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## Symbolic capital and cultural dimensions in Romanian educational organizations

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### Abstract

Organized in the Western part of Romania, we have investigated the role of symbolic capital as a generator of more opened relational patterns in an educational environment. We have found a problematic profile of teacher from universities, comparing with the profile of teachers from secondary schools (higher social cynicism or power distance for academic sample), that indicates the spreading of duplicitous social symptoms as a functional way of acting and thinking in Romanian educational organizations. Thus, the thesis of relational modernization (as higher the subject is in symbolic capital as less he/she is in duplicitous) is refuted, underlining the role of social attitudes and values rooted in cultural history centered on dependency, assistentialism and precarious self-determination.

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### 1. Symbolic capital and cultural dimensions

Described as the resources available to an individual on the basis of honour, prestige or recognition, and serves as a value that one holds within a culture (Bourdieu, 1984/2008), symbolic capital could be presumed as an important resource in generating openness and involvement in social environments. Our research question is articulated around the dilemma of cultural specificity of this feature (as called the hypothesis of relational modernization evoked by

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Bourdieu): as higher you are placed in the symbolic hierarchy of social environment, as opened and honest you are in relationship with your peers? Is the prestige and educational capital a predictor of more democratic relationship Romanian educational organizations? What are the main portrait in terms of cultural dimensions and personal autonomy for Romanian schools?

## 2. Research description

The specificity of this research is also its integrative approach assumed. Thus, the previous studies of the “pathologies” of the system have been realized in predominant (inter)individual (strictly psychological) or a structural one (strictly sociological) perspective. Therefore, our approach brings together the individual register (personal), the structural (societal), the organizational and, especially, the cultural one. Therefore, assembling these distinct theoretical and methodological positions, by signalling the observed trends and critical analysis in terms of the methodology they propose, this study focuses on the relationship between a number of personality variables (associated with personal autonomy: self-determination, self-esteem, locus of control) and a set of cultural dimensions (social axioms, factors Hofstede model).

The survey organized in Timisoara (Western part of Romania) has selected two global samples (N=522), formed by the teacher from secondary schools (n=253) and universities (n=269). We have applied the following instruments: *Values Survey Module 94 (VSM94)*, created by Geert Hofstede, *Social Axioms Survey (SAS)*, realized by Kwok Leung and Michael Harris Bond, *Locus of Control Scale (LCS)*, generated by J. Rotter, *Self-Determination Scale (SDS)*, created by of K. M Sheldon, R. M. Ryan and H. Rice and *Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)*, made by Morris Rosenberg.

## 3. Results

Concerning the register of social axioms, results indicate a high score on the scale of social cynicism (M=3.2970, SD=0.43363). Cynical views seem to be prevalent in the modern world, and many people distrust others and institutions around them, including politicians, business people and government. However, high social cynicism is expected if we refer to decades of communism where authority was excessively valorised, maintaining willingly, amongst people, a climax of fear and mistrust in others. It is clear for those who look back critically the fact that “the authority” wanted a social network made by solitary people, where interpersonal interactions were feared, discouraged. As such, after decades of suspicious and duplicated interactions, we find that the ordinary subjects have forgotten to cooperate. Therefore, many of present behaviour patterns have descended from: lack of responsibility and cooperation, mistrust in the institutions and their significant members, fatalism, deficient social hope, public disengagement – all those characteristics of the social cynicism – find their outcome in contempt of the other. Into a cynic climax of valorous judgments, the alterity can be seen as “taking advantage of us”, “using us”, in who “we” cannot trust. Poor self-determining correlated with high cynicism ( $r=0.186$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) indicate a pattern of vulnerability and helplessness. Social cynicism is also correlated with feelings of frustrations of self, disillusion and mistrust in others and ideology. These characteristics indicate the acquisition of an adaptive duplicitous identity pattern, resulting from the belief that “otherness” will generate an instrumental way of acting and thinking.

The scores for Hofstede’s model, characterized by high scores of power distance (M=78.06, SD= 24.018), collectivism (M=36.31, SD=20.171), uncertainty avoidance (M=85.07, SD=19.221), femininity (M= 33.72, SD=19.739) and short term perspective (M=23.89, SD=15.784).

Moreover, the relation between social cynicism and power distance ( $r=0.392$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) indicates the fact that, the more cynic we are, the more authoritarian the subject become. Therefore, the cynic typical subject is engaged in manipulative, suspicious and deceptive interactions, where the significant other is closely monitored and can be exploited for personal gain. This statement could indicate a defective, vicious model of interpersonal relationship where social interactions are perceived as well-constructed “strategies” for personal gain.

Results indicate also a significant relation between social cynicism and fate control that expresses the personal option for defeated social attitudes ( $r=0.310$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). All these trends are going to create a more accurate image of the social actor with behavioural tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity and aggressiveness. Moreover, results show a positive relation between collectivism and social cynicism ( $r=0.255$ ,

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