhood area, living conditions, etc.), personal choice can improve the feeling of general life-satisfaction.

A connection between happiness and life-satisfaction is described in a 3-dimentional model of individual well-being (Allardt, 1973) which includes 3 components. The "having relation" describes the availability of basic resources like food and shelter. The "loving relation" represents the relationship between the individual and the other members of society (their social status, friendships, etc.). The last component is the "being relation" which includes having goals in life and being satisfied with their accomplishment. (Rosta, 2014, p. 21) Hungarian research after the fall of communist regime showed that life-satisfaction levels dropped

because of the impossibility for Hungarians to achieve their prospective goals and dreams of the new social system. Many people were disappointed with worse living conditions as well. (Rosta, 2014, p. 22) Thus it can be concluded that problems with income, job availability and living conditions are linked to happiness levels. The 2008 EVS' Hungarian section shows that happiness levels in Hungary are one of the lowest on the continent – only 16.2% are very happy, 60.8% - comparatively happy, 18.9% not very happy and 3.8% are not happy at all. If we take into account levels of life-satisfaction, people who consider themselves highly satisfied are very happy (56% of respondents) and comparatively happy (38.7%). Respondents who are "highly unsatisfied" are also "not happy at all" (35.1%). (Rosta, 2014, p. 27-29)

Important extrinsic factors on perception of happiness are age (younger people are happier), place of residence (unhappiest people live in towns with less than 10 000 inhabitants) and education levels (university graduates are happiest). Employment is another factor influencing happiness. It has been estimated that university graduates and young employees are happiest, as well as housewives. The unemployed and retired are least happy. (Rosta, 2014, pp. 29-34) This could be explained with the connection between aspects of life-satisfaction and levels of happiness. Subjective factors that influence happiness are taking part in volunteer organizations (respondents consider themselves "very happy" and "very satisfied" on average),   receiving help from other people (respondents who believe people are willing to help them in need are happier), trusting the others (people who tend to trust the others are happier), having a clear notion of societal norms (people who easily distinguish between good and evil are also happier), locus of control (the ability to control one's life makes Hungarians happier, too), health status and job attitude (a desired job brings more happiness in life). (Rosta, 2014, p. 38-47)

All these factors influence perception of life-satisfaction and happiness but there is one more aspect that should be examined to complete the scope of this chapter – trust. As mentioned above, the ability to trust the others is characteristic of happier people, while unhappy people do not trust the others in general. Or the connection might be the opposite – the less one's learned to trust the others, the unhappier one gets. In a paper from 2010 of Hungarian Social Research Institute's Social Report issue are stated the following social trends in Hungary: there is significantly low level of trust, self-expression values are less present, tolerance to differences is in decline, Hungarians rarely take part in everyday political activities and much less value human rights and freedoms. (Tóth, 2010) EVS data shows that Hungarians trust the least in "politicians", "bankers" and "rich people". The most trust receive "aged people", "poor people" and "religious people" (who go to church). The general lack of trust leads to the inability for cooperation and lack of solidarity (Tóth, 2010). Even though there is a prevalent sense of alienation according to this study, the fact that vulnerable people are mostly trusted shows on one hand that Hungarian society has certain feminine aspects (desire to help people in trouble),

on the other hand is an indicator for higher power distance and the broken connection between ordinary people and people in power (politicians, "rich people"). If we take into account our conclusions about life-satisfaction and happiness, this can also be attributed to low satisfaction and low level of happiness of respondents who associate themselves with the chosen social groups. So, it can be concluded from the data represented in the previous paragraphs that there is intrinsic connection between happiness, life-satisfaction and trust. This connection influences the individual's perception of societal processes and aspirations for achievements in life.

4. A Culture of Achievement?

Achievement is considered as the main aspect of individual success (Ivanova, 2012, p. 175), mainly because of its competitive nature and obvious notion of "acquiring more" in consequence of one's actions. There are studies arguing the importance of achievement in the classroom as a firsthand example of achievement's importance in a culture. According to a study by Farkas and Orosz, acceptance of cheating in order to succeed academically was significantly popular among Hungarian high school students. The paper discusses the relationship between societal success-related values and academic cheating. (Farkas, D., Orosz, G., 2012) The research argues that there is a complexity of factors that contribute to accepting the act of cheating such as individual factors (academic motivation, desire for self-development), situational and interpersonal factors (not fearing punishment or risk of detection) and societal values (cultural values). Reasons for hyper competitiveness and desire to cheat are supposed to originate in societal and education systems that show signs of malfunctioning (crisis of the perception of authority) or are extremely competitive. Main hypothesis is that individualistic (meritocratic) values like putting effort and showing one's abilities will induce weak motivation for cheating. Unlike the above mentioned, collectivist, high context values (importance of social networks) and masculinity (aggressive striving) relate positively to cheating acts, i.e. they motivate such behavior (Farkas, Orosz, 2012). Thus the authors of the study suggest that the more cheating is accepted by the individual, the more often it is executed. Main reason for this is considered to be the importance of social networks (collectivism, particularism, high context) for achieving high results. Students tend to even confess individual cheating (Farkas, D., Orosz, G., 2012) because of their perception of external factors as more important for success than internal factors (individual responsibility). Punishments and risk of detection also showed modest or no effect on preventing cheating. This could be explained by evidence of high power distance and particularism in Hungarian society, which means that students tend to accept themselves as lacking power and control, while their teachers - as having power and control over the circumstances. Student's fear of lack of objectivity in a

teacher's assessment abilities could also be considered a reason for cheating at school. This also shows possible lower levels of trust between the two parties as a consequence of societal influences. According to Farkas and Orosz "it is important to create a school climate in which students evaluate cheating. In this attitude change honor codes could play a crucial role. Furthermore, at least in the Hungarian secondary educational context increasing intrinsic motivation and reducing amotivation can be more effective cure of cheating than exposing harsh punishments." (Farkas, D., Orosz, G., 2012) This suggestion promotes activities involving students and leading to reduction of power distance, thus creating a mutual feeling of trust, which is of exceptional importance for individual success and happiness. The authors correctly distinguish the need to change attitudes to achievement to an intrinsically driven act, rather than consider them an externally influenced outcome. Several other studies investigate the importance of achievement in Hungarian culture (Roe et al., 2000; Fülöp, 2009). According to authors' conclusions *"It seems that in the Hungarian culture if one is a winner and feels happy about it, it is better not to show it because of the potential negative reactions of the social environment and if one is a loser has less successful coping mechanisms to stand up and continue."* (Fülöp, 2009) – rivals are considered enemies, not cooperators for the team's development (Fülöp, 2009). Based on these assumptions we can estimate that Hungarian culture shows solely masculine traits (fierce competitiveness) and individualistic inclinations, which rejects the contradiction between value classifications in chapter 2.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion to the detailed review of Hungarian value dimensions and their role in perceptions of happiness, life-satisfaction and trust, we can summarize that these concepts are interdependent and key factors for both individual and social development. The concepts are defined by the cultural value systems in the country and serve an important role in individual and societal motivation for success. Results could be used for future comparative research between Hungary and other countries, as well as comparing these notions as a whole in order to determine individual motivations in different cultural contexts. Creating problem-solving practices in education, business and entrepreneurship, based on cultural values is a perspective for such research in the future.

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