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## **The concept of the European dimension in Hungarian adolescents**

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### **Introduction**

Emphasising the concept of European identity to adolescents is of great importance, because these young people are members of societies in transition who need to understand the basic values of democracy on which Europe is built. Many European countries are developing or rethinking their curricula in relation to issues of European citizenship, identity and the challenges of living in diverse societies. In Hungary, a qualitative change is expected through democratic transitions as the country becomes a member of the European Union. The Hungarian Ministry of Education is therefore supporting our research project 'The Development of Democratic Values and the European Dimension in Adolescence'.

Our first step was a pilot study that assumed that, in addition to the educational system, societal transitions play an important role in value-formation through their influence on children's social orientation and motivational constructs. We took it as understood that institutional socialisation and social integration affect value formation: it therefore seemed important to highlight Hungarian institutional socialisation processes which promote or block the development of European identity. This paper presents the results of this research on democratic and civic values, the components of the European dimension, and their relations to adolescents' motivational constructs and their tendencies towards individualism and collectivism as social orientation.

### **Democratic values**

Value systems are unique to each individual, but the process of forming values is rooted in society. One of the functions of values is the maintenance of societal control, and this means that an individual's value system will always be related to societal circumstances. Civic education is about values: what values are generally acceptable and desirable in a democratic society? In the case of societies in transition to democracy, the key questions are: which values are dominant? and how can the value system be affected by institutional processes? We examined the concept of democratic values following Schwartz's theory (1997), which proposed eight universal values (appreciation, dominance, purpose in life, pro-social, security, support, autonomy, and achievement). Each of these values has either an individualistic or a collectivist component. We drew parallels between these eight universal values and the theory of Ryff and Keyes (1995), concerning subjective well-being and positive psychological functioning, and added the values of self-acceptance and personal growth. Our final group of twelve democratic values was completed by the concepts of conservatism and liberalism.

**Table 1 Components of the twelve values**

Appreciation	being respected, appreciated and positively evaluated
Dominance	being able to organise and control things, and to have significant impact on others
Purpose in life	the realisation of reasonable purposes and aims. Individuals rated highly with this value feel it important to have determined and creative ideas and act in a purposeful way
Pro-social value	establishing and maintaining well-balanced relationships with others
Security	includes financial security and predictable, balanced everyday life and future, not only for the individual but for important others and society
Support	whether others agree with the individual's opinion and whether the individual has someone to rely on in any situation
Autonomy	personal independence; not being influenced by others in activities or thinking
Achievement	personal achievement and success
Self-acceptance	positive feelings and attitudes of the individual towards him/herself.
Personal growth	positive self-improvement over time and continuously developing abilities
Conservatism	maintaining present conditions. Important features of this value are promoting and respecting traditions, preserving folk customs and celebrating family occasions.
Liberalism	respecting independence and freedom. It involves the freedom to hold different views, equal rights for minorities, and respect for the decisions of others

### **The European dimension**

We consider that the European dimension includes two major components; civic values and social abilities. Civic values are primarily those which preserve democratic principles and societal justice, human rights and tolerance. Social abilities are those capabilities which help young people towards a successful life, a job and lifelong learning: they include communication, selecting information, self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-evaluation, co-operation, problem solving and conflict-handling.

#### *1. Civic values*

*Civil attitudes* can be considered as those which are apolitical and which emphasise benefit-related behaviour. Mobility and establishing foreign relations can also be considered basic civic values.

*Conservative components* are primarily imparted by education, and deal with preserving traditional values. Families socialise individuals to be responsible and to respect the

traditions and the institutions of family and marriage. In this way the civic society can be defined as a consensus to protect rights, freedom, cultural and natural values.

*Liberal component.* A civic society may also be defined by its typical value system, which consists of the ability to make decisions and to be autonomous. Liberal values such as respect of different opinions, accepting others' views, free decision making and freedom of expression can be highlighted.

*Social and communal component.* Civic values can also be described by the social, communal component. In this case people follow the norm of solidarity, respect common group values, undertake a common fate and give significant attention to the other people living in their environment.

*Motivational components.* Motivations impact on almost every aspect of life. The motivational construct might indicate or influence the presence of different social orientations to fulfil special needs for values emerging in society. One of the most important criteria for an educated person is adaptability, which can help the person – consciously or unconsciously – realise an appropriate way of value formation. Related to the European dimension, motivational components can be defined as the sum of those attitudes, attributions, intentions, behaviours and influential factors which help people fulfil their needs. In studies of human motivation, several types which might drive individual behaviour have been identified. We utilised McClelland's theories of achievement, power and affiliation motives, and additionally the avoidance achievement motive (Elliot & Sheldon, 1997) to examine the relationship between motivation and the formation of democratic values.

- The achievement motive includes the notion of doing something better than others (McClelland, 1987). People with high achievement motivation will act in ways that help them to outperform someone else, meet or surpass some standard of excellence, or do something unique. People high in achievement motivation take personal responsibility for their performance, seek performance feedback on how well they are doing, and try new and more efficient ways of doing things.
- Avoidance achievement motivation can be defined as a generalised desire to avoid failure (Emmons & McAdams, 1991). Elliot and Church (1997) proffered a model of avoidance achievement motivation that links goals to underlying motive dispositions. Fear of failure can be a motive disposition underlying the pursuit of avoidance personal achievement goals.
- The power motive causes a person to desire 'impact, control, or influence over another person, group or the world at large'. Individuals with high power motives may satisfy motivational needs through leadership roles or holding office, or by pursuing a career as a business executive, teacher, psychologist, member of the clergy, or any other role which involves direct, legitimate, interpersonal power over others.
- An individual with high level of Affiliation motive will emphasise the importance of mutual relationships. Affiliation motivation is defined as establishing, restoring or maintaining a close, warm, friendly relationship with another or others, or being emotionally concerned over separation from someone else.

## 2. Social orientation - Individualism and collectivism

Social orientation plays an important role in the development of the European dimension. On one hand it shows the individuals' tendencies in following societal values and accepting group norms. On the other hand it can act as a measure of the influence of peer groups in forming democratic values. A recently developed construct of social orientation was introduced to measure the tendencies of individualism and collectivism, consisting of four components:

- *Collectivists* emphasise values and norms that serve the in-group by subordinating personal goals for the sake of preserving in-group integrity, interdependence of members, and harmonious relationships.
- *Individualism - 'the unique individual'* defined by emotional detachment from an in-group. Individualists would like to consider themselves unique, different from others.
- *Individualism - 'the competitive individual'*. Personal goals have primacy over in-group goals. Behaviour is regulated by individual likes and dislikes and cost-benefit analysis. It is important to compete individually with others of their in-group to be successful.
- *Individualism - 'the hedonist individual'* strives to be the best and maximise their own incomes. They can be characterised by hedonism, maximising and seeking their own happiness.

### Research method

#### *Participants*

Adolescents from nine different classes in secondary schools in Debrecen, Hungary (N=234) participated. 58 (25%) were in the first year of secondary school, 51(22%) were pupils in the second class, 69 (29%) in their third year and 56 (24%) in the fourth and final year of secondary schooling. They were between 14-19 years of age (the mean age was 16); 97 (41%) were male and 137 (59%) female. Seven (3%) of them described their living circumstances as bad, 158 (68%) were satisfied with their lives and 69 (29%) of them were very satisfied.

#### *Measures*

All participants were asked to complete a chart listing components of the European dimension - democratic and civic values, individualism and collectivism as social orientation – and to give their motivational construct. Sixteen items were connected to social orientation, and the emergent concept of the European dimension was determined by using 15 items; 12 were applied in measuring democratic values, and 16 were used to determine motivational construct. All items were assessed on a Likert scale from 0 (totally disagree) to 20 (totally agree).

### Results

#### *The construct of motivational components*

Achievement motivation correlated .464 ( $p < .01$ ) with Power motivation. Achievement motivation also correlated with .359 ( $p < .01$ ) with affiliation motivation. Affiliation

motivation had a correlation of .683 ( $p < .01$ ) with power motivation. Avoidance achievement motivation correlated with approach achievement motivation .753 ( $p < .01$ ).

*The construct of individualism and collectivism as social orientation*

There was no correlation between collectivism and ‘unique’ individualism. The correlation that illustrates the relationship between collectivism and ‘competitive-hedonist’ individualism was .202 ( $p < .01$ ). The correlation of ‘unique’ individualism with ‘competitive-hedonist’ individualism was significantly high at .926 ( $p < .01$ ).

*Relations of democratic values and the motivational construct*

The value of dominance contributed to achievement motivation .502 ( $p < .05$ ), to approach achievement motivation .653 ( $p < .01$ ) and  $-.464$  ( $p < .05$ ) to avoidance achievement motivation.

*Purpose in life*

This contributed to achievement motivation at the level of .391 ( $p < .05$ ), to approach achievement motivation .744 ( $p < .01$ ) and to avoidance achievement motivation  $-.654$  ( $p < .01$ ). The pro-social value component contributed to approach achievement motivation .59 ( $p < .01$ ), to avoidance achievement motivation  $-.556$  ( $p < .05$ ) and power motivation  $-.44$  ( $p < .05$ ). The value of support showed a contribution to approach achievement motivation .751 ( $p < .01$ ) and to avoidance achievement motivation  $-.773$  ( $p < .05$ ). Self-acceptance contributed to approach achievement motivation .491 ( $p < .05$ ) and to avoidance achievement motivation

$-.582$  ( $p < .05$ ). Personal growth contributed to approach achievement motivation .429 ( $p < .05$ ). The value of conservatism had contributions to approach achievement motivation on the level of .693 ( $p < .01$ ) and to avoidance achievement motivation  $-.577$  ( $p < .05$ ).

*Relations of democratic values and individualism-collectivism as social orientation*

In the case of appreciation we found contribution to collectivism on the level of regression .349 ( $p < .05$ ). The value of dominance showed contributions to ‘unique’ individualism  $-.464$  ( $p < .05$ ) and ‘competitive-hedonist’ individualism .685 ( $p < .01$ ). Pro-social contributed to collectivism on the level of regression .345 ( $p < .05$ ). The value of security had a contribution .342 ( $p < .05$ ) to collectivism. Autonomy showed contribution to ‘unique’ individualism .349 ( $p < .05$ ). The value of achievement contributed to ‘competitive-hedonist’ individualism .564 ( $p < .01$ ). Liberalism had contributions to collectivism .303 ( $p < .01$ ), to the ‘unique’ individualism .747 ( $p < .01$ ) and to ‘competitive-hedonist’ individualism  $-.861$  ( $p < .01$ ).

*Relations of European dimension and the motivational construct*

Self-esteem contributed to power motivation  $-.624$  ( $p < .05$ ) and affiliation motivation .910 ( $p < .01$ ). Self-confidence showed contributions toward approach achievement motivation .435 ( $p < .05$ ) and affiliation motivation .794 ( $p < .01$ ). Self-evaluation contributed to avoidance achievement motivation .831 ( $p < .01$ ). Problem-solving behaviour had contributions to avoidance achievement motivation .468 ( $p < .01$ ), affiliation motivation .597 ( $p < .05$ ) and power motivation  $-.318$  ( $p < .05$ ).

*Relations of European dimension and individualism-collectivism as social orientation*

Democracy contributed to collectivism .384 ( $p < .01$ ), 'unique' individualism .474 ( $p < .05$ ) and 'competitive-hedonist' individualism -.631 ( $p < .05$ ). Human rights contributed to collectivism .267 ( $p < .05$ ). Tolerance showed a contribution to collectivism .288 ( $p < .05$ ).

*Relations of civic values and the motivational construct*

The value of centralism showed contribution to affiliation motivation .903 ( $p < .05$ ). Apoliticism contributed to power motivation negatively -.635 ( $p < .05$ ) and positively to affiliation motivation .435 ( $p < .01$ ). Mobility showed contributions to approach achievement motivation .520 ( $p < .05$ ), avoidance achievement motivation -.499 ( $p < .05$ ), to power motivation .635 ( $p < .01$ ) and affiliation motivation .695 ( $p < .01$ ). Responsibility contributed to approach achievement motivation .549 ( $p < .01$ ). The family value positively contributed to approach achievement motivation .732 ( $p < .01$ ) and negatively to power motivation -.560 ( $p < .01$ ). The value of traditions showed contributions to approach achievement motivation .423 ( $p < .01$ ) and to power motivation -.472 ( $p < .01$ ). Respect for other opinions had contributions toward approach achievement motivation .436 ( $p < .01$ ) and avoidance achievement motivation -.623 ( $p < .05$ ). Acceptation of difference showed contributions to approach achievement motivation .611 ( $p < .01$ ) and to avoidance achievement motivation -.691 ( $p < .01$ ). Free decision-making contributed to power motivation .438 ( $p < .05$ ). The value of solidarity showed contribution to affiliation motivation .618 ( $p < .05$ ). Common fate had contribution to approach achievement motivation .554 ( $p < .05$ ). Attention to others contributed to approach achievement motivation .558 ( $p < .01$ ).

*Relations of Civic values and Individualism-collectivism as social orientation*

The value of centralism showed a contribution to collectivism .537 ( $p < .01$ ). Benefit-guided behaviour contributed negatively to collectivism -.328 ( $p < .05$ ). Mobility showed contributions to collectivism .478 ( $p < .01$ ), to 'unique' individualism .695 ( $p < .01$ ) and to 'competitive-hedonist' individualism -.453 ( $p < .01$ ). The value of human rights showed a contribution to collectivism .425 ( $p < .01$ ). Respect for other opinions had contributions to collectivism .567 ( $p < .01$ ) and to 'unique' individualism -.623 ( $p < .05$ ). Acceptation of difference showed a contribution to collectivism .638 ( $p < .01$ ). Free decision-making contributed to 'unique' individualism -.434 ( $p < .05$ ). Autonomy had a contribution to collectivism -.424 ( $p < .01$ ). Respect for common values showed a contribution to collectivism .296 ( $p < .05$ ). The value of solidarity showed a contribution to collectivism .599 ( $p < .01$ ). Common fate contribution to collectivism .396 ( $p < .05$ ).

**Discussion**

This study focused on the components of the European dimension related to Hungarian adolescents' democratic value systems, tendencies toward individualism and collectivism, and motivational constructs. The results from this study highlight the construct of the examined components both on an individual and group level. We assume that teachers and classmates play a transformative role in developing pupils' attitudes toward civic values. For future analysis of these effects, multilevel modelling techniques and procedures should be applied.

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