

## **Social representation of competition and fraud<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

Good citizenship includes fair competitive strategies. Dishonest competitive behaviour – such as fraud – can reflect the absence of one main characteristic of good citizenship as mindfulness of laws and social rules. This article investigates the social representation of competition and fraud with two samples of students from business schools in France and in Hungary. Two complementary studies were carried out with P. Vergès' associative method and C. Flament and M. L. Rouquette's tools. The purpose of the first study ( $N_{\text{French}}=104$ ,  $N_{\text{Hungarian}}=107$ ) is to characterize the central core of the respondents' representation of both competition and fraud. On the basis of different cultural, historical and economic backgrounds, it was expected that the concepts of fraud and competition would overlap more extensively among Hungarian students than among French students.

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Results from the first study suggest only slight differences regarding the content of the representations; moreover, in both samples the representations of competition and fraud lacked significant overlap. Hungarian representations of competition and fraud are characterized by a lower level of coherence. Furthermore, academic cheating is mentioned more frequently by Hungarian students than by French students. Following the methodological guidelines of social representations, in order to confirm the results of the first study, a second investigation was carried out ( $N_{\text{French}}=115$ ,  $N_{\text{Hungarian}}=127$ ) with an alternative associative method. These results confirmed the first study in terms of the content of the social representations and differences regarding coherence. Finally, in the case of Hungarian students a higher prevalence of reference to academic cheating, and links between fraud and competition were found. Hungarians' competitive result orientation, linked social representations of competition and fraud via a higher prevalence of academic cheating which can refer to the weaker inclination of Hungarians in terms of rule keeping behaviours, which is one of the hallmarks of a good citizen.

**Keywords**

social representation, competition, fraud, Hungary, France, associations

## <H1>Introduction

In Hungary, before the change of régime in 1989, competition was an ideologically banned and denied phenomenon. Due to the shift, from shortage economy to market economy, during the past twenty years, competition became an explicitly acknowledged part of several spheres of Hungarians' everyday life, i.e. economy, politics, education and science (Fülöp 2004). The question arises: what are the characteristics of a good citizen in a transitional society, which is characterized by competition in every segment of life? According to W. Stephens (2003), the notion of good citizenship requires consciousness and responsibility; a good citizen is 'punctual, reliable, trustworthy, and mindful of rules and laws, caring about the public realm, considerate of strangers, keeping it nice for others' (2003: 23). If these traits are unrewarded by the authorities (i.e. government, teachers, etc.) they can easily weaken. Mindfulness of laws and rules, caring about the public realm (e.g. avoiding the legal externalities can be harmful both to the state and to other citizens) can play an important role in the conceptualization of competition and fraud. It can be especially important, taking into account that according to the Lisbon Accord (EC 2000) one of the major goals of the European Union implies being the most competitive and knowledge-driven economy in the world. Such macro-level competitive pressure can meet and intertwine with different cultural heritages of the members of the European Union. In order to explore such dissimilarities A. Ross et al. (2007) examined teachers' constructions of cooperation, competition and citizenship in United Kingdom, Hungary and Slovenia, with interviews of teachers. The authors point out several differences regarding the conceptualization of competition in these countries. Hungarian teachers see their pupils as frequently competing for popularity, dominance, grades, etc.,

and they also mentioned the immoral aspects of competition. Immorality is an important notion, as, during the process of competition individuals who do not respect laws and rules can undermine the constructive nature of competition (see e.g. Tjosvold et al. 2006). Supposedly, competition is present in both Hungarians and French people's everyday life<sup>1</sup> in which rules can be more or less respected. The fairness of competition can have impact on how individuals can meet the officially declared and informally acknowledged requirements of being good citizens.

During the past twenty years, it is clear that significant changes occurred in France and Hungary; but observing the differences between the magnitudes of transformations that took place in the two countries, we can also note that, in France, several successful macro-level changes occurred regarding the economy, which had to adjust to globalized market competition (Hall 2006). As a consequence of these, the societal cost significantly increased the number of unemployed; during the past twenty years, this number has always been between 7.5 and 11% (see details, e.g. in trading economics). During the same period, in Hungary, the shift from shortage economy to market economy (see Kornai 2007) involved more fundamental changes; for example, in Hungary, in 1989, the unemployment rate was 0.5%, while by 1993, this number rose to 11% (in 2012 it is at a very similar rate). Changes concerning unemployment rates (that can have direct impact on both countries' social representation of competition) can exemplify the degree of the transformations that occurred during this period of time (tradingeconomics.com).

According to R. F. Inglehart and W. Christian's cultural map (2005: 63) there are significant differences between Hungary and France concerning survival and self-expression values: in Hungary, survival values receive more emphasis than in France. This seems to be

based on the different levels of the socio-economic development, as in cultures with a higher socio-economic development, such as France (GDP per capita: \$42,377, World Bank 2011 and with more prevalent self-expression values, people feel existentially more secure. On the contrary, in cultures with a lower socio-economic development (GDP per capita: \$14,044, World Bank 2011), and higher level of survival values, such as Hungary, the sense of security is lower. We assume that, in the case of Hungary, due to the weaker economic development, which, on one hand reflects the scarcity of resources, and on the other hand is responsible for the survival values, there are more competitive situations in which immoral strategies can easily appear. Furthermore, we expect that the influence of this aspect of the value system will be visible in the social representations of the future generation of Hungarian businessmen (i.e. students attending business schools).

Beyond the differences in terms of socio-economic development, survival versus self-expression values and scarcity of resources, the perceived corruption and shadow economy are more widespread in Hungary than in France. According to the Transparency International, on a list of 180 countries, in 2011, France was ranked at the 25th place in terms of the perceived pervasiveness of corruption, while Hungary had the 54th place. Notable differences can be seen regarding the estimated extent of the shadow economy. According to F. Schneider (2004), in 1999/2000, in Hungary, the size of shadow economy was 25.1% of the GDP, while in France it was 15.2%. In a study carried out by the Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (GfK) (2008), based on a representative sample, in which nineteen European countries were compared regarding the evaluation of cheating in different spheres of life, the results show that 89% of the Hungarians perceive cheating as a fundamental problem regarding tax behaviour, 78% have a similar opinion concerning

academic dishonesty and 64% also place it in romantic relationships. French people see the situation as less problematic: 71% of them think similarly concerning taxes, while 65% associate it to the field of romantic relationships, and 'only' 58% connect it to school-related issues, in which they perceive cheating as a fundamental problem.

A previous smaller-scale comparative questionnaire study, concerning academic cheating of French and Hungarian business school students, reinforced these results (Orosz 2009). Hungarian students see cheating as being more acceptable than the French students do, and they self-reported cheating more frequently than their French peers (83 versus 34 per cent).

All these results suggest that corruption-, shadow economy- and cheating-related issues are more prevalent in Hungarians' everyday life than for French people. On the basis of previous studies (Fülöp 1999, 2002; Fülöp et al. 2007) these dishonest-related economic and societal circumstances have an impact on the conception of competition, even in cross-cultural perspectives (Japan, United States). Taking into consideration the aforementioned competition- and immorality-related facts, perceptions and values, which are less prevalent in France, a lower level of overlap between the social representations of competition and fraud, in the case of the French sample in comparison to the Hungarian one, is expected.

This study is oriented towards the examination of the relationship between the two social objects – competition and fraud – in terms of social representations. Studies with Hungarian students (Fülöp 2004; Fülöp et al. 2007), teachers (Fülöp et al. 2004) and businessmen (Fülöp and Orosz 2006; Orosz 2010), show that morality/immorality is salient in the participants' perception of competition. This is true when Hungarian students'

responses on competition were compared to their Japanese and American peers (Fülöp 1999). Therefore, it is hypothesized here that Hungarian students will associate several immorality/morality related terms to 'competition', and they are expected to mention several competition-related terms to 'fraud'. Therefore, due to differences among the two cultures, we anticipate to observe a larger number of spontaneous associations, related to morality for competition and more links between competition and fraud, from Hungarian students, than from French students.

## **<H1>Theoretical framework**

### **<H2>*Social representations***

According to D. Jodelet, social representations can be defined as

a sort of knowledge current, a common sense which is characterized by the following characteristics: 1. It is socially elaborated and shared. 2. It has a practical aim concerning organization and control of the environment (physical, social, ideal) and it orients the behaviours and the communication. 3. It contributes to the establishment of a view of the common reality for a given social community (group, class, etc.) or culture (1991: 668).

Therefore, a social representation is constructed and shared by a social group; various social groups have different social representations. Furthermore, a social representation always has a social object, which has to be a relatively specific item or event; group members have to talk about the social object, which has to be important to

them; the group has to be in interaction with other groups; and a non-rigid social system is required in order to allow the existence of a discourse about the given social object (Moliner 1996). In our study, the purpose was to select objects of social representations that would meet these requirements in both examined nations.

According to J. C. Abric (1994a, 2002), a social representation has a central core surrounded by peripheral elements. The central core, or central nucleus, provides the essential meaning of the social representation, the representation being organized around this central part, which provides the shared meaning of the social object. Moreover, it permits the creation and transformation of other less centrally located elements; it defines the structure and the connections between the other components, and it is the most resistant part of the representation. Furthermore, the central core provides guidelines for the interpretation of a situation in a given-context, and it gives an action-plan for the behaviour. Finally, it is directly connected to the value system. The peripheral elements are organized around the central core. The periphery constitutes the largest part of a social representation. The elements of the peripheral zones are organized hierarchically: elements that are closer to the central core play a more important role than elements that are farther. Furthermore, the components of the periphery are more concrete, compared to the often abstract and overarching central core; the peripheral elements protect the representations if environmental changes occur. It is via the first and second peripheral zones that the representation can be transformed, thus altering progressively the central core (Abric 1994b; Flament 1989).

The above-described structural approach can be complemented by Flament and Rouquette's (2003) methodological assumptions, which allow for defining the density of



a social representation. Dense representations are crystallized and coherent, loose representations are less coherent and less well established. According to our views, the notion of density can be useful in order to measure and compare the solidification of a social representation examined in two contrasting cultures. Furthermore, we suggest that large-scale societal changes can first influence the content of the social representation (surface level: first the periphery, then the central core), and later, they influence such characteristics as the density of a social representation (hidden structure: process of solidification). I. Markovà et al.'s (1998) previous study found that there is no notable difference between Western and Eastern European countries' social representation of 'individual', which was the studied social object. Nevertheless, we suppose that the most significant differences can be expected to be located, not in the surface structure (content of central core and periphery), but in the hidden structure, in terms of crystallization of both the social representation of competition and/or fraud. Therefore, in the first part of this article, the primary goal concerns the examination of both the surface level (i.e. content) and the hidden structure (i.e. density) of the social representation of competition and fraud of Hungarian and French students.

In the present study, the goal is to study how cultural differences, between French and Hungarians, affect the conceptualization of competition, based on the study of social representations, with the approach of the central core (Moscovici 1984, 2008; Abric 1994a) and the specific methodology used in the line of this theoretical background (Abric 1994c; Flament and Rouquette 2003; Vergès 1994). Regarding Hungarians' social representation of competition, probably the first step of the change is more on the surface-level, concerning mainly the content of the representation. However, possibly the

23 years that have passed since the change of régime have not been enough to have stabilized and crystallized such a new concept as competition.

Therefore, this study first aims at comparing these more subtle characteristics of social representations from students in business schools in two contrasting countries: in Hungary, in which major societal pressure had an impact on the transformation of concepts; and in France, in which the degree of these influences and pressures is less significant, as it has been part of the culture for a very long time.

The second purpose of this article is to find potential relations between competition and fraud. A previous study, based on interviews (Fülöp and Orosz 2006; Orosz 2010) showed that more than 80 per cent of the Hungarian businessmen mention various forms of dishonesty in relation to the competitive business sphere. The question arises: is it also the case of the future generation of businessmen, who attend business-schools and generally those who study economics today, and who will become tomorrow's leaders? In order to answer this question, the social representation of both competition and fraud, of Hungarian students and French students, having different cultural, historical, economic and political backgrounds, are compared.

## **<H1>Method**

Two studies are reported here: Study 1 and Study 2.

In Study 1, 104 French business students (M=38%, F=62%, average age=21.3 years) and 107 Hungarian business students (M=41%, F=59%, average age=21.4 years) were assigned to a self-report association questionnaire that investigated the social understanding and conception of competition and fraud. First, an associative task was

used, based on Abric's (1994c, 2002) theoretical underpinnings and on Vergès' (1994) methodological assumptions. It was completed by Flament and Rouquette's (2003) notions concerning density. In Study 1, respondents had to associate five words or expressions to the two key terms (competition and fraud), for which the order of presentation was counterbalanced. During the analysis, the frequencies of produced associations are considered, and the mean ranks of order of the productions are calculated. The associations were not categorized on the basis of Flament and Rouquette's (2003) 'lemmatization' criteria. Terms with a high frequency and a low mean rank are assumed to potentially belong to the central core,<sup>2</sup> while words with a high frequency but a high mean rank belong to the first peripheral zone, and terms with a low frequency and a low rank mean constitute the secondary peripheral zone. The other spontaneous productions constitute the far periphery of the representation.

Concerning the density of the representation, two other indices were calculated. The first is related to diversity, which is determined by the quotient of the number of different words and the number of all words. Diversity shows the consensus of a group towards a representation: the smaller this value is, the larger the consensus of the given object is.

Hapax is the quotient of associations mentioned by only one respondent and the number of different words mentioned by the total population. Hapax refers to the cognitive organization of a representation; the lower this value is, the higher the cognitive organization is. The lower diversity and Hapax are, the higher will the density of a social representation be (Flament and Rouquette 2003). These values, measuring the density of a representation, have never been used in order to study cultural differences concerning a social object. However, on the basis of the methodological notions provided by Flament

and Rouquette (2003), and in order to find content-independent, subtle cultural differences concerning the deep structure of social representations, this measurement appears to be a fruitful one.

In Study 2, 115 French business students (M=52%, F=48%, average age=21.6 years) and 127 Hungarian business students (M=40%, F=60%, average age=21.6 years) had to choose the five most characteristic terms from a list of twenty words concerning competition and fraud. The questionnaire was translated, and back translated from Hungarian to French, by bilingual persons.  $\chi^2$  tests were used in order to find significant differences between Hungarian and French students' frequency of answers. The list of twenty competition-related terms and expressions contained the most central produced words of Study 1 in the following proportion: eight terms and expressions from Hungarians, eight terms from the French students, and four terms/expressions shared by both groups. The list of twenty fraud-related terms was constituted in the same manner as the one for competition. The terms, obtained from Study 1, were selected on the basis of their frequency and mean rank of appearance; words with both the highest frequency and the lowest mean ranks were chosen. This technique was assigned to confirm the results of Study 1 regarding the centrality and stability of the elements in connection to cultural differences.

In Study 2, beyond the confirmatory analysis, the goal was also to examine the structure of the representations. Therefore, in the same questionnaire, students were instructed to draw the most important relations between the previously revealed most important elements of the social representation of competition and fraud, separately. On the basis of

Study 1, the first twelve most important terms were chosen. Hungarian students were instructed to find the six to twelve most important relations between the most central words, which were provided, in the previous associative study, by Hungarian students. The task was the same for the French participants, who had to find the relations between the most important terms produced by French students in Study 1. The technique is based on previous cross-cultural work carried out by J. M. Albertini (1985).<sup>3</sup>

## <H1>Results

### <H2>*Study 1*

#### <H3>*Competition*

The social representation of competition, shared by Hungarian students, does not have a really stable central core: only 23% of the respondents spontaneously refer to 'Victory', and 18% to 'Success' in connection to competition, but both terms have a relatively high (3.3) mean rank (cf. Table 1). A strong element in the second peripheral zone was 'Sport', with 14% of the respondents mentioning it, with an average mean rank of 2.7. Furthermore, other second peripheral elements are 'Combat' (11%; 2.4) and 'Development' (9.3%; 1.6). Altogether, economic concepts compose a relatively small part of the associations related to competition; moreover, they are presented in a fragmented way: 'Business' (6%; 2.2), 1.8), 'Money' (6%; 3.3) and 'Profit' (4%; 2.3). In connection to competition, the moral dimensions, i.e. 'Honesty' (4%; 3) and 'Fair play' (3%; 4) are under-represented in this sample. The coherence (diversity: 0.49) is not too strong and the cognitive organization (Hapax: 0.65) is moderate. These results show that the density of Hungarians' social representation of competition is not dense, nor

crystallized. The responses are quite diverse and the proportion of words that were mentioned by only one respondent was also high.

Table 1. *Hungarian students' social representation of competition*

	Low rank mean (below or equal to 2.7)	High rank mean (above 2.7)
High frequency (above or equal to 16%)	Central core	First periphery Victory (23%; 3.3) Success (18%; 3.3)
Low frequency (below 16%)	Second periphery Sport (14%; 2.7) Combat (11%; 2.4) Development (9.3%; 1.6) Business (6%; 2.2) Power (5%; 1.8)	Periphery Goal (8.4%; 3.1) Loser (7.5%; 4) Money (6%; 3.3)

The potential central core produced by French students for competition (cf. Table 2) seems to be more stable: 41% of them mentioned 'Sport' among the first terms (mean rank: 2.1), and 20% produced 'Contest' with an equally low mean rank (2.1); finally, 'Self-Accomplishment' (17%; 2.7) is also a candidate to the central core. 'Victory' has a rather high frequency (17%), but its rank is high (3.6). 'Emulation' (15%; 1.7) and 'Challenge' (14%; 1.7) were present in the second peripheral zone. The economic associations constitute a very small part of the spontaneously produced associations, with terms such as 'Capitalism' (2%; 4.5) and 'Enterprise' (2%; 2.5). 'Fair play' (6%; 3.7) and 'Dishonesty' (1%; 4) were not central dimensions for the French sample (cf. Table 2). The coherence (diversity: 0.44) and cognitive organization (Hapax: 0.62) seem to be stronger than average values, which implies that there is quite a strong consensus about the meaning of competition among French students.

Table 2. *French students' social representation of competition*

	Low rank mean (below or equal to 2.7)	High rank mean (above 2.7)
High frequency (above or equal to 16%)	Central core  Sport (41%; 2.1) Contest (20%; 2.1) Self-Accomplishment (17%; 2.7)	First periphery  Victory (17%; 3.6)
Low frequency (below 16%)	Second periphery  Emulation (15%; 1.7) Challenge" (14%; 1.7)	Periphery  Capitalism (2%; 4.5) Fair play (6%; 3.7) Dishonesty (1%; 4)

### <H3>Fraud

The first aspect concerning Hungarians' social representation of fraud refers to its loose cognitive organization (Hapax: 0.74) and weak consensus (diversity 0.51). Furthermore, the representation does not contain a component that evidently belongs to the central core. 'Money' (19%; 2.9) and 'Lie/lying' (15%; 1.9) could be two possible candidates, but the relatively low frequency and the high rank of 'Money' do not refer to the existence of a well-based central core. Considering the weak consensus and the loose cognitive organization, it is possible to conclude that the social representation of fraud is not yet crystallized in the Hungarian sample. Beyond the two central core candidates, 'Academic cheating' (16%; 3.2) appears in the first peripheral zone. Moreover, 'Tax evasion' (10%; 2.2) and 'Cards' (12%; 2.8) belong to the second peripheral zone. The social representation of fraud is not coherent among the Hungarian students; for them, fraud principally refers to money, academic cheating, lying and other specific fields, such as cards, game, tax-evasion and sports (cf. Table 3).

Table 3. *Hungarian students' social representation of fraud*

	Low rank mean (below or equal to 2.7)	High rank mean (above 2.7)
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High frequency (above or equal to 16%)	Central core	First periphery
		Money (19%; 2.9) Academic cheating (16%; 3.2)
Low frequency (below 16%)	Second periphery	Periphery
	Lie (15%; 1.9) Tax evasion (10%; 2.2) Game (10%; 2.6) Exam (9%; 2.1) Politics (9%; 2.1)	Cards (12%; 2.8) Scam (12%; 2.8) Sport (10%; 3) Competition (6%; 2,9)

Regarding the French students' social representation of fraud, the cognitive organization is moderately stable (Hapax: 0.66) and the consensus regarding fraud is strong (diversity: 0.41). Furthermore, the central core potentially contains the terms 'Cheating' (35%; 2.2), 'Dishonesty' (22%; 2.6) and 'Illegal' (19%; 2). The most important peripheral components are 'Money' (20%; 3.1), 'Theft' (15%, 2.3) and 'Tax evasion' (15; 2.6). In sum, for French students, fraud is characterized by dishonesty and/or cheating, which concerns mainly the concepts of illegal money or income, such as theft and tax evasion (cf. Table 4).

Table 4. *French students' social representation of fraud*

	Low rank mean (below or equal to 2.7)	High rank mean (above 2.7)
High frequency (above or equal to 16%)	Central core	First periphery
	Cheating (35%; 2.2) Dishonesty (22%; 2.6) Illegal (19%; 2)	Money (20%; 3.1)
Low frequency (below 16%)	Second periphery	Periphery
	Theft (15%; 2.3) Tax evasion (15%; 2.6) Crime (8%; 2.4%)	Lie (12%; 3.6) Bad (8%; 3.1)

## <H2>Study 2



### <H3>Competition

The second study, concerning the confirmation of the social representation of competition, based on the selection of the five most characteristic terms, showed unexpected results (cf. Table 5).

Table 5. Results of the confirmatory analysis for the social representation of competition

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Underlined terms were mentioned significantly more frequently by the given group, than the other.

Hungarian results (N = 127)				French results (N = 115)			
Ranking	Term	%	N	Ranking	Term	%	N
1.	<u>Combat</u> **	51%	65	1.	<u>Contest</u> *	59%	68
2.	Contest	46%	58	2.	<u>Challenge</u> **	58%	67
3.	<u>Goal</u> **	42%	53	3.	<u>Self-Accomplishment</u> **	44%	51
4.	<u>Success</u> **	41%	52	4.	Motivation	44%	51
5.	Motivation	38%	48	5.	Win	40%	46
6.	Win	36%	46	6.	Emulation	30%	35
7.	<u>Money</u> **	31%	39	7.	Will	30%	35
8.	Victory	31%	39	8.	<u>Stimulating</u>	28%	32
9.	Will	28%	36	9.	<u>Sport</u> **	24%	28
10.	<u>Development</u> **	27%	34	10.	Combat	22%	25
11.	Emulation	27%	34	11.	Fight	21%	24
12.	Fight	24%	31	12.	Victory	20%	23
13.	Stimulating	21%	27	13.	<u>Competitive examination</u> **	17%	19
14.	Business	17%	21	14.	Business	12%	14
15.	<u>Loser</u> *	16%	20	15.	Success	10%	12
16.	Challenge	15%	19	16.	Goal	10%	11
17.	Self-achievement	4%	5	17.	Money	7%	8
18.	Sport	3%	4	18.	Loser	7%	8
19.	Competitive examination	3%	4	19.	Development	4%	5
20.	Footy	1%	1	20.	Footy	2%	2

For Hungarians, the confirmatory results partially contradict the results of Study 1.

In this case, 'Combat' is the most frequently chosen word characterizing competition.

Then, the idea of 'Contest' appears, even though, it was a word deriving from the French students' associations in Study 1, not initially produced by the Hungarian sample.

Furthermore, among the first ten words, there are four terms that are strongly connected

to the positive or negative result of competition itself, which are chosen significantly more frequently by Hungarians: 'Goal' ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=32.1, p<0.001$ ), 'Success' ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=28.88, p<0.001$ ), 'Money' ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=21.76, p<0.001$ ), 'Loser' ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=4.56, p<0.05$ ), and 'Victory' ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=3.63, p=0.057$ ) that shows that they are quite result oriented. Among the first ten chosen words/expressions, only two terms reflect motivational and development-related issues: 'Motivation' and 'Development', the frequency of 'Development' ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=22.45, p<0.001$ ) being higher than in the French group.

Taking into account both Study 1 and Study 2, Hungarian business students do not seem to possess a well-concretized central core concerning competition. However, their social representation is tightly connected to the idea of combat, in which goals have a priority over developmental and motivational issues.

In the case of the French students, there were fewer inconsistencies than in the Hungarian results. However, the most striking result was that 'Sport' was saliently chosen by fewer students in the second task than in the first one. Nevertheless, its frequency is still higher than it is among the Hungarian students ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=22.64, p<0.001$ ). 'Contest' remained in the same position, but in this second analysis characteristics related to motivational issues as 'Challenge', 'Self-accomplishment' and 'Motivation' move from the periphery to the centre. In sum, even if the correspondences between the results of Study 1 and Study 2 are not absolute, a better match was found between the results of the two studies in the case of the French participants in comparison to Hungarian participants. Moreover, the results of both studies suggest that French students have a more consistent and crystallized social representation of competition than

Hungarians do. Furthermore, taking into consideration the ten most frequently chosen words, French students focus on the process of competition and on motivational issues to a larger extent than the Hungarians do. More precisely, French students mentioned the terms ‘Contest’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=4.38, p<0.05$ ), ‘Challenge’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=49.4, p<0.001$ ) and ‘Self-accomplishment’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=55.41, p<0.001$ ) more frequently than the Hungarian students. Therefore, on the basis of the results obtained here, the representation of competition for French students seems to be more crystallized than for Hungarian students. Moreover, for French students, the goal of competition is not as central as for Hungarians. Finally, in contrast with the Hungarian results, ‘Combat’ plays a secondary role for French students.

In Study 2, the same analysis was carried out concerning associations related to the term of fraud. In Study 1, Hungarians do not have a well-characterized central core. However, the social representation of fraud of French students has a well-defined central core describing fraud as being ‘Cheating’, connected to ‘Dishonesty’ and being ‘Illegal’. The results from Study 2 (Table 6) show that, concerning Hungarian students, the overlap between the most prominent elements of the first study and the second one is weak. Among the eight most frequently mentioned words from the first study, only one term belongs to the five most frequent words in Study 2. In the case of the French students, this number is four out of five. Supposedly, this difference, among others, demonstrates the less crystallized social representations of fraud for Hungarian business students in comparison to French students.

Beyond structural dissimilarities, several content-related differences also appear.

Hungarian students mention more frequently the terms ‘Lie/lying’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=7.38, p<0.01$ ), ‘Theft’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=6.56, p<0.01$ ), ‘Politics’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=14.19, p<0.001$ ), ‘Academic cheating’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=13.87, p<0.001$ ) and ‘Competition’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=11.315, p<0.001$ ). French students chose more often the words ‘Crime’ ( $\chi^2 = (1, N=242)=23.35, p<0.001$ ), ‘Embezzlement’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=39.43, p<0.001$ ) and ‘Money’ ( $\chi^2=(1, N=242)=9.89, p<0.01$ ).

The results of Study 1 showed only minor correspondences between both Hungarian and French students’ social representations of competition and fraud. However, in Study 2, Hungarians chose ‘Competition’ more frequently in relationship to fraud, than French students did. This result fits well with our initial assumptions. The second difference concerns an activity that is less abstract and that can be closer to the everyday practices of business students: ‘Academic cheating’ that was mentioned more frequently by Hungarian students, in both the first and the second study. This result might reflect differences between Hungarian and French students in terms of fraud-related behaviour in their everyday situations (i.e. in educational context).

Table 6. Results of the confirmatory analysis in the case of social representation of fraud

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Underlined terms were mentioned significantly more frequently by the given group, than the other.

Hungarian results (N = 127)				French results (N = 115)			
Ranking	Term	%	N	Ranking	Term	%	N
1.	Dishonesty	61%	77	1.	Cheating	53%	61
2.	<u>Lie</u> **	57%	73	2.	Dishonesty	50%	57
3.	Corruption	57%	72	3.	Illegal	49%	56
4.	Cheating	46%	59	4.	Corruption	48%	55
5.	Illegal	43%	54	5.	<u>Crime</u> **	46%	53
6.	<u>Theft</u> **	38%	48	6.	Lie	40%	46
7.	Scam	33%	42	7.	<u>Embezzlement</u> **	36%	41

8.	<u>Politics</u> **	28%	35	8.	Scam	31%	36
9.	Tax evasion	27%	34	9.	<u>Money</u> **	28%	32
10.	<u>Academic cheating</u> **	26%	33	10.	Theft	23%	26
11.	Crime	17%	22	11.	Bad	23%	26
12.	Bad	16%	20	12.	Tax evasion	18%	21
13.	<u>Competition</u> **	13%	17	13.	Politics	9%	10
14.	Money	12%	15	14.	Academic cheating	8%	9
15.	Game	9%	12	15.	Exam	5%	6
16.	Exam	6%	7	16.	Game	3%	4
17.	Playing cards	5%	6	17.	Customs	3%	4
18.	Embezzlement	4%	5	18.	Competition	2%	2
19.	Sport	2%	2	19.	Playing cards	1%	1
20.	Customs	2%	2	20.	Sport	1%	1

In the second part of Study 2, the goal is to describe the structure of the social representations of competition and fraud for Hungarian and French business students. As Figure 1 shows, Hungarian's social representation of competition is fragmented. It is divided into three main parts. The largest one mainly contains elements that are related to the result of competition i.e. 'Success', 'Money', 'Victory', 'Reward', 'Winner' and 'Goal'. Nevertheless, the term 'Development' also appeared more frequently in this part, which could potentially imply that Hungarian business students perceive their own development as being one of the results of competition.

In contrast with the Hungarian's representation of competition, French respondents' social representation of competition is more coherent (Figure 2). The twelve terms are interconnected within a holistic semantic field. Here, result-related (i.e. 'Victory'), process-related (i.e. 'Combat', 'Emulation'), motivational ('Motivation', 'Self-accomplishment', 'Will' as willpower, 'Stimulating', 'Challenge'), and area-specific ('Sport', 'Competitive exam') terms are not separated from each other. These differences reinforce previous results concerning Hungarians' less crystallized social representation of competition. Furthermore, Hungarians' representation of competition is closely related

to the goals, while the French social representation of competition integrates goals, processes, motivations and specific areas such as education and sports.

Figure 1. Hungarians students' social representation of competition

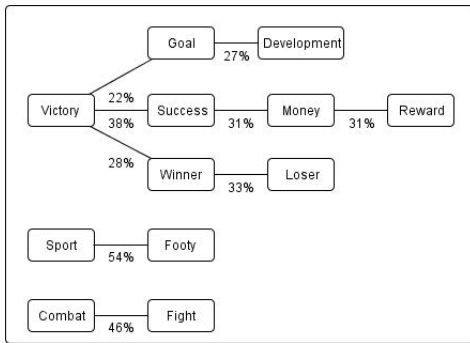
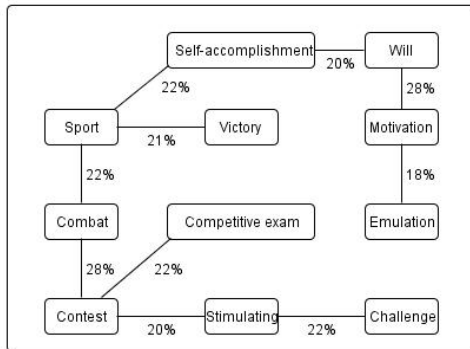


Figure 2. French students' social representation of competition



Concerning the social representation of fraud a similar pattern appears: the Hungarian representation of fraud is more fragmented than the French one (Figure 3 and Figure 4). The shared Hungarian social representation of fraud contains three main parts: the first refers to dishonesty, within economic and political fields; moreover, it includes such behaviours as lying (lie) and cheating (scam). The second part refers to fraud in the field of games and sports. Finally, the third one concerns the educational context. In sum, this social representation is grounded around three main areas: politics and economy,

sports/games and education. In the French representation of fraud, two major parts were revealed: the first one mainly contains general, money-related terms, such as ‘Tax evasion’, ‘Embezzlement’, ‘Corruption’ and ‘Illegal’, while the second part includes area-free expressions, such as ‘Cheating’, ‘Dishonesty’ and ‘Lying’. Here, ‘Customs’ does not belong to the above-described two larger semantic categories.

Figure 3. Hungarian students’ social representation of fraud

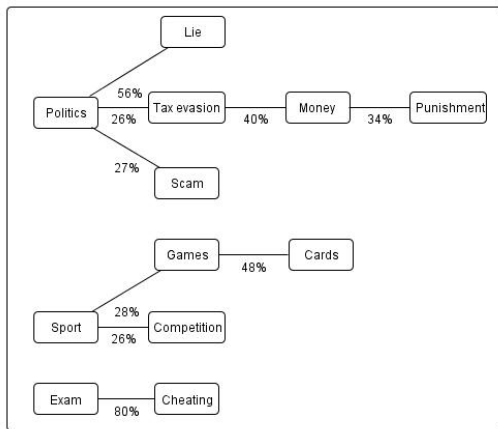
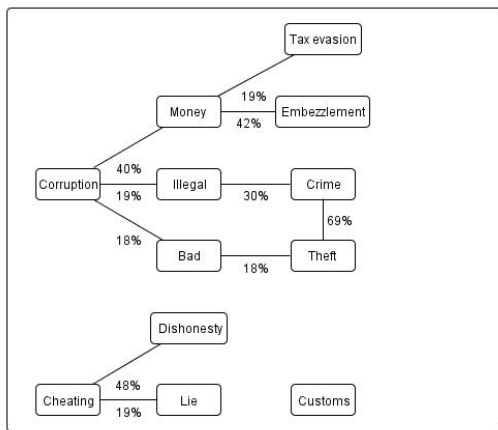


Figure 4. French students’ social representation of fraud



## <H1>Discussion and conclusion

In this article, the purpose was the analysis of social representations of competition and fraud of Hungarian and French citizens. In Study 1, differences were revealed concerning the social representation of competition: Hungarian students do not have a well-defined central core, their representation is less crystallized, and it is more oriented towards goals, than it is for the French students, for whom the representation is more oriented towards motivational and self-improvement issues, with a well-characterized central core, and a strong density. In the case of fraud, Hungarians' social representation does not have a stable central core either; it is less organized and it is more diverse than the representation of the French participants; moreover, it contains more elements concerning 'Academic cheating', thus potentially it reflects on dishonesties in Hungarians everyday situations. Finally, Study 1, unexpectedly, did not show strong links between fraud and competition.

Study 2 confirmed several hypotheses. Concerning the content of Hungarians' social representation of competition, it is significantly more connected to the representation of fraud, and they selected 'Academic cheating' more frequently, than the French students did. Concerning the centrality of elements, even if there is no complete match between Study 1 and Study 2, Study 2 confirms that for Hungarians competition is result oriented, while the French participants are more oriented towards motivation and self-accomplishment. Furthermore, Study 2 confirmed that Hungarians' representations of competition and fraud are more fragmented than French students' representations. In sum, concerning both the surface level, in terms of the content of social representations, and the hidden level, regarding their crystallization, differences between Hungarians and



French students were found. As initially stated, these differences can be explained by cultural, historical and economic dissimilarities between the two cultures.

C. Roland-Lévy and M. Fülöp (2006) found subtle differences between Hungarian and French secondary school students' social representation of competition, which are in line with the present results. Here, we aimed at exploring potential differences deriving from Hungarian and French business school students' dissimilar cultural and historical backgrounds. These dissimilarities were expected at two levels: at a surface level, considering the content of the social representation of competition and fraud, and at a hidden level, regarding the deep structure of social representations in terms of density and fragmentation. In fact the distinction of these two levels was necessary, as both differences and similarities appeared in the analyses of the representations. In fact, similarities appeared in the case of the content of the social representation's hidden structure, which imply a less crystallized structure of the social representation, which can be explained, by the fact that, in terms of the consolidation of a social representation, the twenty years that have passed since the change of régime in Hungary, is considered, in the theory of social representation, as a short time.

Besides these similarities, there are major differences concerning the specific content of the representation of competition, as both Study 1 and Study 2 showed that Hungarians are more result oriented, than the French students, who focus on processes, results and motivational forces of competition. These differences in terms of content can be explained by more materialistic values as well as survival values. In Hungarian societal circumstances, in which resources are still perceived to be scarcer and in which existential survival is not taken for granted, it can be a luxurious attitude to focus on

‘Self-accomplishment’ or ‘Challenge’. In this case, ‘Combat’, ‘Success’ and ‘Money’ can reasonably be perceived as more important. If we take into consideration the fact that, in Hungary, before the system changed in 1989, there was no unemployment, practically all citizens had a job, and authorities paid close attention to providing a modest, but stable standard of living to everyone (Hankiss 1990). During the 1990s, the context has fundamentally changed: unemployment rose saliently. Moreover, those who worked had to struggle day-by-day in order to maintain their standard of living (Ferge et al. 1995). Such changes could have created a societal climate in which result orientation could become a reasonable strategy, which can explain the main distinctions between the French and the Hungarians.

In the hidden structure of the studied social representations, there are also four fundamental differences between Hungarian and French students. (1) On the basis of the results of Study 1, Hungarians’ social representations of competition and fraud do not have a well-established central core, unlike the French students’ social representations. (2) Furthermore, the two indices that measured the density of the social representations (diversity and Hapax) showed that the density of Hungarians’ social representations is weaker than in the case of the French representations. (3) In Study 2, the results of the confirmatory analysis suggest that French students selected more similar terms to those that they provided in Study 1, which is not the case among Hungarians’ students. (4) Finally, the second part of Study 2 revealed different kinds of relationships between central elements of the social representations, and showed that Hungarian social representations are more fragmented, than the French ones. Altogether, these results suggest that the Hungarians’ social representations of competition and fraud are not as

crystallized as the ones of the French students. In Hungary, twenty years have now passed since the change of régime, and this length of time seems to confirm that according to the theory of social representations, according to Abric (1994b) 25–30 years are needed in order to allow the crystallization of the social representations, especially concerning central elements of the representation, here for competition and fraud; this seems confirmed, even though these concepts are highly prevalent in the everyday discourses in Hungary today. Another alternative explanation is related to the tightness–looseness-related values of Hungarians. On the basis of the results of M. J. Gelfand et al. (2011), Hungary is one of the loosest countries that implicates the lack of consensus-based norms and that is related to elevated acceptance of deviant behaviours.

In the case of Hungary, it was hypothesized, that due to the country's lower level of socio-economic development, a higher level of materialist values (Inglehart and Christian 2005), a perception of pervasiveness of corruption (Transparency International), shadow economy (Schneider 2004) and academic cheating (Orosz 2009) would more extensively connect the two studied social representations: competition and fraud. Yet, Study 1 alone, based on free associations, did not prove this assumption, whereas, Study 2 confirmed it. Hungarians' students more frequently chose the term of competition when they were instructed to select the most characterizing terms for representing fraud, than French students did. In sum, these results show that Hungarian business students established stronger links between competition and fraud, than the French ones. Taking into account economic and value differences, this result is consistent with previous studies that showed that Hungarians tend to connect competition to immorality (Fülöp 1999; Fülöp et al. 2004; Orosz 2010). However, this relationship cannot be strong, as it was almost non-

existent when students had to associate freely to the key term of competition. Possibly, the reason of this relatively weak link can be explained by the somewhat moderate presence of competition in their performance-related (e.g. educational) everyday functioning. In Study 1, in the Hungarians' social representation of competition, only 1.7 per cent (nine out of 542) of the free associations referred to the educational field. This proportion suggests that for Hungarian business students, university is not perceived as a typical field for competition. Yet, concerning fraud, another practice seems to be present in their education-related functioning. In terms of the social representation of fraud, similarly to a previous study (Orosz 2009); it was found that academic cheating is more salient among Hungarian students than among French students.<sup>4</sup> This could suggest that academic cheating plays an important role in Hungarian students' life, in a context which is not, according to them, a typical field of competition.

In sum, this work has two messages: the first is closer to theory and methodology, which can provide stimulating guidelines for future researches investigating societies under transition; the second is more practical and it is not an optimistic one, as it concerns tomorrow's Hungarian businessmen.

According to the first point, it was important to examine both content level and hidden level aspects of a social representation. On the one hand, content provides information concerning Hungarian and French citizens' everyday practices and notions, and on the other hand, the hidden level shows the degree of stabilization of a representation under construction. Concerning the process of crystallization, information can be obtained from associative studies by using already existing measures, such as frequency and mean rank (Abric 1994c; Vergès 1994), diversity and Hapax (Flament and

Rouquette 2003), overlapping different methods (Abric 1994c; Doise et al. 1993), creation of maximal trees (Albertini 1985). According to the results of our two studies, data provide information about the degree of stabilization of a representation in an altering society.

The second message is more practical. Tomorrow's Hungarian businessmen live in a country in which corruption and shadow economy is still relatively widespread, and associate words and expressions to fraud that reflect on their own cheating, i.e. academic cheating. Therefore, it is probable that in their future career, competition and dishonesties will be even more deeply intertwined when they enter the 'dog-eat-dog' competitive business sphere (Fülöp and Orosz 2006). Such societal contexts do not facilitate them to meet the requirements of being good citizen as described by Stephens (2003).

A well-known economist, J. Kornai (2003), listed the most important fields that can contribute to the creation of a trustful and honest society. These main factors are upbringing, education, families, schools and universities, press, television, as well as role models of public figures, such as teachers and workplace managers. All of these allow creating everyday situations, both in Hungary and France, which contribute to shaping citizens' social representation of competition and fraud. In educational contexts, teachers who pay attention to rule keeping and regulation of competitive performance situations can create situations in which fairness of competition is prevalent and unfair behaviour occurs less frequently. These experiences and practices – especially if they appear not just incidentally but regularly – might contribute to the separation of students' or pupils' social representation of competition and fraud.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Representative data are not available regarding the magnitude of the presence of competition neither in France nor in Hungary.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning the definition of elements composing the central core, in order to demonstrate cultural differences, we chose a cut-level, of a minimum of 16 per cent of respondents who spontaneously mentioned the given-term/expression, with a mean rank lower or equal to 2.7 in order to be candidate to the central core.

<sup>3</sup> During the analysis, the program SIMI2000 (Vergès, Zeligier and Junique 2002) was used in order to create maximal trees (Kruskal) to demonstrate the most relevant relationships between the above-mentioned central elements. The software only took into consideration the highest possible relationships. Furthermore, relationships, which were taken into account, were drawn by at least 18 per cent of the participants in this study.

<sup>4</sup> According to McCabe et al. (2006) large-scale study business graduate students cheat more, than their non-business peers.

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