

Slovenia under psychomicroscope: Recent research of personality and value dimensions

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Abstract

An extensive research concerning the personality dimensions and values of Slovenian population has been conducted in the past decade. The comparison of Slovenian samples with other (European and non-European) showed some significant differences in the basic personality dimensions. Slovenians are characterized by relatively pronounced introversion (-E), and psychoticism (P). This combination of basic personality dimensions could be at least statistically associated with some other national characteristics (relatively high rates of suicide, depression, alcoholism, traffic accidents, independence seeking and creativity). The research of values yielded a definite hierarchical structure of value universe, which turned out to be relatively stable in different national and cultural contexts. In our studies we also found clear relationships between value orientations, political affiliation and religious adherence. The congruencies as well as differences in our comparative research of personality and value dimensions can be explained in terms of our basic model of national and cultural characteristics.

In der letzten Dekade haben wir umfangreiche Forschungen über Persönlichkeitsdimensionen und Werte der slowenischen Population ausgeführt. Die Slowenen zeigten im Vergleich zu anderen (Europäischen und nicht-Europäischen) Stichproben relativ erhöhte Werte in Introversion und Psychotizismus. Diese Kombination der Persönlichkeitsdimensionen kann man wenigstens statistisch mit einigen anderen Nationalcharakteristika in Beziehung stellen wie zum Beispiel mit hohen Ebenen der Suizidalität, Depression, Alkoholismus, Verkehrsunfälle, aber auch Unabhängigkeitsstrebung und Kreativität. Die Forschungen über Wertorientierungen und Wertsysteme haben eine klare und transkulturell stabile hierarchische Struktur der Werte und Wertdimensionen gezeigt. Die Wertorientierungen korrelierten beträchtlich mit politischen und religiösen Orientierungen. Die national- und kulturvergleichende Ergebnisse unserer Persönlichkeits- und Wertforschungen können im Rahmen unseres darliegenden theoretischen Grundmodells sinngemäß interpretiert werden.

Keywords

personality, personality dimensions, national character, values, cross-cultural research

Schlüsselworte

Persönlichkeit, Persönlichkeitsdimensionen, Werte, Nationalcharakter, Kulturvergleichende Forschung

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Introduction: two approaches in empirical research of national/cultural characteristics in psychology

In psychology, the research of national characteristics has never been widely performed; moreover, it has never been enthusiastically accepted. The conceptual and methodological controversies concerning the construal of so-called national or social character brought some discomfort into the readiness for research in this area. Consequently, the research of national characteristics (including personality traits), has not been accordingly included into otherwise extensive cross-cultural research in psychology.

The concept of national character is clearly rooted in the philosophy of romanticism, especially in Herderian notion of "national mind" or "national spirit" (Steinthal, in Musek, 1994) or "national essence" (Volkswesen) (Spektorski, 1932). This notion was purely speculative and could not be empirically tested. It was not resistant to the influence of national prejudices and other cultural biases. Nevertheless, the more recent research of national or cultural character conducted in cultural anthropology and sociology is not very far of it and is hardly more convincing. This research yielded different concepts which have some in common, but weren't equivocally defined, for instance the concept of national character (Mead, 1936), ethnocharacter (Wiesbrock, in Musek, 1994), basic personality (Kardiner, 1939; Linton, 1936), modal personality (Honigman, 1954), communal personality (Kluckhohn, 1949), social personality (Inkeles, 1955), social character (Fromm, 1963; Riesman, 1965). Take for example the definition of basic personality structure by Linton (1936): "Basic personality is a personality structure, which is shared by majority of the social community members and is based on previously shared experiences."

According to this model, we can speak of personality characteristics on three levels: some characteristics are universal, for they can be found overall in the mankind, others are individual, for they are idiosyncratic, and some are in between, so-called basic (or social, or cultural, or national), and they are shared by a majority of respective community members.

There are some serious problems with the model mentioned above. It is leading to psychologically unacceptable notion that each individual personality is constituted by three types of traits: universal, individual and – in between – social or cultural. Take for instance the dimension of introversion – extraversion. We can allocate the people along this dimension in all societies, all cultures and all nationalities. But there are certainly some culturally based shifts related to this dimension (and other dimensions similarly): the members of some cultures or nationalities are in average more introverted and others are in average more extroverted. For example, Italians or Greeks are in average more extraverted than Germans or Danes. Therefore I propose another model of cross-cultural or national personality differences. According to this model, the personality traits are basically the same (conceived in terms of bipolar dimensions) in all societies and this fact represents the

universal level of personality structure. On the other side, we can find some general shifts in the averages of personality dimensions for different national or cultural communities. These intergroup differences represent the group (national, social, cultural) level of personality structure. And finally, we can also find interindividual differences across any personality dimension. This is then the individual level of personality structure. Individual and intergroup differences are mutually interdependent: intergroup differences are simply inferred from individual differences.

Our model has some methodological advantages also. It makes possible to simply infer the values of group on the basis of individual values. Speaking with other words, the comparison of mean values of personality dimensions for different national or cultural or other populations is the rationale for the research of national personality characteristics. Thus, the national averages on personality dimensions simply represent the national character. They can be easily computed, compared and consequently, our model can easily be tested in an empirical manner. Instead of unpromising search for (probably non-existing) specific basic or cultural characteristics we have a simple statistical procedure.

Certainly, our approach is also not problem-free. It requests the establishment of cross-culturally comparable measures of personality traits. I am convinced that this problem could be satisfactorily solved in the future research. In the meantime, some other possibilities are available. For example, we can analyse comparable national samples or we can compare existing national population norms on the same personality tests and questionnaires.

I. National/cultural comparison of basic personality traits

In past decade we carried out several studies aimed to establish a sort of Slovenian personality profile. Thus, in a study, conducted approximately ten years ago, we compared the Slovenian population norms on personality questionnaires with some other comparable national population norms. We will focus mainly on some illustrative results concerning basic dimensions and traits of personality, especially three basic dimensions in Eysenckian terms, extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism (Musek, 1994).

In the next few examples we can see the data for Slovenian normative sample compared with similar, although greater sample of British subjects. As we can see from Figure 1, Slovenian subjects exceed the British primarily on the scores of psychoticism (apart from another very interesting difference on Iye detector scale). Surprisingly enough, Slovenian female subjects have higher scores on psychoticism than British male subjects! These results were further confirmed in another study, in a cross-cultural study comparing seven different national samples of students (Johnson et al., 1989; see Figure 2). Slovenian students obtained the highest scores in the realm of psychoticism dimension.

***** Insert Figure 1 about here *****

***** Insert Figure 2 about here *****

In a more broad scale of personality traits we can draw some comparative conclusions regarding the differences in Slovenian and German national norms in FPI (Freiburgerpersönlichkeitsinventar, Freiburg Personality Inventory) (Musek, 1994). Again, some results are in concordance with previously mentioned, showing relatively high scores for Slovenian in the whole for the traits of dominance and masculinity, with the interesting interaction between nationality and gender (in both traits Slovenian women strongly exceeded German females, while German male subjects exceed Slovenian also in both traits, although not so convincingly). We can also see, that Slovenian subjects obtained higher scores in some traits in the domain of neuroticism, like nervousness and depression. In other studies, the comparative data from American, Italian, Croatian, Serbian and Austrian samples were also gathered and analysed (Musek, 1994).

On the ground of these and other studies we can briefly summarize the distinctive Slovenian personality profile as follows:

Concerning introversion – extroversion dimension, Slovenian subjects are clearly more introverted than subjects from Mediterranean countries, Latin countries, or US subjects. They are roughly on the same position regarding this dimension as Central-, West- and North European subjects. The Slovenian subjects are somewhere in European average or slightly above the average in neuroticism dimension and markedly above the average in psychoticism dimension. Finally, they are definitely above European average in regard of psychoticism.

Certainly, all these findings have some statistical validity, and should be properly understood. National differences could be statistically very significant, but are nevertheless small. The differences are in terms of averages, not in absolute terms. Italians are for instance in average more extraverted than Slovenians, but maybe about 40 percent of Italians are more introverted than average Slovenian!

At least hypothetically, we can relate our findings to some Slovenian demographic characteristics. Let us take for example high rates of suicide, alcoholism and traffic accidents in Slovenia. They could be connected with many factors including personality traits. Combination of high introversion, psychoticism and neuroticism (especially depressiveness) could be conceived as a personality basis of suicidality. As seen before, this combination of personality traits has been well detected in Slovenian samples. Similarly, high scores on psychoticism and introversion could be also related to the creativity (Eysenck, 1995). Introversion and psychoticism could also contribute to the accentuated need for independency and self-domination.

Another interesting aspect of our topic is related to the national stereotypes and autostereotypes. Like any other nation, Slovenian had also developed some autostereotypes. In our own eyes, we often claim, we are rather reserved (introverted), envious, industrious and artistically creative in comparison to others. Especially, we have a pronounced and widely accepted autostereotype, that we are non-aggressive or even too servile. From our findings, we can draw some support to such autostereotypes, with a very clear exception, namely the last one. In the presence of our scores on psychoticism, we are in fact far from the picture of submissive, non-aggressive, servile population. On the other hand, the origin of this autostereotype could be psychologically explained. Slovenians are a small nation, which has been for the major time in the history controlled by more

numerous neighbouring nations. Despite of this, Slovenians have been permanently struggling for the independence. Unsuccessful in these attempts, they could form the self-picture of being the victims of mighty opponents, forcing them into the role of submissiveness. A submissive person would probably not complain if he would be held in a submissive position for this would be in accordance with the very nature of this person. But a dominant person would complain and rebel in this position, and if not successful, he or she would develop a resenting attitude of being an innocent and submissive victim of his aggressive suppressors.

What might be the causes, reasons and explanations for national and cultural differences in personality traits? This is a difficult question, because it is obvious, that there could be many answers, including historical, cultural, geographical and genetic reasons. For our country, possible additional causal factors could be also so-called selective migration, and - assimilation. Our nation has for many centuries been confronted with the assimilative pressures. It could be imaginable, that introverted and dominant (aggressive) persons are more resistant to assimilation processes. In a long run, such persons could slightly outnumber their more extraverted and submissive coevals in the non-assimilated population that remained Slovenian. This possible factor is, of course, a speculation, that cannot be demonstrated, but has nevertheless some plausibility.

II. Comparison of value structure and value orientations

The study of values is very important as a means for better understanding the cross-cultural perspective of human behaviour. As Smith and Bond (1998, pp. 69) said: "The best conceptual frameworks currently available to guide cross-cultural research are those provided by studies of value differences". The conceptualisation of culture, however, includes both cross-cultural differences as well as intercultural universals. It is a general impression that the studies of differences across various cultures prevail in current cross-cultural research. Specifically, this conclusion is valid for the research of values in cross-cultural psychology. A tremendous research in past years has been dedicated to the discovery of intercultural differences in the universe of human values, especially to the establishment of great cross-cultural dimensions such as individualism-collectivism, power distance, masculinity-femininity, and others (Bond, 1988, 1991; Bond, Leung and Schwartz, 1992; Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Fiske, 1991, 1992; Hofstede, 1980, 1983; Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Kagitçibasi, 1970, 1996; Hui and Triandis, 1986; Leung and Bond, 1989; Leung, Bond and Schwartz, 1995; Sagiv and Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz, 1994; Smith and Schwartz, 1997; Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars, 1996, 1997; Smith, Trompenaars and Dugan, 1993, 1995; Triandis, 1990, 1995; Triandis et al., 1972). The role of the values in a given cultural context is important not only for the realm of interpersonal relationships but also for the formation of the self-concept. The difference between individualism and collectivism in cultural orientation corresponds thus to the difference between independent and interdependent self-schema (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, 1994). In this respect, deeply rooted cultural differences could be found in the languages, making the translations in cross-cultural research a very complicated task. For example, one of the Japanese words for self, *jibun*, is translated as "one's share for the shared life space" (Hamaguchi, 1987). Another known examples, characteristic for Japanese society, are *amae*, the Japanese term for a specific form of indulgent dependence (Doi, 1973; Kim et al., 1996; Nakagawa, Lamb and Miyaki, 1992), *ie*, the sense of the

familial loyalty and commitment, and *kaisha*, the Japanese type of business organization (Kashima and Callan, 1994).

Other differences based on different cultural context could also be cited. In a broad cross-cultural study, Sagiv and Schwartz (1995) found numerous values, which were differently connected to the other values as a consequence of different cultural background. Within the sample of 542 Japanese students the authors discovered that the value "true friendship" was included into the security value type, being connected most closely with the values like "sense of belonging" and "health". In other national cultures "true friendship" was typically linked with the values like "mature love", "responsibility", "meaning in life" and thus located within the value type of benevolence. Similarly, the value "forgiveness" was located within the cluster of universalism in Japanese data (associated close to the "equality" and "broadmindedness"), whereas in other countries it was clustered into the value type of benevolence (being closest to the "honesty" and helpfulness").

On the other side, culturally different value systems have much in common. We are, psychologically understandably, much interested in cultural differences, but very probably, common or shared characteristics prevail over cultural differences in the cross-cultural perspective. If the contrary would be true, the efficient communication between different cultures would be impossible.

Our statement claims that the question of the universals in the value systems is related to the hierarchical structure of values. The main categories of values are similar or even the same in different cultures: the higher the generality level of those categories, the higher the intercultural similarity. The differences between cultures exist by majority in the extent of importance that is attributed to the given category in a given culture. Also, there are many culturally based differences in the location of single values within broader categories or types of values.

In our studies we applied our own measuring instrument, namely MVS (Musek Value Scale). It consists of 54 different values. Subjects have to rate the importance of each value on a rating scale (in a continuum 1 – 10, or as a variant 1- 100). The value scale has been used in several studies already for 15 years and has good psychometric characteristics. The value of Cronbach alpha coefficient for the scale is 0.95, the correlations with other value surveys (for example Schwartz Value Survey) are also quite substantial (Musek, 2000). One of the greatest advantages of our scale is the possibility that it can measure the importance not only for single values, but for three higher order categories of values also.

Our different multivariate studies clearly revealed a hierarchical structure of the value universe. From the beginning we hypothesised a structural model of values, and our expectations have been confirmed. Figure 3 shows the hypothetical model, and Figure 4 is showing the results of our empirical studies that validated the model. As we can see, the structure of values encompasses four levels, extending from the level of single values (bottom level) consecutively to the highest level of highest order or range categories on the top. Empirical analyses confirmed that at the top level all values could be roughly divided into only two classes being named dionysian and apollonian values. Dionysian and apollonian values then both split into two subclasses (high range categories or value types): hedonistic, potency, moral and fulfilment values. They could be further divided into middle range categories of values (sensual, health, security, status, patriotic, legal,

traditional, social, societal, cognitive, cultural, self-actualising, aesthetic, spiritual/religious). Finally, the middle range categories split into single values.

***** Insert Figure 3 about here *****

***** Insert Figure 4 about here *****

Our studies also confirmed a developmental hypothesis that we change our value orientations during our life span (Musek, 1987, 1993a, 1993b, 2000). Thus, we added a very important developmental aspect to our basic hierarchical model of values. A developmental hierarchy of values has been joined to the basic structural hierarchy. The investigations being conducted so far showed that in the span of our life (from adolescence to the old age) we shift our focus in a relative manner from dionysian to apollonian values, more precisely from hedonistic to potency, then moral and finally fulfilment values.

In our further studies we compared the value systems or value orientations between Slovenian subjects and two sample of subjects from other national and cultural background, one very close to Slovenian, namely Austrian, and one from a fairly distant culture, namely Japanese (Musek, 2000; Musek, Pergar Kuscer & Bekes, 2001). Thus, we can at least roughly compare the value systems of Austrian, Japanese and Slovenian subjects in order to ascertain shared characteristics in each value system as well as main differences between them.

The results of the studies confirmed the relevance of the hierarchical model of value structure being proposed elsewhere (Musek, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995). Factor analyses being performed in the present study revealed the meaningfulness of at least three levels contributing to the explanation of the value-structure hierarchy above single-value level: the level of middle-range categories of values, the level of the value-types and level of the macrocategories of values. Thus, the structural hierarchy of values, which has been discovered in our previous research, was clearly confirmed in the case of Austrian as well as in the case of Japanese subjects.

The main goal of the studies has been the comparison of the structural hierarchies of values that have been drawn from three groups of subjects. The results of our studies confirmed the underlying hypothesis that the cross-cultural similarity and stability of value structure increases with the level of the generality of that structure. The higher being the level of generality of value categories, the greater is their similarity and thus the cross-cultural consistency. The results of these studies are therefore in concordance with the theory of the universality of the basic structure of value categories (Musek, 1993a, 1993b; Sagiv and Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987, 1990). However, the discovery that the basic structure of value system is commonly shared by wide range of different nations and cultures is not incompatible to the well-established cross-cultural differences being

found in numerous investigations (Bond, 1988, 1991; Bond, Leung and Schwartz, 1992; Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Fiske, 1991, 1992; Hofstede, 1980 1983; Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Kagitçibasi, 1970; Leung and Bond, 1989; Leung, Bond and Schwartz, 1995; Sagiv and Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz, 1994; Smith and Schwartz, 1997; Smith, Trompenaars and Dugan, 1993; Triandis, 1990, 1995; Triandis et al., 1972). It seems that these differences increase with decreasing level of generality of the value universe. Different cultures differ in conceiving how single values are correlated and grouped into primary categories of values, but converge in conceptualising how these categories could be further associated into higher level dimensions. Searching for the culture-independent dimensions of values we can find them in the highest levels of the hierarchical order of the value universe.

On the other hand, the results of our studies revealed also some other differences between Slovenian, Austrian and Japanese samples. Although the samples did not differ strongly in the basic hierarchical structure of values, they differ in the rated importance of some value dimensions or categories.

We can now briefly summarize the main differences between three national samples (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). As we can see, Slovenian subjects differ from others in higher ratings for moral (especially traditional) values and lower ratings for hedonistic values. Interestingly, Austrian subjects are higher than others in religious values as well as in sensual. On the other hand, Japanese subjects are more stressing cultural and societal values.

***** Insert Figure 5 about here *****

***** Insert Figure 6 about here *****

As expected, the differences between proximal cultures like Austrian and Slovenian are smaller than the differences between distant cultures (Austrian and Slovenian versus Japanese, see Table 1).

***** Insert Table 1 about here *****

We can conclude therefore, that the structure of values is rather uniform and universal, especially at the highest levels of that structure, but, nevertheless the national and cross-cultural differences exist in value rankings, in the rated importance of otherwise universally established common dimensions of values.

Our further research of values reflected also the impact of transitional processes and the shaping of the new socio-political realm in our country in the last decade (Musek, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 2000). In one of our studies we can demonstrate the relative increase of dionysian values in the first years after Slovenia's independence (Musek, 1995). In the second study, we could show a very intimate relationship between values, religiousness and political adherence in our population (Musek, 1998). It is very interesting, indeed, that we obtained very clear relationships. It seems, that in the case of Slovenia, religiousness is an even more crucial factor, which determines the personal political orientation, as elsewhere in the Europe. A vast majority of sympathisers of right political parties is religious, and equivalently the atheists and non-religious persons are almost exclusively concentrated in the left side of Slovenian political space.

There is another interesting aspect of our result also. According to the famous model of Eysenck (1954), the political adherence could be located along two dimensions: radicalism – conservatism, and authoritarianism – democracy. I am convinced, that this differentiation has its substantial counterpart in value orientations. Therefore, we can propose a common model of political orientation on the base of underlying value systems (Figure 7). An interesting result from our studies is the fact, that – at least in Slovenian case, but probably also elsewhere – undecided, undeclared (and maybe also central) political position coincides with fulfilment value orientation. Is it maybe true that personal orientation toward fulfilment values is not especially compatible with clear political determination?

***** Insert Figure 7 about here *****

Conclusions

On the basis of our initial model, two lines of the research of Slovenian national characteristics have been conducted. First line, concerning the basic personality dimensions, showed a personality profile with comparatively expressed scores on introversion and especially psychoticism. The second, concerning the dimensions of values, clearly established a hierarchical structure of values, which proved itself to be culturally stable but also rendered a useful framework for meaningful interpretation of national and cultural differences. Our studies also revealed some important connections between value orientations in Slovenian population and others psychosocial factors like religious and political adherence and transition processes.

Our results demonstrated the usefulness of our model of testing the cultural or national differences being proposed in the beginning of the article. The very clear underlying assumption of our model claims that cultural or national differences could be reasonably

conceived only against the background of common, widely shared universal features of human nature. Thus we can draw the national and cultural differences from basically shared personality and value dimensions. The only promising way for scientific research in cultural or national perspective is in acknowledgment of common dimensions of human nature. The peoples of different cultures and nationalities have despite undoubted and sometimes huge differences much more in common than not in common. On the basis of this general standpoint we can hope that scientific research could contribute to the better understanding between us and not to the further conflicts.

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EPI values

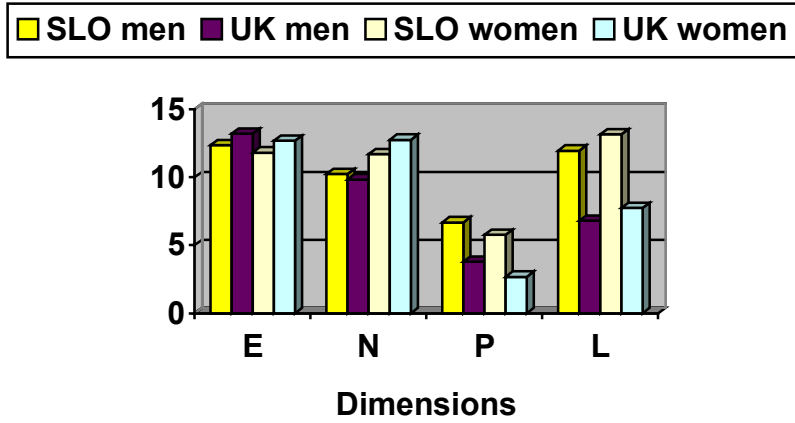


Figure 1. Comparison of Slovenian and United Kingdom population norms for EPI values. Apart from the values for social approval items (L score), the strongest national differences on three basic dimensions of personality are in psychoticism scores (P).

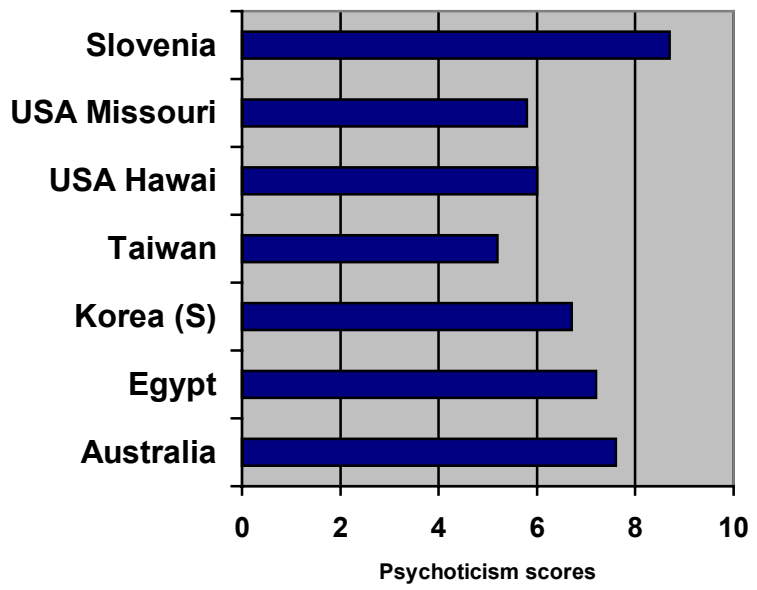


Figure 2. Mean psychoticism scores of seven national samples: comparative data for students from 6 countries (Johnson et al, 1989).

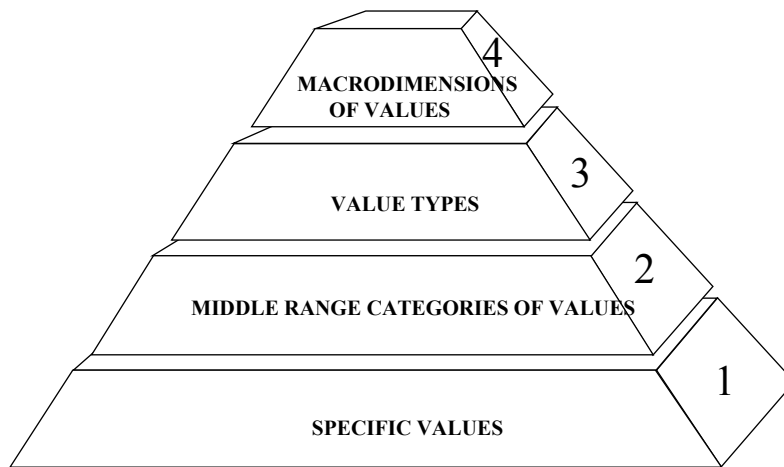


Figure 3. Hierarchical model of values. It includes the level of highest range categories (macrodimensions of values), the level of higher range categories (value types), the level of middle-range value categories and the level of specific values.

<i><u>DIONYSIAN</u></i>	HEDONISTIC	sensual health security	joy, entertainment, sociability, exciting life, comfortable life, sexual satisfaction, good food, free movement health security, rest
	POTENCY	status patriotic legal	power, reputation, celebrity, money, political success, exceeding others, longevity patriotism, national pride order, respect of laws
APOLLONIAN	MORAL	traditional social (familial) democratic (societal)	honesty, benevolence, diligence family happiness, good partnership, love for children, love, hope freedom, equity, national equality, peace, concordance, justice
	FULFILMENT	cognitive cultural aesthetic/natural self-actualising spiritual /religious	truth, wisdom culture, arts, creativity beauty, nature self-actualisation faith in God, religious belief
<u>LEVEL I</u>	<i>LEVEL II</i>	<i>LEVEL III</i>	<i>LEVEL IV</i>

LEVEL I HIGHEST ORDER (RANGE) CATEGORIES (MACROCATEGORIES)
LEVEL II HIGHER ORDER (RANGE) CATEGORIES (VALUE TYPES)
LEVEL III MIDDLE ORDER (RANGE) CATEGORIES
LEVEL IV SINGLE (SPECIFIC) VALUES

Figure 4. Hierarchical categories of values being found in our multivariate studies (see also the text).

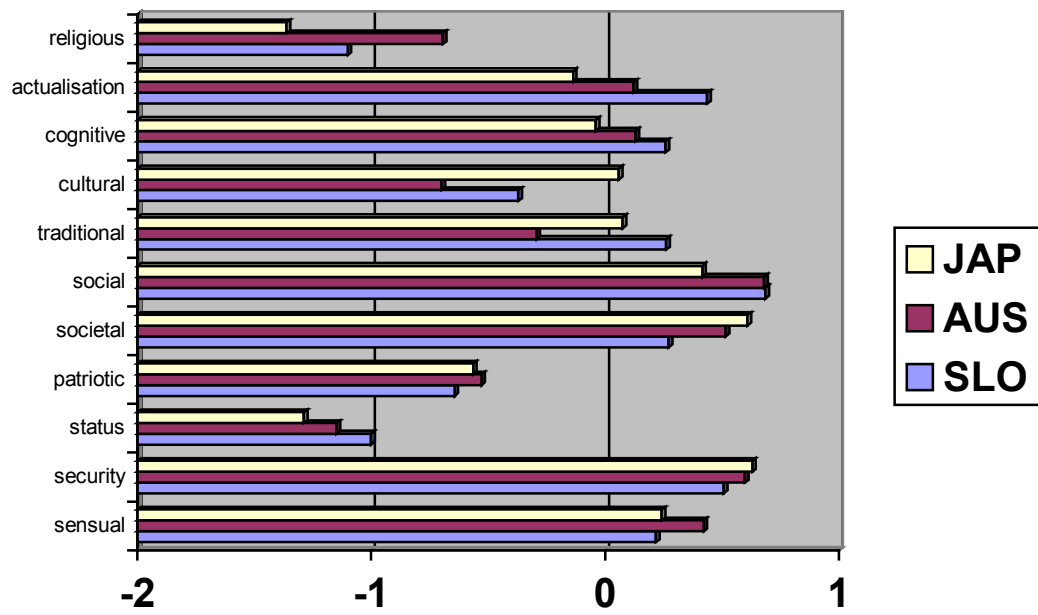


Figure 5. Mean standardised scores of middle-range categories of values for three national samples (Japanese, Austrian and Slovenian). See the text for further explanation.

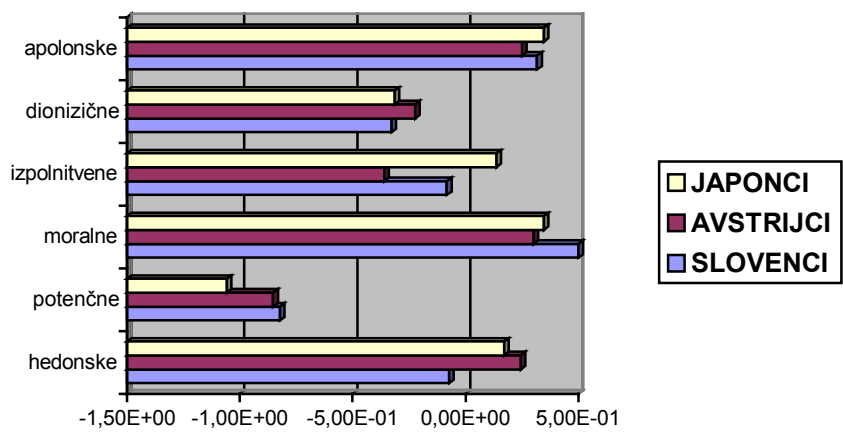


Figure 6. Mean standardised scores of higher and highest range categories of values for three national samples (Japanese, Austrian and Slovenian). See the text for further explanation.

	<i>HEDONISM</i> <i>radicalism</i>	MORALISM <i>conservativism</i>
<i>POTENCY</i> <i>authoritarianism</i>	<i>LEFT</i>	<i>RIGHT</i>
<i>FULFILLMENT</i> <i>democratism</i>	CENTRAL (UNDECLARED, UNDECIDED)	

Figure 7. Proposed typological model of political orientation based on the value system of individual adherents. The left political orientation is connected with hedonistic and potency values, the right with moral and potency values, and the central or undecided with fulfillment values.

Table 1. Correlations between value-rankings for three national samples: Slovenian, Austrian and Japanese.

	SLO	AUS	JAP
SLO	1.00	.85	.76
AUS	.85	1.00	.71
JAP	.76	.71	1.00