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## THE IMPACT OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES ON PERCEPTIONS OF GROUP BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES

### INTRODUCTION

In this paper we analyze the answers of deliberative weekend participants (N=108), regarding their perceptions of their group and their own behavior during a weekend discussion. This article describes investigations into: a) whether groups are assessed differently by their members; and, b) how evaluation is influenced by personal and social resources. In other words, the article discusses the relationship between the individual's social and personal resources and perceptions of group behavior and attitudes.

Regarding the first question, we assume that the more personal resources people have, the more of a constructive attitude they will have towards their respective group. The independent variables in the analysis are social and personal resources. Group behavior and group perception are considered dependent variables. Social and personal resources do affect group behavior and perception and also have an additional indirect effect on perception via group behavior.

Concerning personal resources, we examined several variables which represent important aspects of psychological coping skills such as general satisfaction with one's life, optimism, trust, happiness and a lack of fear. For occupational and cultural resources we examined variables associated with employment status, occupation and level of education.

For the evaluation of group behavior we used Bales Interaction Process Analysis to examine the effects of different resource backgrounds on the behavior of individuals and on the evaluation of the group as a whole. Later in the analysis we checked if different capital backgrounds resulted in different group behavior types (emotional, instrumental, positive, negative) and group evaluation patterns.

It is commonly said that having more personal resources results in more constructive behavior within a group, and more positive attitudes generally; furthermore, their presence leads to better SWB (Subjective Well Being) indicators. The sample – 1514 people from the base survey and the 108 participants of the deliberative weekend – was taken from the 2008 Kaposvár Deliberative Poll on Unemployment and Employment. The selection of participants and the equal opportunity conditions for expressing themselves should be kept in mind while reading the analysis we present in this paper.

Arrangement of people into small discussion groups is one of the most challenging tasks – both theoretically and practically – during the implementation of deliberative polling (weekends). Researchers prefer to see representative small samples in the discussion groups in order to approach an equal opportunity situation – meaning that different opinions and perspectives

emerge at the same probability. In practice, grouping decisions are based on efforts to maintain the original ratios of the survey sample according to gender, level of education, place of residence and all of the other basic variables with which the survey sample could be called representative. Since it is always uncertain how many people (and of what type) will turn up, the final result will carry the stamp of eventuality.

There are other types of inequalities brought into groups by participants that affect equal opportunities. People have different personal and social backgrounds and resources which are not taken into account when forming small groups. Personal resources, like presentation skills or argumentation routines and various indicators of social status – such as choice of words, accents or dress – all are brought into small groups from outside and can distort the ideal conditions in which a wide range of argument should be given careful consideration. In extreme cases, despite all the efforts of the well-trained moderators, some arguments are not represented at all because their representatives do not have the skills to demonstrate them, or because of some specific features emerging from the group dynamics (such as conformity, group pressure, scapegoating etc.).

Theoretical discussions on this problem appear in Habermas' works; more specifically it is discourse on ethics and communicative action theory that is considered to be the fundamental theoretical background for deliberative polling. Deliberation in an ideal case is inclusive and non-coercive rational discourse among free and equal participants where decisions are made according to the principle of the "force of the better argument" (Habermas, 1982, quoted by Fishkin, 1995).

Taking roles during the process of deliberation is mentioned as a precondition of careful consideration, which is the substantial element of the ideal deliberation. Goodin (2003) discusses two sides of deliberation; "external–collective" and "internal–reflective" aspects, both of which rely on Habermas, who describes the discourse of ethics as "rest[ing] on ... a joint process of 'ideal' role taking" in which "everyone is required to take the perspective of everyone else, and thus project herself into the understandings of self and world of all others" (1995). Habermas calls this "intersubjectivity". As a psychological phenomenon at an individual level it has the function of empathy. The psychological concept takes empathy to be more emotional, Habermas' "intersubjectivity" concept seems to have more cognitive elements. Whichever – cognitive or emotional – aspect of 'role taking' is emphasized, it is a common experience that people differ concerning the development of their skills involved in that behavior. Since every society contains an innumerable number of deliberating groups, the common experience of inequality is being continuously reinforced. Regarding the equality of participants in deliberation, critics also consider the major weakness of Habermas' theory of communication and governance to be his assumption that all people at all times are able to offer and accept only rationally argued, bias-free claims (Gilder, 1987).

Factually, empirical deliberations are far from the "ideal speech situation" (Habermas 1982). All participants in any deliberative small group arrive with different personal social and communication skills and with various social backgrounds. They do not therefore have the same capability to influence others, to affect the group discussion and finally to make their voice heard.

The problem of equality of people in small group discussions can not be resolved in a way that Kurt Vonnegut (1961) posed in his short story *Harrison Bergeron*:

"THE YEAR WAS 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General" (Vonnegut, 1961).

In this story, societal equality has been achieved by handicapping the most intelligent, athletic or beautiful members of society to the level of the lowest common endowment. This process is central to society and is designed so that no one feels inferior to anyone else. Handicapping is overseen by the United States Handicapper General.

Instead of ignoring inequalities or handicapping the most talented and skilled members of a certain group, the practical alternative approach is to consider that inequalities stem from different levels of personal resources and then seek solutions that ensure that conditions of proper deliberation are met.

In social psychology, the empirical study of communication and persuasion has produced a distinction between systematic and heuristic processes of information. The most commonly-elaborated model based on this distinction is the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The model gives an inside view into changes of attitude. According to this model, persuasion can continue through two routes; a central and a peripheral route.

Central route processes require a great deal of thought, involving careful scrutiny of persuasive communication to determine the merits of the arguments. Merits can be evaluated both favorably and unfavorably and this determines the direction and magnitude of the attitude change (in relation to the acceptance and rejection of a certain message). In order to process the message centrally, a person needs both the motivation and the ability to do so.

Peripheral route processes, on the other hand, do not involve elaboration of the message through extensive cognitive processing of the merits of the actual argument presented. These processes often rely on the environmental characteristics of the message like the perceived credibility of the source and the quality of the procedure in which it was presented.

The choice of route is mainly influenced by the motivation and ability of an individual. Motivational factors include the personal relevance of the message topic, accountability, and a person's "need for cognition" (their innate desire to enjoy thinking).

Ability factors include the availability of cognitive resources such as the presence or absence of the pressure of time or other distractions or the relevant knowledge needed to carefully scrutinize the arguments. Under the conditions of moderate elaboration, a mixture of central and peripheral route processes will guide information processing. The central and peripheral routes are not mutually exclusive methods of persuasion but rather represent two poles of a permanent information processing process.

Whichever way the discussion in the small group influences people, for an influential effect there are prerequisites both from the side of communicators and the recipients (and the people playing these roles permanently change positions within the group). Being motivated, personally involved and having some expertise on the topic and a high need for cognition, concentrating on the issue and making a mental effort indicate a higher chance of a solid attitude change in the so-called 'central route' concerned recipients. On the other hand, communicators who aim to influence people need good argumentation skills and knowledge of the topic and/or need to have high credibility and capacity to reward.

The prerequisites of influential communication at an individual level depend on a person's human capital and are connected to other skills.

While the Elaboration Likelihood Model considers the personal level, individual aspects and prerequisites regarding the attributes of the people who are communicating and the communicated content and the context of the communicative action, IPA deals with the group dynamic aspects of a deliberation at group level.

Bales' (1950) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) categories are based upon observation of small group discussion interactions. They emerge from the observation that a group has two tasks: reaching agreement on a solution, and maintaining group cohesion. It is worth mentioning that in deliberative small discussion groups agreement on any solution is not a requirement, but participants at least have to agree on the questions to be asked in plenary sessions. Finding and wording those questions is the main tangible output of group work.

A discussion is thus seen as a field of tension with two forces at work; namely, the solution of a task and the maintenance of satisfactory relations between group members. Thus there are references to task-oriented behaviors and maintenance-oriented emotional behaviors.

The IPA consists of 12 complementary-paired group processes; these are further subdivided into four major *functions*, describing communication issues or *problems*.

*Table 1. System of process categories in the IPA, related psycho-social group functions, and common communication problems*

| Function                                     | Process   | Paired processes addressing central problems of: |
|--|---|--|
| Social-Emotional:<br>Positive Reaction       | 1. Shows solidarity, raises other's status, gives help, reward      | 1 & 12<br>Problems of integration                |
|  | 2. Shows tension release, jokes, laughs, shows satisfaction         | 2 & 11<br>Tension-management                     |
|  | 3. Agrees, shows passive acceptance, understands, concurs, complies | 3 & 10<br>Decision                               |
| Task Area: Attempted<br>Answers              | 4. Gives suggestion, direction, implying autonomy for other         | 4 & 9<br>Control                                 |
|  | 5. Gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling, wish     | 5 & 8<br>Evaluation                              |
|  | 6. Gives orientation, information, repeats, clarifies, confirms     | 6 & 7<br>Orientation                             |
| Task Area: Questions                         | 7. Asks for orientation, information repetition, confirmation       | 7 & 6<br>Orientation                             |
|  | 8. Asks for opinion, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling    | 8 & 5<br>Evaluation                              |
|  | 9. Asks for suggestion, direction, possible action                  | 9 & 4<br>Control                                 |
| Social-Emotional Area:<br>Negative Reactions | 10. Disagrees, shows passive rejection, formality, withholds help   | 10 & 3<br>Decision                               |
|  | 11. Shows tension, asks for help, withdraws out of field            | 11 & 2<br>Tension-management                     |
|  | 12. Shows antagonism. Deflates other's status, defends/asserts self | 12 & 1<br>Integration                            |

From Bales, R. F. (1950): A set of categories for the analysis of small group interaction. *American Sociological Review*, 15, p. 258.

## PERCEPTION OF PERSONAL AND GROUP BEHAVIOR

The main purpose of deliberative opinion polling (DP) is to produce informed public opinion. In order to reach that aim the DP method gives an important role to small group discussions where a moderator helps the group solve a problem: the group discusses an issue and forms questions for experts. From the aspect of group dynamics, at the same time the group has to solve the problem of group maintenance using expressive-emotional behaviors.

At the end of the deliberative weekend a survey of participants was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire in which many questions were repeated from the earlier (pre-deliberation) questionnaire. There were several questions dealing with the evaluation of the event by the participants. In this section participants were asked to assess both their own and their small group behavior according to Bales' IPA categories.

*Table 2. Evaluation of individual and group behavior using Bales' IPA categories (%)*

|  |                   | Not at all<br>(0-4) | Exactly in<br>the middle<br>(5) | Very much<br>(6-10) | No opinion | Average<br>(1-10) |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1. Expression of solidarity towards each other | small group       | 0,9                 | 18,5                            | 75                  | 6,5        | 8,46              |
|  | your own behavior | 3,7                 | 23,1                            | 65,7                | 7,4        | 7,81              |
| 2. The ability to decrease emotional tensions  | small group       | 5,6                 | 14,8                            | 73,1                | 6,5        | 8,16              |
|  | your own behavior | 13                  | 24,1                            | 52,8                | 10,2       | 6,72              |
| 3. Expression of agreement                     | small group       | 1,9                 | 15,7                            | 75,9                | 6,5        | 8,46              |
|  | your own behavior | 3,7                 | 22,2                            | 68,5                | 5,6        | 7,68              |
| 4. Expression of suggestions                   | small group       | 3,7                 | 10,2                            | 79,6                | 6,5        | 8,54              |
|  | your own behavior | 5,6                 | 22,2                            | 63,9                | 8,3        | 7,54              |
| 5. Expression of opinions                      | small group       | 1,9                 | 9,3                             | 83,3                | 5,6        | 8,9               |
|  | your own behavior | 3,7                 | 19,4                            | 72,3                | 4,6        | 8,08              |
| 6. Providing information to each others        | small group       | 1,9                 | 15,7                            | 75                  | 7,4        | 8,48              |
|  | your own behavior | 4,6                 | 21,3                            | 67,6                | 6,5        | 7,87              |
| 7. Asking information from others              | small group       | 4,6                 | 24,1                            | 56,5                | 14,8       | 7,45              |
|  | your own behavior | 12,0                | 25,0                            | 56,5                | 6,5        | 6,95              |
| 8. Asking for the opinions of others           | small group       | 6,5                 | 17,6                            | 71,3                | 4,6        | 8,11              |
|  | your own behavior | 2,8                 | 14,8                            | 76,8                | 5,6        | 8,25              |
| 9. Asking for suggestions                      | small group       | 8,3                 | 25,9                            | 67,6                | 6,5        | 7,33              |
|  | your own behavior | 13,9                | 28,7                            | 50,9                | 6,5        | 6,59              |
| 10. Expression of differences in opinions      | small group       | 11,1                | 14,8                            | 66,7                | 7,4        | 7,35              |
|  | your own behavior | 15,7                | 21,3                            | 55,6                | 7,4        | 6,77              |
| 11. Expression of tensions                     | small group       | 46,3                | 23,1                            | 23,2                | 7,4        | 3,69              |
|  | your own behavior | 64,8                | 13,0                            | 15,7                | 6,5        | 2,54              |
| 12. Expression of aggressive feelings          | small group       | 70,4                | 11,1                            | 10,2                | 8,3        | 1,86              |
|  | your own behavior | 74,1                | 10,2                            | 8,3                 | 7,4        | 1,52              |

Small group and individual behavior (self-evaluation, %) Based on questions:  
 How much did the following characterize your small group?  
 And how much the following characterize your own behavior in the small group?

The averages show that, in general, participants thought that small groups were more active than individuals. The interviewees rated every item, with the exception of negative items (item 11. – Expression of tensions and item 12. – Expression of aggressive feelings) in the “very much” category – which means that they thought that the specific behavior described very much characterized them and their small discussion groups. The attributed activity was higher in the case of small groups regarding both negative and positive feelings such as expressions of solidarity and aggressive feelings. The average of “expression of tension” was one point higher in the case of individuals and two points higher in the case of groups than the average of “expression of aggressive feelings” on the 0-10 scale. The difference can be explained by a need for social desirability; being stressed may be more acceptable than having and expressing aggressive feelings. According to the data, individuals are more active in expressing themselves than in activating others (asking for suggestions, opinions or information). This means that in small group communication the tendency to open up is stronger than the tendency to encourage others to participate in discussion.

Table 3. Grouping IPA categories averages by problem areas

| Problem area: <i>Integration</i>               |      |                            |      |   |
|--|------|----------------------------|------|---|
| 1. Expression of solidarity towards each other | 8,46 | Average (1-10) small group | 1,86 | 12. Expression of aggressive feelings     |
|  | 7,81 | your own behavior          | 1,52 |   |
| Problem area: <i>Tension-management</i>        |      |                            |      |   |
| 2. The ability to decrease emotional tensions  | 8,16 | Average(1-10) small group  | 3,69 | 11. Expression of tensions                |
|  | 7,72 | your own behavior          | 2,54 |   |
| Problem area: <i>Decision</i>                  |      |                            |      |   |
| 3. Expression of agreement                     | 8,46 | Average(1-10) small group  | 7,35 | 10. Expression of differences in opinions |
|  | 7,68 | your own behavior          | 6,77 |   |
| Problem area: <i>Control</i>                   |      |                            |      |   |
| 4. Expression of suggestions                   | 8,54 | Average(1-10) small group  | 7,33 | 9. Asking for suggestions                 |
|  | 7,54 | your own behavior          | 6,59 |   |
| Problem area: <i>Evaluation</i>                |      |                            |      |   |
| 5. Expression of opinions                      | 8,9  | Average(1-10) small group  | 8,11 | 8. Asking for the opinions of others      |
|  | 8,08 | your own behavior          | 8,25 |   |
| Problem area: <i>Orientation</i>               |      |                            |      |   |
| 6. Providing information to each others        | 8,48 | Average(1-10) small group  | 7,45 | 7. Asking information from others         |
|  | 7,87 | your own behavior          | 6,95 |   |

According to participant evaluation, deliberative small groups managed to ensure both functions: task-oriented or instrumental problem-solving work (questions from 4 to 9) and socio-emotional or expressive work aiming at the maintenance of the group (questions 1 to 3 and 10 to 12). The average values of the IPA categories show that the groups are very active and cohesive.

Answers to other questions like “on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely passive, and 10 is extremely active, and 5 is exactly in the middle, how did you feel: During the small group discussions?” and “on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely bored, and 10 is extremely interested, and 5 is exactly in the middle, how did you feel: During the small group discussions?” reinforce that impression. The average value of the former was 7.69, and of the latter, 9.11. Evaluation of personal and group behavior seems to be in parallel in most cases. This can be a result of overgeneralization or projection – attribution of the same intentions and performance to others as to oneself.

Values in the table regarding questions 10-12 should be considered as having a negative sign; in contrast to earlier questions, the content of these items is negative (due to their being negative social- emotional reactions).

We used a one-sample T-test to control whether gender influenced the evaluation of behavior with IPA categories. We did not find significant difference between men and women in any category. Men and women, according to their own assessments, had the same roles and exercised the same functions during the small group deliberation.

In order to check how the dimensions of group behavior were structured in the perceptions of participants of the deliberative weekend we conducted factor analysis concerning both the level of personal and group assessment.

It seems from factor analysis of the IPA categories that, concerning the process of group dynamics, three main dimensions exist, as illustrated in the table below.

*Table 4. IPA categories used for group assessment*  
Rotated Component Matrix(a)

|   | Component |      |      |
|---|-----------|------|------|
|   | 1         | 2    | 3    |
| 1.Expression of solidarity towards each other | ,840      |      |      |
| 2. Expression of agreement                    | ,835      |      |      |
| 3. Expression of opinions                     | ,815      |      |      |
| 4. Providing information to each others       | ,812      |      |      |
| 5. Asking for the opinions of others          | ,751      | ,400 |      |
| 6. The ability to decrease emotional tensions | ,726      |      |      |
| 7. Expression of suggestions                  | ,704      | ,349 |      |
| 8. Asking information from others             | ,586      | ,470 |      |
| 9. Expression of differences in opinions      |           | ,846 |      |
| 10. Asking for suggestions                    | ,431      | ,759 |      |
| 11. Expression of tensions                    |           |      | ,863 |
| 12. Expression of aggressive feelings         |           |      | ,826 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.  
Rotation converged in 4 iterations.  
Total variance explained: 70.9%  
KMO value 0,852 meritorious (Ketskeméty – Izsó 2005)

The structure behind IPA categories presented by the rotated component matrix is different from that suggested by Bales. Neither task and socio-emotional area, nor negative – positive area appear to be differentiated according to the original IPA pattern.

The first and second factors have common variables (in italics) and the third is a clear, unambiguous factor. The second factor can be explained with or without reference to common variables, revealing more or less the same conclusion. Items 5, 7 and 8 have smaller weight in the second factor but all belong to the neutral task area. When these items are omitted, only the requisites of a clearing debate are left; expression of differences in opinions and asking for suggestions are both important in a very task-oriented quest for the best argument.

Using the data from the group assessment, the first factor is *the factor of emotionally positive – constructive cooperation*; this factor contains only positive emotions (solidarity, tension reduction, agreement) and active discussion and elaboration of arguments – providing and demanding information. It represents the positive socio-emotional area and the whole neutral task-area identifiable from the original Bales model.

The *second factor is a purely cognitive factor* which contains only those elements regarding the problem of control, evaluation and orientation. There is one exception: “expression of differences in opinions” in Bales’ categorization belongs to the expressive –emotional area (as a negative

reaction) which is connected to the problem of decisions – but this time it is the strongest variable determining this cognitive factor.

The two questions dealing with the problem of *decision* (expression of agreement and expression of differences in opinion) seem to require different interpretations. Both belong to the expressive area regarding their function. But while the “expression of agreement” moves together with the other emotional answers, the “expression of differences in opinions” differs from the rest of the negative emotional items which make up the third factor. It appears as if it were rather a cognitive aspect of group work – to clear up entirely the content of different positions taken in arguments – and does not have anything to do with the emotional group-maintenance aspects.

As seen earlier, when examining differences between group and individual level assessment (see Table 3), the item “expression of agreement” seems to be rather a description of very strong cognitive elements: the manifestation of differences in opinions, an explicit presentation of a specific idea and the justification of an argument which supports the better solution and profound elaboration of information.

The third factor is the *factor of negative emotions* which contains only two variables: expression of tensions and expression of aggressive feelings. Both reactions undermine the necessary positive cohesive atmosphere, demoralize the group and make it difficult or impossible to fulfill the instrumental function of the group.

On the other hand, using personal assessment data, the result is slightly different.

In this case, the first and second factors also have common variables (in italics) and the first and third have one common variable: expression of differences in opinions. The first factor is *the factor of positive self-expression* regarding social-emotional positive reactions, and from the task area: attempted answers belong to this factor, apart from the double natured variable “expression of differences in opinion” that, in this factor, is related to problem solving cognitive items. The first factor on this occasion does not contain the items describing actions involving gaining information from others; there are only those left which are used for expressing opinions and positive feelings without encouraging others to communicate. “Expression of differences in opinions” in this factor seems also to have an instrumental cognitive function which supports the process of information elaboration.

The second factor can be explained with or without reference to common variables. Taking into consideration the common elements with the first factor, this contains all the positive emotional and cognitive variables with the exception of “the ability to decrease emotional tensions”. If we consider only the non-overlapping variables, it seems to be *the factor of “asking”* means orientation towards other members of the group, an openness or curiosity towards other people’s opinion and the expression of trust and attention.

In the third factor, which is a negative emotional factor, “expression of differences in opinion” can also be found in the first factor. In the first, it takes the role of a cognitive item and in the third it behaves like a negative emotional item. This is *the factor of negative emotions*. In social psychological experiments concerning attraction theory, this was often proven: similarity is a common and significant cause of attraction. Agreement increases (and disagreement or differences in opinion decrease) levels of attraction and the strength of cohesion among the members of a group (Newcomb, 1961; Byrne 1971; Condon and Crano, 1998)



*Table 5. IPA categories used for individual behavior assessment*  
**Rotated Component Matrix(a)**

|   | Component |      |      |
|---|-----------|------|------|
|   | 1         | 2    | 3    |
| 1. The ability to decrease emotional tensions | ,805      |      |      |
| 2. Expression of opinions                     | ,745      | ,397 |      |
| 3. Expression of suggestions                  | ,707      | ,447 |      |
| 4. Providing information to others            | ,665      | ,457 |      |
| 5. Expression of differences in opinions      | ,630      |      | ,361 |
| 6. Expression of agreement                    | ,593      | ,495 |      |
| 7. Expression of solidarity towards others    | ,568      | ,410 |      |
| 8. Asking information from others             |           | ,845 |      |
| 9. Asking for suggestions                     |           | ,841 |      |
| 10. Asking for the opinions of others         |           | ,819 |      |
| 11. Expression of aggressive feelings         |           |      | ,875 |
| 12. Expression of tensions                    |           |      | ,873 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Total variance explained: 69,5%

KMO value 0.844 meritorious (Ketskeméty–Izsó 2005)

## PERSONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Lazarus (1966, 1984, 1993) invented a cognitive model of coping or coping skills. According to his definition “coping is every cognitive or behavioral effort which aims to deal with external or internal effect considered to be beyond the individual and seem to consume the individual’s resources” (Lazarus, 1993). According to his theory, the first step in the interaction between the individual and the environment is always cognitive appraisal, and this – or the result of this – determines both the strength and the quality of the emergent emotion and the way of coping. Behind cognitive appraisal there are stable and solid attitudes which in favorable cases assist in finding adequate coping strategies.

We use variables to assess the person’s psychological resources which comprise a toolkit for coping with stress and difficulties in life: satisfaction with life, optimism, trust, happiness and lack of/ or adequate level of fear<sup>1</sup>.

Data regarding these variables are found in the questionnaires before (T1) and after the deliberation weekend (T3). Questions connected to satisfaction with life and optimism-pessimism were asked in the T1 questionnaire while trust, lack of fear and happiness items were asked in T3 questionnaire. Only the data for deliberative weekend participants (N=108) are processed in this paper.

“Satisfaction with life” belongs to the positive-thinking dimension of coping. It is a form of self-respect which indicates that the person deems him or herself valuable, important and considers their achievements honorable.

<sup>1</sup> Detailed correlation matrix and documentation of calculations are available from the author upon request

Self-respect also means active value preservation: it is behavior aimed at maintaining and rewarding ourselves. It manifests in an improvement in mental and physical fitness. Satisfied people with self-respect can respect all that they have achieved.

*Table 6. Satisfaction with life (%) N=108*  
0-10 scale %

| Completely dissatisfied (0-4) | Exactly in the middle (5) | Completely satisfied (6-10) | No opinion | Avg. (0-10) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 16,5                          | 43,3                      | 39,2                        | 1,0        | 6,68        |

For the question: "...how satisfied would you say you are, all things considered, with your life as a whole?"

Satisfaction with life correlates positively with happiness and lack of fear and has a weak negative correlation with two of IPA categories: a) expression of opinions; and, b) providing information to others. It appears as if satisfaction can reduce motivation to change other people, or at least their opinions: life is good as it is.

*Table 7. Optimism – pessimism (%) N=108*  
0-10 scale %

| Completely dissatisfied (0-4) | Exactly in the middle (5) | Completely satisfied (6-10) | No opinion | Avg. (1-10) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 14,4                          | 37,1                      | 46,4                        | 2,1        | 7,78        |

For the question: "How optimistic or pessimistic would you say you are about your future?"

"Optimism" also belongs to the positive thinking dimension of coping. It means an orientation towards positive consequences and an expectation and anticipation of favorable change.

It is a success-oriented attitude and represents a hopeful state of mind. According to the table, a majority of participants (more than two thirds of them) are rather optimistic.

Optimism correlates with happiness and a lack of fear, and has a weak positive connection with personal performance regarding expressions of suggestion: life can be improved, so it is worth suggesting to others how this can be done.

*Table 8. Trust*

In general, do you think that people can be trusted, or can one not be prudent enough with others? % (average on 1-4 scale: 2,47) N=108

|  |   |      |
|--|---|------|
| People can be trusted in most cases.                   | 4 | 2,8  |
| People can usually be trusted.                         | 3 | 51,9 |
| Usually one can't be prudent enough with others.       | 2 | 34,9 |
| In most cases one can't be prudent enough with others. | 1 | 10,4 |

This factor belongs to the category of "monitoring of social resources" skills. This ability makes people capable of assessing information from their social environment. This factor correlates with empathy, social-self consciousness and social openness. We only found one weak correlation with "asking for suggestion".

*Table 9. Happiness in life*

Thinking of your current life in general, how happy would you say you are?  
% (average on 1-4 scale: 2,60) N=108

|                  |   |      |
|------------------|---|------|
| Not happy at all | 1 | 6,2  |
| Not too happy    | 2 | 35,1 |
| Quite happy      | 3 | 51,5 |
| Very happy       | 4 | 7,2  |

This item has a strong positive correlation with satisfaction and optimism and a weak negative correlation with suggestions and asking for the opinions of others.

*Table 10. Lack of fear*

There are people who are often afraid of things and others not likely to be afraid of certain things. How true is it for you that you are often afraid of things? % (average on 1-5 scale: 2,40)

|                             |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 1 –not true at all          | 21,3 |
| 2 – rather not true         | 27,8 |
| 3 – neither true nor untrue | 40,7 |
| 4 – rather true             | 10,2 |
| 5 – very true               | 0    |

Happiness and lack of fear are both manifestations of positive thinking and emotional orientation. Lack of fear correlates positively with happiness, satisfaction and optimism and has no connection with any IPA category.

Coping skill indicators – satisfaction with life, optimism, trust, happiness and/or lack of adequate level of fear show a strong positive correlation with each other – with one exception: trust seems to be an independent dimension concerning coping strategies. There was no strong correlation between coping skill elements and group behavior. However, we found several weak correlations which are following:

- Happiness is weakly (negatively) correlated with “asking for suggestions” and “asking for the opinions of others”.
- We found a correlation between trust and “asking for suggestion”.
- Optimism has a weak positive correlation with “expression of suggestions”.
- Satisfaction with life has a weak negative correlation with two of the IPA categories (expression of opinions and providing information to others).

The above findings suggest that personal resources which belong to the category of coping skills have impacts on behavior in groups. Positive correlational relations seem to be plausible; people with higher levels of trust are more prone to ask for suggestions and furthermore, optimism makes people more disposed to express their suggestions. This means that trust and optimism are the personal characteristics which make significant contributions to the work of group deliberation more probable from the side of the individual. However, satisfaction and happiness seems to have the opposite effect: a weak negative correlation with task solving, instrumental IPA categories suggests that happy and satisfied people are less motivated (or capable) to influence cognitive processes inside the deliberative groups.

When we compared the averages of the 15 small groups regarding the 12 IPA categories there were between-group differences only in the cases of “expression of solidarity”, “the expression

of agreement”, “the expression of suggestion”, “the expression of opinions” and “providing information to each others”. This suggests that these items are the most group-sensitive behavior forms and depend most on the characteristics of the individual and the composition and dynamics of a certain group.

## OCCUPATIONAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Variables connected to employment status, occupation and educational level were scrutinized<sup>2</sup> in order to identify different group behavior patterns belonging to people with different social capital. We assumed that a higher educational level and better employment position meant both higher opportunity and tendency to utilize other people’s resources (Coleman, Granovetter, Bourdieu 1998) which would yield more positive – constructive behavior in small group discussions. The participant sample was not balanced in every dimension; for example, there were 52 pensioners from the total of 108, and there were only 2 entrepreneurs. From this sample there were no observable differences in the evaluation of group behavior, or behaviors cannot be interpreted because of the very low cell frequencies.

## CONCLUSION

In this article we presented some findings from the Kaposvár deliberative poll regarding elements of group dynamics processes and their connection with human capital; namely the indicator variables of personal coping skills.

Factor analysis using Bales’ IPA categories yields three explainable factors: positive-cooperative, purely cognitive and negative emotional. The “expression of differences in opinion” variable has a twin interpretation; the first is a strong cognitive aspect – which means that this is a method which aids in clearing up different positions and arguments. The second aspect of it is a negative emotional one: expressing disagreement and emphasizing differences. It clearly needs to be balanced; too much expressed difference damages group cohesion because cohesion is based partly on uniformity. But too little expressed difference will worsen the task-solving performance of the group and members will not find the solution at a higher level because of bottled up disagreements.

Personal characteristics or resources make certain behaviors more probable in deliberative groups. In this way the composition of a group in which personal resources are taken into consideration can be made more balanced and can better fulfill the principle of equality of participants. Regarding the group dynamics of deliberative groups, further analysis is needed in order to clear up the nature and role of influencing factors.

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<sup>2</sup> Documentation of calculations are available from the author upon request

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