

HOW DO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEENAGERS REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT EPISODES OF HUNGARIAN HISTORY?

A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH



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ABSTRACT

The episodes of key importance in the Hungarian national history are in the focus of the paper, as they are recalled as examples for positive or negative turning points and as they are evaluated on scales. The sample consists of a 100 students attending The Evangelic Secondary School in Aszód. Their responses are in line with the results of former studies in respect of recalling positive examples mainly from the time passed by several centuries and negative examples from the 20th century. Nevertheless, the 1956 revolution and the transition to market economy are definitely represented in the range of positive examples. Representations of the episodes can be assorted not only by the positive-negative dichotomy but by aspects, meaningful in respect of the function of collective memory: sovereignty, unity, credibility. There are several arguments raised in the paper supporting that studying collective memories of national history with the help of scales is as justified as studying it with narratives.

Key words: collective memory; functions of remembering of historic events; evaluations

1. INTRODUCTION

All nations and all individuals need knowledge about their past. Like an individual feels personal continuity and identity via remembering of personal memories from one's own past, to develop a national identity needs awareness of the origin and the history of the nation. This knowledge provides the person with significant historic examples and solutions which are helpful in understanding the present; historic examples could serve as a kind of hope in entertaining the idea that "the glory of old times once comes back". Moreover, remembering historic episodes offers the occasion for saluting in the honors to heroes and in general, to cultural heritage. Memories can serve as subjects of criticism, helping us to learn the lesson in order not to commit the same mistakes again.

Knowledge about historic episodes is an ultimately important societal interest because of its identity-formative function. The acquirement of this knowledge goes on at different arenas of socialization: in families and in the schools. Even if the need for modern knowledge caused a dramatic decrease in the volume with which many classic subjects (mainly the natural sciences) are represented in public education, the study hours students learn history (and also Hungarian language and literature) have not suffered a considerable decrease in the last few decades. Secondary school students form a population which – on average – stores the encyclopedical knowledge about the national history the best (Király, 2010), as they had fully went through all the spectrum of national history and actually they are deepening, integrating and fixating their knowledge in secondary school. In this phase, they most probably have not only the knowledge but also the attitudes towards these episodes.

What are the typical negative and positive turning points of our national history in the view of teenagers? What are the dimensions behind their attitudes? How can the most typical episodes be mapped in the space defined by these evaluative dimensions? Can the evaluative dimensions be connected to the psychological functions of remembering historic episodes?

We executed the data collection in two phases. First, the participants freely recalled three positive and three negative episodes from the Hungarian history. Then, based on the results of the first phase, the same group of participants evaluated the 10 (5 positive and 5 negative) turning points on 13 bipolar scales.

Our study has its research antecedents in Hungary inspiring our examination. First, our participants were to recall examples of positive and negative turning points from the national history based on the procedure of a former study (László, Ehmann és Imre, 2002), but asking for three-three examples instead of a single mention of a positive and a negative turning point. On the other hand, evaluation of historic episodes on scales is a method well-known from the work of György Hunyady (2010) and we will relate our findings to his experiences covering a broad time interval.

According to our results the participants showed the sign of turning to the distant past for positive memories to a lesser extent than participants from relevant other studies (László, Ehmann & Imre, 2002; Kinyó, 2005). The tolerant and nostalgic attitude towards the communist regime (Hunyady, 2010) was absent, and the 1956 revolution was definitely represented as a positive turning point. Representations of the episodes were assorted not only by the positive-negative dichotomy but by aspects, meaningful in respect of the function of collective memory: sovereignty, unity, credibility.

1.1. Representation forms of remembering history

On the one hand people know facts about history, and on the other hand they have emotions, feelings, evaluative attitudes towards the events. The factual level relates to the knowledge of “simple” facts, like the date and place of events, the names of significant personalities involved and also relates to the knowledge of more complicated ones, like the context of the event, the motives of the significant actors, the consequences of the action (Abari & Máth, 2010; Kurucz, 2010).

However, not the knowledge representations are in the centre of our study, but attitudes, evaluations, that is, how proud somebody is of an episode of the Hungarian history, how determinative that episode is judged, to what extent it is considered as an episode bringing Hungarians closer to each other, etc.

Knowledge and evaluations are not disconnected. If somebody strongly identifies with a personality of a specific period, or with the spirit of that period in general, most probably needs more and more information about the period, turns to references and reads novels on the subject, etc. The interest motivates the acquirement of knowledge, which is a fun with involvement, and emotions accompanying the knowledge acquirement serve as reinforcement (Zajonc 1997/ 2003).

There is considerable variety in the factual knowledge of people, not only because of the motivational aspects but because of forgetting. Perhaps, only the most important dates, places and personalities should be expected as common cross-section of knowledge. On the contrary to that, in respect of feelings, attitudes and evaluations we can expect more homogeneity, namely because feelings are much less variant than knowledge, and forgetting about feelings, emotions, evaluations is less intense (Zajonc, 2003/1997). Put it differently, after a certain time feelings and evaluations which orientate us in our attitudes compress our knowledge and remind us to it even when the details of knowledge are fading (Lingle és Ostrom, 1979).

It is exactly this relative homogeneity why we took evaluations as our research subject in this study. We were curious about some aspects of cultural memory, what is, by definition, the cultural layer of individual memory, common in all the members of a culture.

Studying representations as they appear in narratives also has its remarkable tradition in approaching cultural memory (Hunyady, 2010; László et al., 2002). The narrative approach is in harmony with the view that what is important in remembering collective (in this case: national) history is not necessarily the true and adequate fact, but personal significance and personal understanding (Nora, 1996). Exploring collective memories via studying representations reflected in narratives is a very rich research stream either in Hungarian or in international context (see for example László et al. 2002; Wertsch, 2003; White, 1981). The results of our attitude-study are to be related to some results offered by the narrative approach.

1.2. Functions of collective memory

Collective memory by definition is the commonly shared collection of memory pieces about subjects of great importance in respect of a group (either interactive or symbolic group) (Assmann, 1999; Kovács, 2010; Nora, 1996). If the members of the “group” add up a nation, the subjects of collective memory are called as “national memory places” in Nora’s (1996) terminology. Important episodes of the national history form a subtype of national memory

places. The attitudes and evaluations of important episodes of the Hungarian history are in the focus of our paper. The argument in this block is that general attitude functions correspond to the functions of collective memory, providing a kind of justification for approaching collective memory within the frame of attitude research.

Attitude functions are organized in two basic factors. On the one hand attitudes have a social function, helping people to connect and to adjust to each other. When they express their attitudes in the communication, individuals belonging to groups of common beliefs are identifiable. On the other hand attitudes have an instrumental function helping to adjust to the environment (Smith, & Mackie, 2002).

Attitudes serve the same goals in the specific context of significant turning points of the Hungarian history. They offer themes for experiencing belongingness and developing a common national identity, consequently serve social (national) affiliation and adjustment. Furthermore, the attitudes very often have a moral aspect making memories be subjects of criticism, and helping to learn the lesson in order not to commit the same mistakes again. Moreover, the attitudes can be at people's help in coping with traumatic¹ collective experiences, facilitating effective accommodation.

When recalling collective memories, the members of the group share similar experiences, hence they become bound together by a piece of memory. Although remembering always happens in the frame of individual functioning involving thoughts and emotions, specific memory subjects (or memory places) become reference points in the communication with the in-group members (compatriots in the specific context of national history). Discourses on the national history help to feel belongingness. This social function of narratives is especially remarkable in case of great national narratives (legends, myths, histories about the origin of the nation). Children, as the new members of the community, get the heritage of national community and the national identity via listening to these narratives and experiencing emotions evoked by them (Pataki, 2003).

Besides the search for the feeling of belongingness, the search for a positive identity is also a very important urge in our social life. In the frame of national memory places this refers to the goals of developing a national identity with continuity and with positive attributes. Maintaining and transmitting group identity sometimes result in rewriting of the past. Some stories become redundant from the perspective of developing the national identity. Certain details are enlarged in the collective memory, while others are faded serving the interest of the group. This restructuring is directed by the goal of supporting and presenting the group identity as efficiently as possible (Assmann, 1999).

The need for searching a positive identity is often troubled by the facts. Like discussing negative life events (which evidently implies recalling memories) can help individuals to cope

¹ This function should be treated in a psycho-analytic context but for the sake of simplicity we do not present attitude functions here in more details where the self-defensive function would get distinct exposition (Katz, 1976). By applying this simplification we adjust for example to the structure offered by Smith and Mackie (2002) in their handbook.

with those events (see for example groups working on traumatic experiences), collective remembering can also help communities to cope with traumatic experiences. On 'traumatic' we mean an event, when the members of the community experience something terrible, that is considered to be unforgettable and impactful on the common future. Collective traumas are represented not merely by their contents, but by the process in which the concerned community is getting to the interpretation of the respective event as threatening the core of their existence (Alexander, 2004).

The representation does not disappear with the generation experiencing the trauma directly; according to Rüsen the following two generations maintain it. The psychological elaboration of the trauma is an ongoing process and dealing with cultural-historic experiences is a form of cultural strategies aiming to survive the traumatic experiences (Rüsen, 2004).

Collective narratives often teach moral lessons with positive and negative heroes, blameless or peccable victims. According to White (1981) historic narratives always offer moral messages which serve as motivating factors behind social activities. As history is always about human deeds, narration of the past offers opportunities to present the purposes behind acts and to report the consequences of these acts. According to Poole (2008) taking the responsibility for the mistakes committed by the community is one of the most important functions of collective memory, which should motivate keeping promises and repairing damages. However, these moral lessons appeal not only our remorse but they also offer positive examples of the struggle for positive national identity.

1.3. Representations of the Hungarian historic eras

As it was mentioned in the introduction, our study can be related to the experiences accumulated within the frames of two differing research streams. One of them is based on the concepts of social representation theory (László et al., 2002), and the other relies on the traditions of attitude research (Hunyady, 2010).

László and his colleagues asked students to write a typical story as an example of positive and negative historic eras of the Hungarian history, and one more story from an era that had impact on one's own family. The most frequently referred positive eras or episodes were the "Settlement of the Magyars in the Carpathian basin", the "Golden Era", the "Era of successful anti-Turkish fights", the "Hungarian Revolution and the War of Independence in 1848-49", together with the relatively rare reference to the "Transition to market economy in 1990". Stories referring to negative eras were taken from the "Era of Ottoman Hungary", from time of the "Fall of the Hungarian Revolution and the War of Independence in 1849", from time of the World Wars or cited the "Treaty of Trianon" or less frequently the "Era of the Soviet occupation". The researchers identified four groups of the observations. They referred to an era or an event where Hungarians: won a fight; first they won but then lost; they lost; first they lost but then won. The relatively rare appearance of stories referring to the positive era of transition to market economy was explained with lack of schemas for this type of category (first we lost but then won). The qualitative content analysis identified the freedom fight and losses counted in lives, values, territories and sovereignty as the core motives of positive and negative examples, respectively (László et al., 2002).

György Hunyady has been studying representations about history for decades. Among many other questions he set those of the content of knowledge, the categorization and evaluation of historic characters, the consequences of cognitive styles on processing history-relevant informations, and the evaluations of the eras of the 20th century (Hunyady, 2010). Concerning objectives and methods our study can be related the most to that latter question. He asked students in 1981 and 1991 to evaluate periods involving 25-25 years of the Hungarian history according to specific attributes. These periods were the era of the Monarchy, the Horthy regime after the Treaty of Trianon, the era of Rákosi, the Kádár-era of consolidation after the fall of the Revolution in 1956, and the transition to market economy. Of course, this latter was absent in the survey from 1981 where the participants found the expression “the society at the end of the century”. The whole study was actually replicated in 2000 on a representative sample. The attributes of evaluations captured the notion of advancement, maturity and progressivity concerning the diverse areas of life (living standard, the level of technological development, culture, sports, etc.) The average evaluation stands for the general attitude towards a period which can be related to the other periods’ averages. The line drawn by the average attitudes proved to be an upwards line in 1981. In the other two surveys the line appeared to be a U-shaped one with the era of Rákosi evaluated worst. The enjoyable barrack of the Kádár-era was considered neutral in 1991 and even positive with a nostalgic season in the views of people in the representative sample at the end of the century (Hunyady, 2010).

The question arises how the transition to market economy is evaluated by our sample. At all, how strongly the transition is represented among the positive eras. Have people had accumulated schemas to represent “first lost but than won” category in the representation of national history since it was last measured by László and his colleagues in 2002? Do these young Hungarians really consider the disappearance of the communist regime as a kind of lost?

2. STUDY

2.1. Research questions

In the study secondary school students were to judge Hungarian historical events and eras, in order to obtain answers for the following questions:

1. Which events of our history are judged the most negative and most positive? Our expectation was that if the respondents can choose three events, the glorious past is less separated from the sad, or less successful closer past. Since such mapping of the Hungarian history – with extreme simplification – is not far from reality, and fairly prototypical, a more sophisticated pattern of the positive and negative elements can be obtained by allowing three choices.
2. How the participants relate to the most frequently mentioned events in their feelings and in their evaluations? We expect that the positive evaluations of positive events are more salient than the negative evaluations of negative events. In order to create a positive identity the national awareness would find the meaningful aims even in failures, and emphasize the very aspect of negative events that was after all (or obviously) positive.

3. What are the underlying dimensions of the event patterns? Do the revealed underlying dimensions match the functions of collective memory? According to our expectation in the background pattern of the events' representations dimensions that are in line with such functions of collective memory as social orientation, conformity, and belongingness will occur.

2.2. Sample, measures and procedure

The sample consisted of 100 secondary school students from Aszód, with an equal proportion of the genders, from four grades: ninth (N = 27), tenth (N = 20), eleventh (N = 32), and twelfth (N = 21).

The study consisted of two parts. The questions used in the first part were based on the structure of László and his colleagues' (2002) questionnaire study (replicated in 2005 by Kinyó) investigating the positive and negative events of the Hungarian history. However, the instruction in the present study was different, the respondents were asked to name three positive and three negative events, instead of naming just one story. The following instruction was given to the students: "Name three historical events or eras which, in your opinion, were the best, which you are the most proud of, or in which you would have wanted to take part the most!" (1); "Name three historical events or eras which, in your opinion, were the worst, which was the most harmful for the country, which should never have happened!" (2).

The data obtained in the first part of the study provided a good basis for the second part (beyond the results obtained from them). In this second part, the students were to evaluate the ten most frequently mentioned historical eras (five positive and five negative ones) along thirteen dichotomies on a seven-point (from -3 to 3) scale (see the Appendix). These dichotomies let the students express their opinions concerning the events. The analysis of the answers is to reveal the structure that guides the students' thoughts about the historical events that they consider to be important.

2.3. Results

In the first phase the students' answers for open questions were analyzed. In the analysis the first study question was investigated, that is, which events are considered the most positive and most negative by the students. Our expectation was that the possibility of naming multiple events will elaborate the previous results stating that people tend to look for positive events in the far past, whereas negative events in the closer past.

The hundred students named 263 positive events (not everyone named three of them). The answer frequencies of the positive events are depicted in *Figure 1*. The list of positive events that were mentioned at least by 10% of the students starts with the 1956 revolution being the most frequent answer and ends with the transition. (Were the "1848 Revolution" and the "1848-49 Freedom fight" handled as one single event, it would have been on the top of the list). Besides the above mentioned events, the Settlement of the Magyars, the "victories over the Turks", Saint István's founding of the Hungarian state and the reign of King Mathias were mentioned often.

The frequency of the negative historical events mentioned by the students is depicted in *Figure 2*. The Treaty of Trianon has the highest answer frequency, with 59% of the respondents

mentioning it. The frequently mentioned negative events were the Turkish occupation, the world wars, the retaliation of the revolutions and freedom fights, and the soviet era in Hungary. An interesting addition is that the students mentioned examples from their own personal, or their families' history ("Gyurcsány era", political culture after the transition, or the transition itself).

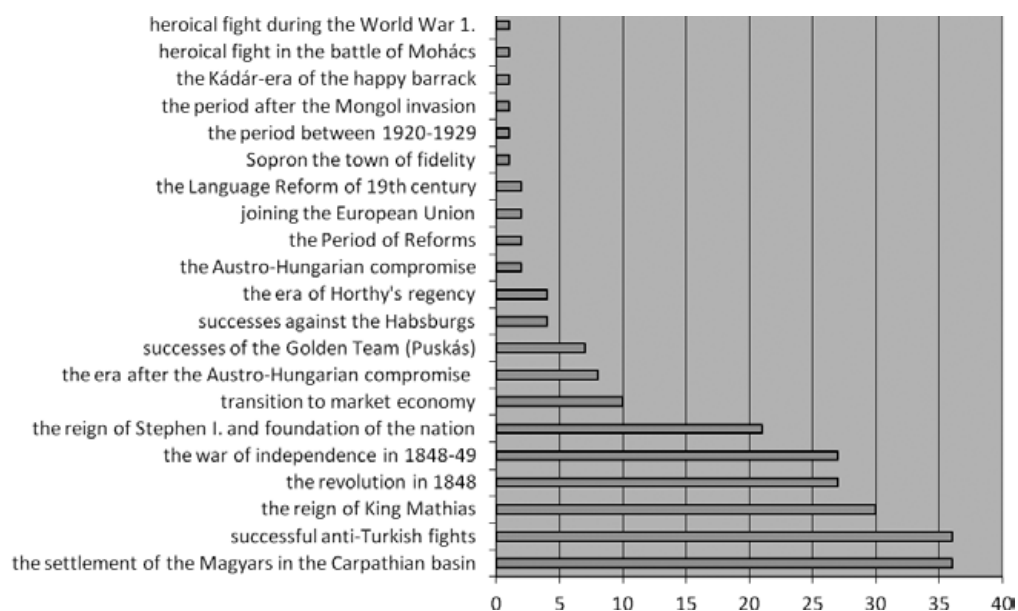


Figure 1. Numbers of mentioning specific positive events and eras



Figure 2. Numbers of mentioning specific negative events and eras

The events, which were mentioned only in a positive context are all from the far past. The judgements of the events from the era of the great kings till the beginning of the 20th century are ambivalent, whereas the events of the 20th century till the transition are mentioned in an obviously negative context. The only exceptions in this decline of historical events are the 1956 revolution, and as an endpoint the transition. The summary of the data clearly reveal

that there are memories that can be interpreted as both positive and negative. These are usually events, in which the Hungarians endured even in hard times, and – although a foreign power retaliated the endurance – the virtues expressed are exemplary even today (e.g., fight against the Turkish, 1848-49 freedom fight, 1956 revolution).

The results from the first part of the study confirmed the previous findings about perceiving a decline in our history on the one hand, and revealed that the positive events of the 20th century modulate the view of pessimistic perception of history, on the other hand.

In the second hypothesis we expect that the students' attitudes to positive events are more positive, than their rejection of negative events. In the second part of the study the students evaluated ten historical events along 13 dimensions. These events were listed in a chronological order: "The settlement of the Magyars in Hungary", "The era of Mathias", the "Turkish occupation", "1848-49 revolution and freedom fight", "Hungary's involvement in World War 1", "Treaty of Trianon", "Hungary's involvement in World War 2", "1956 revolution", "Transition to market economy". There were certain evaluative dimensions that do not measure attitude, like how authentic the sources about an event are, how determining the event was, how much it influenced the Hungarians' future, whether it is evaluated the same way by the different generations, whether it influenced the respondents' or his/her family's life. However, there were eight dimensions referring unquestionably to emotions and positive-negative evaluations. These are the following: brought something new, some development for the Hungarians; positive event in the Hungarian history; I wish I had participated in the event; contributed to the Hungarian awareness; proved that Hungarians are fond of freedom, it was worth fighting; revived the awareness of national belongingness; I am proud it had happened.

The mean of the evaluative judgments are depicted in *Figure 3*. The mean of the positive attitude toward positive events is more salient than the mean of the negative attitude toward negative events. The mean of the positive answers for positive events was 1.51, while the mean of the negative answers for negative events was -0.81. The absolute value of the two means was statistically significant ($t = 9.81$; $p < 0.001$).

The third set of questions was about the dimensions creating the patterns of the events, and whether these dimensions can be matched with the functions of the collective memory.

As a first step, a factor analysis was performed on the 13 aspects for all the 10 events, in order to find the aspects that load consistently, for all the ten events, on one single factor. Two connections were found that showed such consistency. One of them was between *credibility* and *determinative feature*, the other one among *Hungarian awareness*, *freedom loving*, *struggling* and *belongingness*. The mean of the answers in these factors will be referred to as *origin*, and *belongingness*. Origin has been chosen, because to experience identity one has to have credible sources about the determining, significant events. Like someone would get an existential crisis learning that the indentifying documents of his/her life are fake, the community would also suffer a crisis should the information about the determining events turn to be uncertain. When choosing the label belongingness we have simply chosen one of the items belonging to the factor, which may serve as a keyword representing the freedom loving, struggling, Hungarian with a definite national identity.

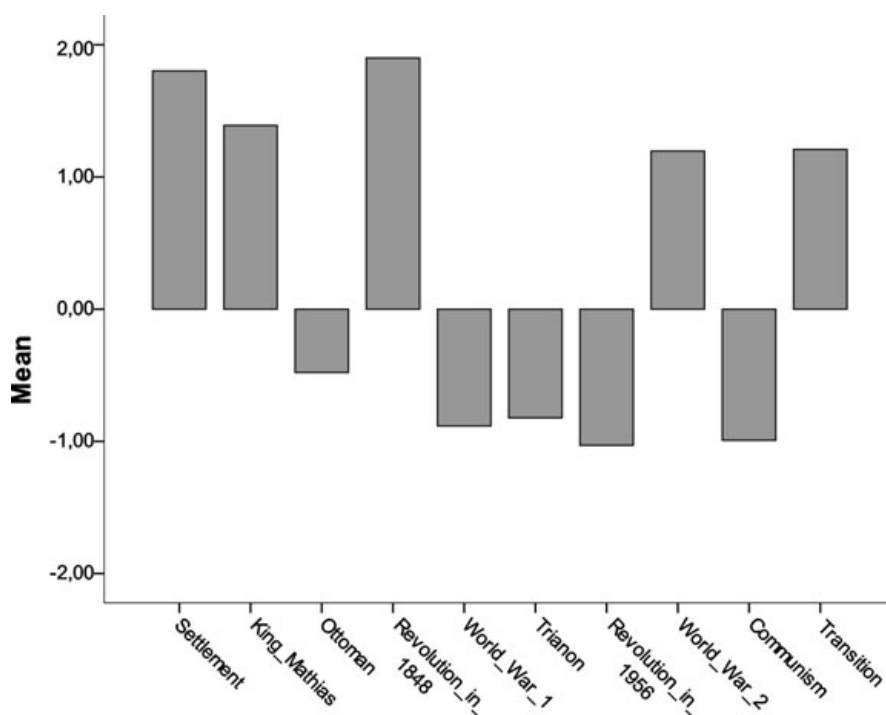


Figure 3. Mean evaluation of the events and eras

In the further analyses multidimensional scaling (MDS) was performed in case of origin, the nation's fate (belongingness), and pride (which was an independent question among the evaluations).

The scaling resulted in a good-fitting two-dimensional model in case of origin (Stress = 0.05, RSQ = 0.98). Based on the setting of the events, the meanings attributed to the underlying two dimensions are *legend* versus *fact* on the one hand, and *agreement* versus *ambiguity* on the other hand. King Mathias' unanimously evaluated legendary figure, the story of the Settlement of the Magyars known from legends, involving uncertainty, the contradicting personal stories about the socialist era and the lot of knowledge and social consensus about the 1848-49 revolution and freedom fight can be identified as defining points in this pattern. Figure 4 shows the relative positions of the events along the two dimensions. Figure 5, on the other hand, shows the evaluations in an absolute sense. As far as origin is concerned, Figure 5 contains only positive evaluations, the participants believe in the social interpretations of our important events, they consider these as proven.

The multidimensional scaling revealed two dimensions in the background of the *belongingness* feelings of the events as well (Figure 6). The scaling resulted in a good-fitting two-dimensional model also in this case (Stress = 0.04, RSQ = 0.99). The setting of the events suggests *positivity* and *similarity* in the Hungarian people's fate at the time of the event as the interpretation of the underlying dimensions. On the right side of Figure 6 there are mainly positive, whereas on the left side there are mainly negative events. Along the vertical axis different fates of the nation disintegrated by the Treaty of Trianon, the trisected country (Turkish occupation) and the country extruding compatriots because of racial discrimination are contrasted with the fates of the socialist era perceived as homogeneous, and the consistently employed justice known from the tales about

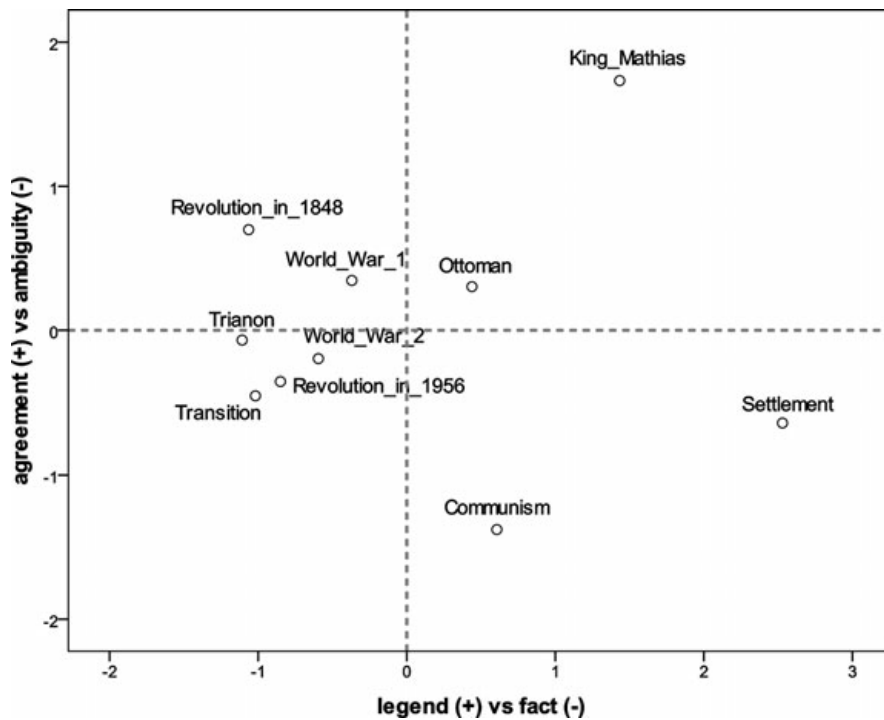


Figure 4. Dimensions behind origin and the events and eras in the two-dimensional space

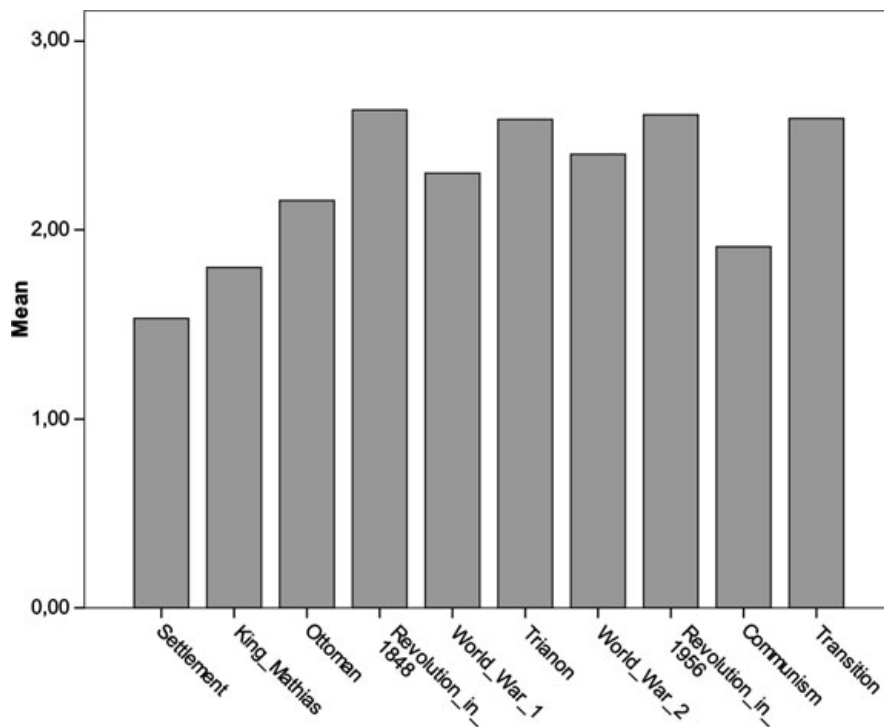


Figure 5. Mean evaluation of the events and eras in respect of credibility

King Mathias. On Figure 7 the mean values of the evaluations are depicted. According to the students' evaluations the nation's belongingness was more reinforced than deteriorated by basically every event, no matter if it was positive or negative, unifying or divisive.

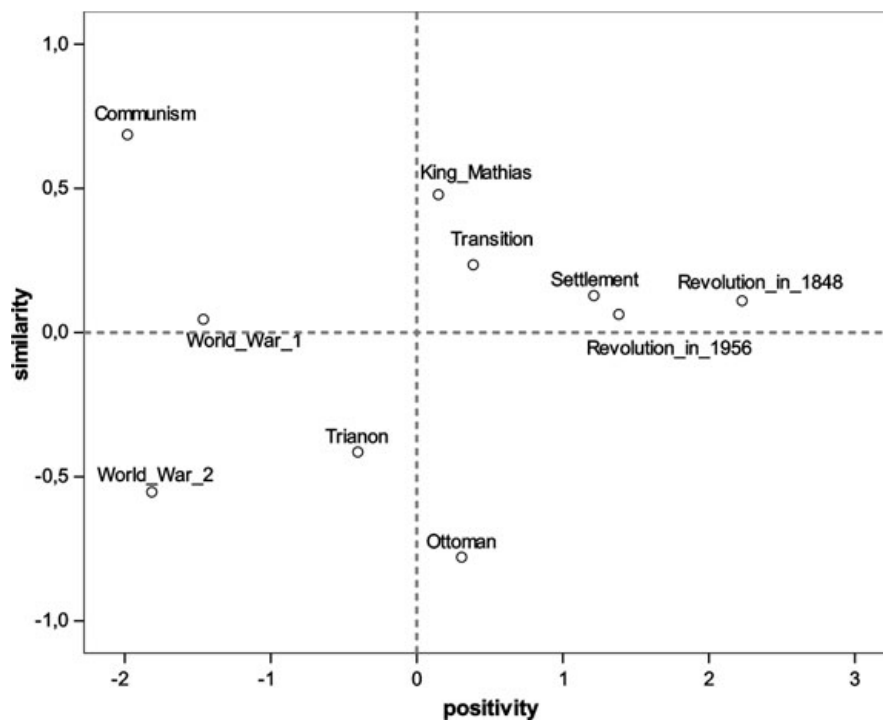


Figure 6. Dimensions behind nation's fate (belongingness) and the events into the two-dimensional space

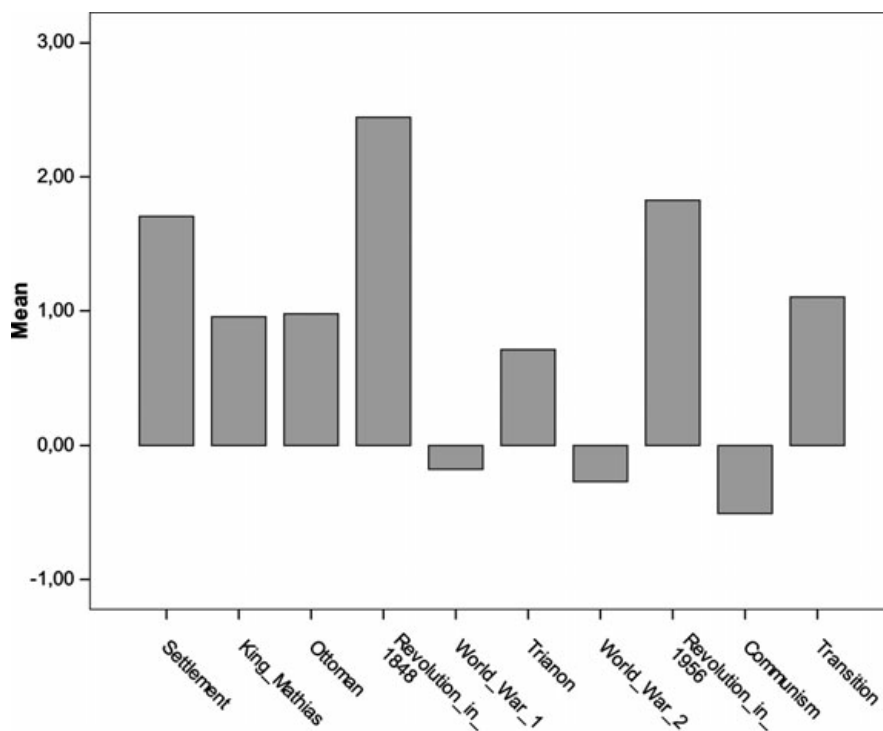


Figure 7. Mean evaluation of the events and eras in respect of nation's fate (belongingness)

Finally, a multidimensional scaling was performed for the feeling of pride (Figure 8). The fit of the resulting two-dimensional model was good again ($Stress = 0.02$, $RSQ = 0.99$). The underlying dimensions were labeled as *positivity* and *sovereignty*. The latter refers to what the students think of the political sovereignty of the country characteristic of the era. The

most salient subjection is perceived for the socialist era according to the respondents. This is opposed to the independence of the country changing regime, and the country choosing its allies in a sovereign way when getting involved in World War 1. Concerning pride the events are evaluated corresponding to positivity (*Figure 9*).

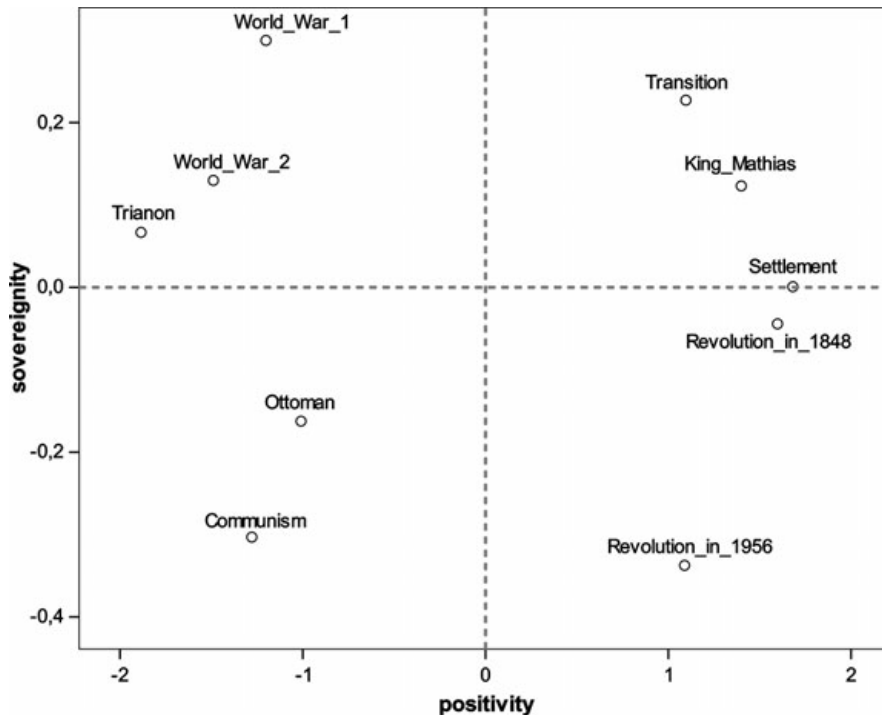


Figure 8. Dimension behind the pride and the events and eras in the two-dimensional space

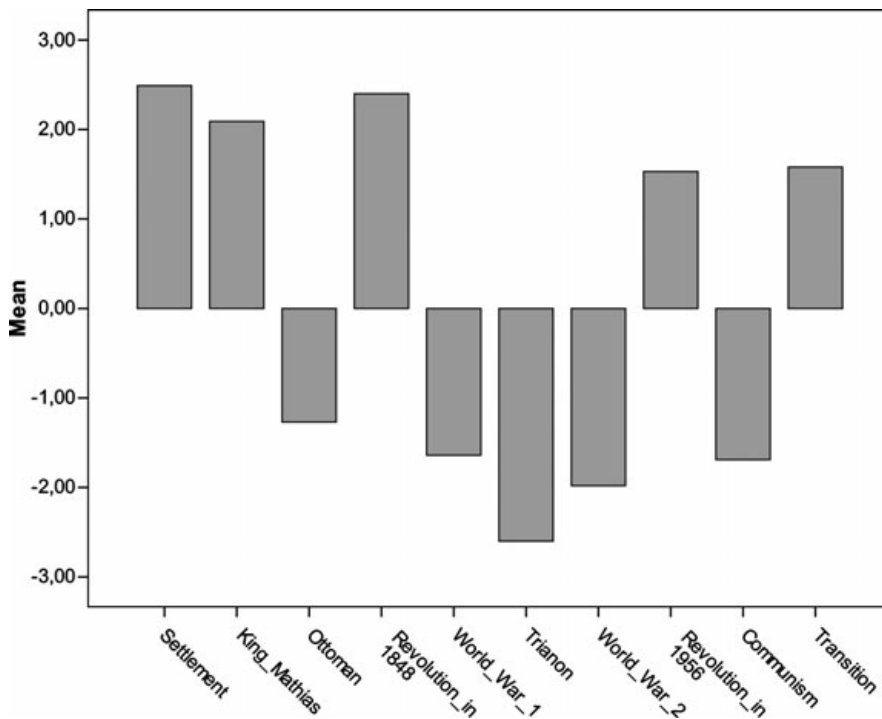


Figure 9. Mean evaluation of the events and eras in respect of pride

3. DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the discussion, a brief summary of the results is given. The most noticeable result from the first part of the study was the pretty easily available positive representation of the 1956 revolution in the memory of the respondents about the national history, and the, though less representative, but present positive accessibility of the transition. The list of the most frequently recalled negative events is in line with the previous findings. The positive attitude towards positive events is stronger than the rejection of the negative events. The interpretations of the events are observed, beyond the positive-negative aspect, along the origin and the belongingness aspects as well. Further dimensions in the background of these interpretations were identified as factuality, analogy in the nation's fate and sovereignty.

That is, in the present study there was a significant difference in the evaluation of the 1956 revolution and the transition, as compared to previous studies. While in László and his colleagues' 2002 study less than 8% of the respondents mentioned the 1956 revolution or the transition as a positive event (this proportion was less than 1% in Kinyó's 2005 study), in the present study these answers represented more than 18% of the answers, and almost half of the respondents mentioned at least one of these events.

The question is what causes the difference. Is it the difference of the data collection or the difference in the sample, or is it the time passed between the studies? Could it be that 1956 is not to be mentioned in first place because it is not the prototypical good answer for the "positive event" (for that, events that are successful in every aspect are better, because the revolution was defeated), but the evaluation of this event along freedom, struggling and belongingness makes this answer as a good second or third choice? Or could it be that the history teachers of the secondary grammar school in Aszód are committed to the case of 1956? Or else, could it be, that the years that passed since the previous studies qualified 1956 as history? At this point, this question cannot be answered, for that we would need data from the same sample with only one answer, or data from a different sample for the same questions. However, should we get any of these answers, it is reassuring, that there is hope that 1956 can be taught to be a national holiday.

The tendency to find positive events more in the far past and only occasionally in the closer past was interpreted by László and his colleagues as a sign of the resigned Hungarian pessimism that tends to turn to the past. However, it can be seen, that if not only one but three answers could be mentioned by the students, 19th and 20th century events appeared in a significant proportion beyond the events making people proud. According to this finding students can see the values of a certain era even if it can otherwise be interpreted as a tragedy, and find the moral message of these events important even today.

In the discussion, László et al. (2002) raise that two things are missing from the spontaneously mentioned stories: one is the cooperation with other nations, the other is the era of peace. However, by altering the instruction, these aspects appear as well. The importance of cooperation with the Habsburgs is confirmed by the fact that 10% of the students mentioned the Austro-Hungarian compromise or the era after that as positive. The importance of the peaceful eras is also shown by the fact that altogether 10% of the students mentioned the victories of the Golden team, the era of the language renewing, or the happy barrack as a positive event (Figure 1).

Our results are worth comparing with the results of György Hunyady, who found forgiving, nostalgic retrospection to the Kádár regime, both in 1991, among students, and at the millennium, using representative samples (Hunyady, 2010). Although we have not defined periods within the socialist era, the consistent negative evaluation suggests that this kind of nostalgic attitude is missing from our sample, except for mentioning the happy barrack in a positive context for a few times.

The answer for our second question, that is, people evaluate positive events as more positive than negative events negative is comforting as far as the Hungarian identity is concerned, and it is well interpretable on the basis of the social identity and collective memory literature, although contradicts to the idea of the pessimistic and self-deteriorating Hungarian soul. People have a natural tendency to evaluate their group, and hence themselves in a positive way (Brewer, 1999; Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman & Sloan, 1976; Tajfel, 1982), what they try to achieve even when the facts try to hinder that. In such cases, things are re-evaluated along certain views, identifying aspects, that create advantages from the losses (Lemaine, 1974) and rethinking the motives and the causes behind failures to find an interpretation that is more for the own group (Pettigrew, 1979), for example by emphasizing the failing group's noble motives in contrast with the alien enemy's dubious motives. Reaching a positive identity is one of the most important memory functions, according to the research tradition of collective memory (Assmann, 1999).

The third set of questions in our research was related to the underlying dimensions of the evaluations. Behind the primary dimensions of origin, positivity and belongingness, we have found secondary dimensions like consensus, fate similarity and sovereignty. On the basis of the primary and secondary dimensions it is not difficult to identify relations between aspects of evaluation and the functions of collective memory. Belongingness and consensus may refer to common experience, origin and positivity to positive identity, negativity and fate-similarity to trauma-elaboration, sovereignty and positivity to morality. Of course we are aware of the subjective nature of our interpretations that might appear in attributing meaning to the underlying dimensions found by the multidimensional scaling.

Nevertheless, our study based on the analysis of evaluations may encourage, that it worth to collect such data on larger and more heterogeneous samples. That would create an opportunity to overcome the limitation of the present study, the relatively small and homogeneous sample.

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APPENDIX

The scales for evaluation

There are credible sources of information about the event.	There are no credible sources of information about the event.
The event determined Hungary's fate for a long time.	The event was not that significant.
It brought something new some development for the Hungarians.	It hindered the development of Hungary.
It influenced the future of the Hungarians.	It did not influence the future of the Hungarians that much.
It was a positive event in the Hungarian history.	It was a negative event in the Hungarian history.
It is evaluated the same way by different generations.	It is evaluated differently by different generations.
It influenced my family's life.	It did not influence my family's life that much.
I wish I had participated in the event.	I am glad I did not participate in the event.
It contributed a lot to the Hungarian awareness.	It did not contribute a lot to the Hungarian awareness that much.
It proved that Hungarians are willing to fight for freedom.	It did not prove especially that Hungarians are willing to fight for freedom.
It was worth fighting.	It was not worth fighting.
It revived the awareness of national belongingness.	It did not revive the awareness of national belongingness that much.
I am proud it had happened.	I am ashamed it had happened.