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Abstract: Provides information on a study which examined the life aspirations of people in the United States and Romania in relation to their psychological well-being. Method used in the study; Results and discussion.

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ROMANIAN AND AMERICAN LIFE ASPIRATIONS IN RELATION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Researchers have concluded that individuals who perceive extrinsically related goals as relatively more important than intrinsically related aspirations show lower levels of psychological well-being (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1993). We found only partial support for the intrinsic goals hypothesis: In this cross-cultural study, Romanians and Americans both showed positive correlations with psychological well-being when community feeling (intrinsic) was considered central to their lives. However, when financial success (extrinsic) was held to be the most central aspiration, only the American sample showed a negative relationship with psychological well-being. Further analyses revealed the meaning of financial success for both cultures: For Americans, financial success was related to "power" and "security" whereas the same construct more closely related to "self-direction" for the *Romanian* sample."

Recent studies of intrinsic motivation (based on self-determination theory) have taken an important theoretical turn: a focus on what it means to hold a particular aspiration (content defined) higher than all others, and the effect of this "relative concern" on psychological well-being. Kasser and Ryan (1993) have examined what happens to psychological well-being when extrinsically motivated aspirations are held to be more central than intrinsically motivated ones. Specifically, they investigated the relationship between well-being and four major life aspirations: self-acceptance, affiliation, community feeling, and financial success. The first three life aspirations are considered intrinsic, whereas financial success comprises the one extrinsically motivated aspiration. Their study found that holding financial success to be both more important and more likely to be attained was inversely related to well-being. The researchers interpret this relationship to mean that effort spent in the pursuit of financial success may presuppose less attention available for the aspirations of self-acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling. In general, research of this type that examines the contents of goals suggests that goal-related studies benefit from examination of what it is that a person aspires to, rather than simply looking at how one aspires.

However, can we really deduce from studies such as those carried out by Kasser and Ryan (1993) that aspiring for financial success is psychologically unhealthy for all human beings? Do the findings apply to a culture experiencing economic conditions quite different from those in America? And given the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, must we conclude that their new path, capitalism, implicitly sows the seeds for lower levels of well-being? On the other hand, if the financial success aspiration is specific to the United States, might understanding cultural variability help us refine our theories regarding the relationship between values and psychological well-being? A further concern with this type of research is the manner in which psychological well-being is defined and measured. Which aspect of well-being should be targeted, especially when examining cross-cultural renderings of well-being?

The purpose of the present article is to examine Kasser and Ryan's (1993) conclusions and to determine whether we need to clarify their pronouncements about this "dark side of the American dream." We have

chosen to examine this issue by studying a culture which has experienced some of the most devastating effects of communism: Romania. It has been our belief that, given the dire economic crisis that the dictator of Romania forced on the people during the 1980s (an economic state considered to be far more ruthless and consequential than was experienced by any other European nation under Communist rule) we could then speak to a truer "dark side." Thus, Romania was chosen as a comparative research site with the assumption that, if the "dark side of the American dream" holds for Romanians, then significant attention must be given to the general conclusion.

We shall begin by focusing on our first concern with the dark side research, the question of whether a dark side might exist in a transition country such as Romania. We will then turn to our second focus of concern, the problem of understanding and measuring psychological well-being for research of this sort.

ROMANIA'S CRISES OF THE RECENT PAST

Economically, environmentally, socioculturally, and politically, Romania experienced cultural setbacks during its communist years that many believe will not be easily repaired (Nelson, 1996). Few countries have experienced as repressive and disastrous a political regime as did Romania in the 2 decades prior to the revolution of 1989. Nicolae Ceausescu led the country through a time span in which two generations moved from childhood to adulthood and knew no other political system than that furthered by his ruthless regime.

Because of their recent move from a centrally planned toward a markettype economy, most people of Romania are experiencing economic hardships common to a transition of this sort. However, Romanians must be singled out as a people facing dire conditions during this transition due to two overall factors. First, one is hard-pressed to find any other nation (including those of Eastern Europe and the Baltic states) to have experienced a dictator as damaging to an economy as Ceausescu, who ruled from 1967 to 1989. Economically, conditions were particularly harsh in the 1980s when Ceausescu decided to alleviate the country of any foreign debt. To repay loans and compensate for government policy blunders, the Romanians were forced to pay the price in terms of lower wages, drops in nutritional intake, drastic reductions in electrical usage, and more (Nelson, 1996).

Second, Ceausescu's isolationist policy also meant that Romania did not experience the economic advantages of a black market as did such former Communist countries as Hungary and the former Czechoslovakia. In these countries, the black market served as a springboard for trade relationships with other nations, a luxury not afforded the Romanians. Volgyes (1995) attests to the wide variation in economic success between the many countries currently moving from closed, centrally led economies to more open, capitalist ones. Perhaps only Albania, where Hoxha's rule lasted much longer than Ceausescu's, comes close to the isolation and devastating economic effects of Communist rule (Biberaj, 1995). Still, Romania stands apart as having been much more entrenched in a state-controlled economy:

At a time when every other European Communist Party-state adopted some measure of economic reform--ranging from muddled face-saving steps in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic, to farreaching efforts in Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland--Ceausescu's Romania rejected any notion of undoing centralization. (Nelson, 1996, p. 204)

Ceausescu's economic policies clearly left their mark on Romanians' conception of "financial concern." Whereas Romanians spent 4 decades showing little interest in issues of inflation and investments, suddenly these questions have been at the forefront of concerns during the 1990s (Verdery, 1996). As Verdery notes, "It had made little sense to plan their financial futures expansively or seek profitable activities, but now it does" (p. 180). For Romanians, the new open economy meant not only that their financial standing was no longer state secured but also that they quickly became aware of the various means by which money might be made. Pyramid schemes became common topics of discussion in the early 1990s as Romanians were introduced to whole new ways of securing their financial means to live. Their only previous knowledge of securing financial success was either to rely on the state, to engage in illegal "Mafia" type activities (this option was not available to most people), to try one's luck in the lottery, or "weddings" (large sums of money have been a traditional wedding gift to couples from invited guests). However, after 1989, a whole range of financial possibilities, often funded by foreign investment, were introduced to the people. Thus, whereas many former Communist nations have experienced a

gradual concern for private capital, Romanians have been forced to take a hasty interest to counteract their severe economic struggles.

In examining the impact of Communist policies on economic and financial concerns of present-day Romanians, we benefit from the fact that, in transitional states, politics and the economy often seem to be inseparable (Przeworski, 1991). For this reason, much of the writing on the post-Communist states addresses the topic of economic concerns. When we move to a study of the impact of communism on other values and concerns of Romanians, however, we find a paucity of research--particularly in the field of psychology.

ROMANIA AND CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Cross-cultural research has been instrumental in identifying dimensions of cultural variation, particularly with the study of values (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1992). These large-scale studies have helped to better define national cultures, especially on the dimension of individualism-collectivism. This dimension, which has proven to be one of the most interesting for classifying national cultures, has been defined in a number of ways: Triandis (1990) refers to it in terms of group membership, Hofstede used work-related terms, and Schwartz has defined the dimension using orientations toward others and one's world. Though the importance of these studies cannot be understated, they still leave us with questions about the focus of individualism-collectivism as a guide in predicting values and behavior for cultures such as Romania. Further, some of these large-scale studies have not included data on former Communist bloc nations in general, and Romania in particular, most likely due to difficulties in gaining access to subjects.

One exception, however, is a study of national cultures and values based on organizational employees (Smith, Dugan, & Trompenaars, 1996). This study used a multidimensional scaling process to examine results from a large-scale sample, with the intent of finding clearer definitions for the dimensions of individualism-collectivism and power distance. Results suggested that Hofstede's (1980) individualism-collectivism and power distance dimensions might be more clearly defined by variations in group membership, "utilitarian-loyal involvement" and a continuum noting obligations of social relationship, termed "conservatism-egalitarian commitment." Using these redefined dimensions, the results for **Romanian** values showed preferences for utilitarian involvement, suggesting a leaning toward individual rights and responsibilities in a job setting, and a conservative commitment, which was defined in relation to ascription (stability of one's "place" in the world) and particularity (a focus on specific relationships rather than relationships in general). The authors also noted that some items loading on the conservative-egalitarian dimension made up a factor they labeled paternalism, emphasizing formal hierarchies.

Indeed, this pattern of individualistic, particularistic, and ascriptive values was found in eight of the nine East European countries that were part of the study. It is interesting that we might have assumed that these former Communist bloc countries would favor a more collectivist orientation due to their politically and socially imposed systems of the latter part of the century. However, it appears that factors other than Communism (or in spite of it) have served as guiding principles for these nations. Questions remain as to what these "other factors" overriding the Communist ideology and practice might be or have been. At any rate, the individualistic orientation based on national cultures work (Smith et al., 1996) appears to be a consistent finding for the region of Eastern Europe.

Data collected in Romania using the Schwartz Value Survey also showed some interesting individualistic patterns (Frost & Schwartz, 1997). Although the findings for Romania were quite consistent with the other universal values patterns based on Schwartz' (1992) model, it was found that achievement values were more closely related to self-direction than the theory normally predicts. Achievement values, such as successful, capable, and self-respect, were more closely related to self-direction values such as ambitious, choosing one's own goals, and freedom. Thus, perhaps this pattern suggests that success for Romanians has more to do with independent and freely chosen goals than it does for many other cultures.

ROMANIAN AND AMERICAN ASPIRATIONS

Based on our previous discussion of values, what can we predict will be the **Romanian** and American aspiration preferences using the values included in the present study? Kasser and Ryan (1993) chose to study three intrinsic values (self-acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling) and one extrinsic value

(financial success). They described self-acceptance as a category which "assesses aspirations for individual psychological growth, self-esteem, and autonomy" (p. 411). This broad category is similar in meaning to other commonly researched values including Schwartz and Bilsky's (1987) self-direction and maturity and Braithwaite and Law's (1985) personal growth and harmony. Affiliation assesses aspirations that reference friends and family. Novocek and Lazarus (1990) use this designation in their measure of individuals' personal commitments, and Wicker, Lambert, Richardson, and Kahler (1984) note the importance of "interpersonal concern" in their extensive list of human motives. Values surveys typically include similar variables such as Braithwaite and Law's satisfying interpersonal relationships and Schwartz and Bilsky's (1987) "family and true friendship." Community feeling aspirations refer to one's relation with the world, values that extend beyond oneself or one's close relationships. Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) find support for a category of values labeled prosocial, and Schwartz (1992, 1994) later broadens that classification to benevolent-universalist aspirations. The latter, benevolent-universalist aspirations, include such single values as meaning in life, forgiving, social justice, world at peace, equality, and spiritual life. Finally, financial success refers to the "aspiration to attain wealth and material success" (Kasser & Ryan). "Getting ahead" (Braithwaite & Law) and "economic status" (Wicker et al.) have been identified as common individual goals. Kasser & Ryan have stated that aspiring for financial success over and above other, more intrinsic aspirations (such as those noted above) may actually hinder well-being due to the primarily extrinsic motivational focus that opposes autonomy and actualization.

Given the meanings of the aspirations under consideration, we now have a foundation with which to make predictions regarding Romanians' value preferences and how these might compare with Americans' aspirations. We believe that present-day Romanians prefer and tend to place much importance on financial success (though they may not believe it a likely attainment). Further, it is conceivable that we would also find Romanians focusing on themselves, as individuals (given the previous individualist-utilitarian designation described above), as opposed to an emphasis on community (again, given the individualist, particularistic finding discussed above). We should also find a strong emphasis on close affiliations (particularistic).

It is interesting that this is likely the same pattern that would be predicted for Americans. With Hofstede (1980) and other studies (Smith et al., 1996; Triandis, 1990; Triandis, Bontempo, & Villareal, 1988) consistently showing the individualism of Americans, we predict a strong emphasis on self-acceptance. Likewise, this emphasis on individualism may also infer a subordination of the goals of one's in-group to one's personal goals (Triandis et al., 1988). Additionally, American subjects have also been found to be more on the "egalitarian" end of a "conservatism-egalitarian" continuum, where conservatism was related to a particularistic preference in terms of interpersonal relationships (Smith et al.). In this study, the American sample tended toward a nonparticularistic preference, valuing ties to people in general, rather than specific interpersonal ties. As for community feeling, if this aspiration is likened to Schwartz's (1992) benevolence-universalist designation (which is opposed to the individualistic types of goals such as achievement and hedonism), then we are likely to find both Romanians and Americans showing low preference for community. In sum, the *Romanian* and American samples should show, based on previous research, strong preferences for self-acceptance and financial success. Weak preferences for community feeling should be expected from both cultures. Finally, because of the previous differences in relation to particularity, we would expect Romanians to show stronger preferences for affiliation when compared to the American sample.

ROMANIA AND THE DARK SIDE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Does the dark side concept apply to those countries experiencing such transitions in their economic lives as Romania is today? We know from previous research that a stable and strong country-level relationship exists between Gross National Product (GNP) and well-being (Diener, 1984). GNP has also been related to individualism (Adelman & Morris, 1967). Indeed, these three factors may have strong bilateral relationships with one another: GNP or affluence may foster individual self-reliance and creativity, which in turn may be necessary aspirations for a culture's collective growth in GNP. However, Kasser and Ryan (1993) suggest that an excessive focus on aspirations of economic or financial success may have detrimental effects on psychological well-being. Could it be that this suggestion, however, only applies to affluent societies? Certainly there is evidence that an "extreme individualism" (which may be associated with excessive interest in financial success) has been linked to variables closely aligned to well-being, including physical and mental illness and emotional stress (Cobb, 1976). Indeed, Inglehart (1990, 1997) has described a trend showing that, after a particular level, further increases in GNP do not have a substantial effect on well-being. Perhaps Romanians represent a culture that has not yet reached the well-

being plateau that Inglehart describes, and a focus on financial success during these transition times may not be deleterious. Indeed, it may be that financial success for Americans suggests more of a materialistic status, whereas for Romanians it points toward security of basic needs to live in an uncertain and challenging world. This argument could further be substantiated by Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs theory, suggesting that Romanians' focus on financial success may be a necessary step in need of attainment prior to emphasizing other self-oriented goals.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND DARK SIDE RESEARCH

A critical question with dark side research, however, is what is meant by "psychological well-being," and how is that concept to be measured? The literature on psychological well-being is extensive, at least in part due to a tendency toward broad, vague definitions and confusion of the term with other concepts (e.g., health, happiness, normality, functional, adaptive, etc.). Because the present study follows in the budding line of research juxtaposing values and well-being, we have chosen to address the well-being concept in a manner that follows the research of Kasser and Ryan (1993).

In previous aspirations and well-being studies, the concept of "self-actualization" has served as the primary understanding of psychological well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996; Ryan et al., 1997). The argument for the use of this particular understanding of well-being was based on the belief that Maslow's (1954) theory of personality most closely matched a broad definition of well-being. Maslow considered the highest level of well-being for individuals to be "self-actualization." As he conceptualized it, self-actualization includes such characteristics as efficient perception of reality, problem-centeredness, autonomy, acceptance of oneself and others, increased spontaneity, increased detachment and desire for privacy, greater freshness of appreciation, improved interpersonal relations, and a more democratic character. Instruments designed to measure the characteristics and capacities specified by Maslow have been constructed and employed as measures of psychological well-being (Jones & Crandall, 1986; Shostrom, 1964).

The use of self-actualization as a primary measure of well-being may be problematic, however, especially as this concept is employed in a cross-cultural study. We argue that, even though Maslow (1954) conceived of self-actualization to include an "other-orientation," self-actualization as a concept still moves from the individual outward. In other words, well-being begins with oneself and then one's orientation flows outward to in-groups and the larger world. In addition to self-actualization, then, we have chosen to include understandings of well-being that embody a more infused understanding of oneself and others.

Adler, for example, believed that an individual's psychological well-being cannot be understood without including one's whole being as part of an in-group, namely the family and one's social world (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). He termed this concept social interest and believed that it was central to understanding psychological well-being. Specifically, Adler viewed psychological well-being as effortful, with individuals striving to live life with concern and interest in and for others, to live with an attitude of social interest or *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* (Ansbacher & Ansbacher). This social feeling, as it is often named, takes on a global attitude in the individual's life, *Lebensform*, which represents the cognitive structure that is given to the value dominating a person's life. Thus, the self cannot be understood apart from its connectedness with the larger, social world.

Another concept receiving attention in the psychological literature is that of "communitarianism," which has come to mean a push toward the "we" rather than the "me"; that is, the concept represents a reaction against a perceived growing individualism--especially in America (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Etzioni, 1993). Communitarians do not suggest a pendulum swing in favor of suppressing individuality or excessively promoting the needs of the community over the individual, rather, their's is a notion that equates the well-being of a people with a commitment to the common good, including both rights and responsibilities. For purposes of examining well-being in the context of aspirations, we have chosen to include both the concept of self-actualization as well as two other understandings of well-being: social interest and communitarianism.

Aware that these conceptions of well-being have arisen from particular psychological theories, we have also chosen to include a well-being construct that allows the subject to determine uniquely their own ideas of the good life (Diener, 1984). It should be acknowledged, however, that one can never escape

defining psychological well-being from some theoretical perspective. Thus, concepts that tap "happiness" (Chekola, 1975) assume that this state of being in the world represents a primary end state, just as understandings of "affect" (Bradburn, 1969) suggest that emotion should ultimately be considered for well-being. With the "satisfaction with life" construct, quality of life is based upon one's own criteria and, thus, is often referred to as the satisfaction of individual desires and goals--regardless of the content of those goals. We have included satisfaction with life as an additional way of understanding well-being, especially due to its extensive history within the psychological well-being literature.

We may now make predictions regarding *Romanian* and American aspirations in general, and the dark side theory, in particular. Our first three hypotheses examine cultural level predictions with regard to aspirations in general:

Hypothesis 1: In general, the American sample will show a higher overall likelihood that they will attain their aspirations than will the *Romanian* sample.

Hypothesis 2: On the importance dimension, the Romanians will show stronger preferences for the aspiration of affiliation than will the Americans.

Hypothesis 3: Though neither the Romanians nor Americans will place high importance on community feeling, the Americans will show stronger preferences for this aspiration than will the Romanians.

In terms of the dark side analysis, we make two additional predictions:

Hypothesis 4: Ranking financial success as the central life aspiration will be negatively correlated with psychological well-being for the American sample.

Hypothesis 5: Ranking financial success as the central life aspiration will be positively correlated with psychological well-being for the *Romanian* sample.

METHOD

SUBJECTS

The 418 subjects (males = 208, females = 210) for this study were college students from Romania and the United States. Data collection took place, first, in Bucharest, Romania. College students at both a large, state-owned university and a large technical university were used for the study. Each of these universities have competitive admissions standards that measure knowledge achieved in each of the major disciplines studied in high school. The age for the 217 *Romanian* respondents (male = 95, female = 122) ranged from 21 to 22 years, which is likely to be the students' 3rd to 4th years in university training. Applied social science (41%) and engineering (34%) majors made up a large percentage of the *Romanian* respondents; law majors (5%) and a host of other majors with less than 2% representation rounded out the sample.

Data was then collected in the United States at a large, public university located in the Southwest. Among the 201 American respondents (males = 115, females = 86), a total of 122 questionnaires were completed by undergraduate students enrolled in a human sexuality course in the Educational Psychology Department of the university. This particular course was selected because its enrollment was likely to include students pursuing a variety of majors and students who were in the midst of their 2nd or 3rd year of study at the university, thus approximating the *Romanian* sample in terms of majors, age, and current level of study. Additionally, a total of 79 questionnaires were completed by students in the College of Engineering, providing a close match to the *Romanian* sample on the basis of college major. The American respondents tended toward more diversity than the *Romanian* sample in terms of college major: engineering = 40%, applied social science = 14%, business = 11%, natural sciences = 9%, and communication studies = 8%, with several other majors showing less than 3% representation.

For the American sample, 3 cases were dropped because subjects failed to complete the full questionnaire. For the *Romanian* sample, all items were translated into *Romanian* language using the method of back-translation (e.g., Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973).

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Measures of Aspirations

Aspirations Index. Kasser and Ryan (1993) constructed 22 items intended to measure subjects' major life aspirations from four main content areas: self-acceptance, affiliation, community feeling, and financial success. Sample items for each content area include, for self-acceptance, "You will be the one in charge of your life"; for affiliation, "You will have good friends that you can count on"; for community feeling, "You will work to make the world a better place"; and for financial success, "You will have a job that pays well." These items were both concrete and rooted in daily life to avoid the abstractness found in many values instruments, including Rokeach's Value Survey (Rokeach, 1973). The aspirations were presented as "future states," and subjects were not allowed to choose their own aspirations, because the latter procedure may be unduly influenced by social desirability and subjects may completely omit some values. Subjects rated the 22 aspiration items on two dimensions: personal importance and the likelihood of attainment in the future. Responses for each dimension relied on a 5-point Likert-type scale where, for the importance dimension, 1 = not at all and 5 = very important, and for the likelihood dimension, 1 = very low and 5 = very high.

Internal consistency was calculated for each of the dimensions (importance and likelihood) as well as for each of the content areas. Reliabilities for the *Romanian* sample were as follows: total importance = .82, self-acceptance = .51, affiliation = .60, community feeling = .73, and financial success = .68. For the American sample, total importance = .85, self-acceptance = .61, affiliation = .70, community feeling = .88, and financial success = .79. On the dimension of likelihood, reliabilities for the *Romanian* sample were as follows: total likelihood = .88, self-acceptance = .62, affiliation = .67, community feeling = .83, and financial success = .72. For the American sample, total likelihood = .87, self-acceptance = .73, affiliation = .71, community feeling = .84, and financial success = .74. Thus, the subscale of self-acceptance showed the least internal consistency, whereas the reliabilities of the rest of the subscales ranged from moderate to good.

Factor analyses were run on each of the dimensions of the Aspirations Index for the two country samples, and results supported the four factors the index was designed to measure (Factor 1 = self acceptance; Factor 2 = affiliation; Factor 3 = community feeling; Factor 4 = financial success). Structural equivalence coefficients (Tucker's phi) were computed to examine the psychological equivalence of the scale for the two samples (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). For each of the first three factors, the coefficients of agreement were moderately high (.87, .82, and .85, respectively). For the financial success factor, however, only a .34 correlation coefficient was found. Thus, it appears that the *Romanian* sample may be construing the meaning of financial success somewhat differently than the American sample on the dimension of importance. For the dimension of likelihood, a similar pattern is found: Structural equivalence tests revealed a .91 correlation for the self-acceptance factor, .84 for affiliation, .66 for community feeling, and a .51 for financial success. Here again, the meaning of financial success in terms of likelihood seems to be construed differently between the two samples. Further, for the likelihood dimension, it appears that there is also some question regarding the meaning of community feeling as it is construed for the two country samples.

Schwartz Value Survey. As a secondary measure of life aspirations and values, the Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995) was used, particularly because of its success in more than 40 different countries. With this measure, values are defined as "desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives" (pp. 93-94).

This survey is an extension of the work begun by Rokeach (1973), with the addition of several more values to the original scale so that the Schwartz Survey contains 56 core values which subjects rate on a Likert-type scale from -1 to 7. This particular scale allows respondents to identify "negative values" they may want to reject completely as a guiding principle in their lives. Further, a rating procedure is used rather than ranking, so that a longer list of values is manageable for subjects. Though rating raises a problem of scale use by respondents, an anchoring procedure was employed that asked subjects to first look over the list of 56 values and find the one value they most reject (and assign it a score of -1) as well as the one value they feel is most important (and assign it a score of 7). Subjects then return to the beginning of the list and rate all remaining 54 values.

The Schwartz Survey is most commonly used as part of a larger project in which value ratings of particular countries are compared with those of several other countries in a larger database. A smallest-space analysis procedure applied to the data allows values to be assigned to 10 motivationally distinct types. The following is a list of the motivational types (value clusters) and the individual values they include:

Power: social power, authority, wealth, preserving my public image, social recognition;

Achievement: successful, capable, ambitious, influential, intelligent, self-respect;

Hedonism: pleasure, enjoying life;

Stimulation: daring, varied life, exciting life;

Self-Direction: creativity, curious, freedom, choosing own goals, independent;

Universalism: protecting the environment, a world of beauty, unity with nature, broad-minded, social justice, wisdom, equality, a world at peace, inner harmony;

Benevolence: helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal, responsible, true friendship, a spiritual life, mature love, meaning in life;

Tradition: devout, accepting my portion in life, humble, moderate, respect for tradition, detachment;

Conformity: politeness, honoring parents and elders, obedient, self-discipline;

Security: clean, national security, social order, family security, reciprocation of favors, healthy, sense of belonging.

Measures of Well-Being

Self-Actualization Scale (SAS). Jones & Crandall (1986) constructed a widely used short form, the SAS, to measure Maslow's (1954) concept of self-actualization, "considered to be the highest level of well-being for humans" (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, p. 412). Previous factor analyses have found five factors emerging from the 15-item short form: (a) autonomy or self-direction, (b) self-acceptance and self-esteem, (c) acceptance of emotions and freedom of expression of emotions, (d) trust and responsibility in interpersonal relations, and (e) ability to deal with undesirable aspects of life (Jones & Crandall).

Subjects responded to the 15 items using a 4-point Likert-type scale where 1 = disagree and 4 = agree. Internal consistency estimates for this scale were .59 for the American sample and .50 for the *Romanian*. A factor analysis of the data converged on six factors for each sample, however, the coefficients of congruence between the two samples were quite low in general (Tucker's $\phi = .71, .88, .59, .65, .65, .82$). A reduction in the number of factors for this scale did not lead to an increase of the coefficients of congruence.

Social Interest Scale (SIS). To obtain additional readings of psychological well-being, the SIS was employed. This scale measures Adler's notion of the highest level of well-being for mankind. Crandall (1981, 1991) constructed the SIS using 24 pairs of personal trait adjectives. Subjects are asked to select, from the pair of adjectives, the one that is of more value and importance to them. One adjective of the pair is related to social interest and the other is unrelated; nine of the pairs are buffer items. Attempts to control for social desirability were made by asking subjects which of the pair they would rather have as opposed to which trait actually describes them (Crandall, 1981). Sample items include "a. intelligent b. considerate," "a. alert b. cooperative," and "a. capable b. tolerant."

Internal consistency estimates for the SIS were .68 for the *Romanian* sample and .75 for the American. Factor analyses were performed converging on five factors, then structural equivalence tests revealed the following correlation coefficients per factor: .77 (generous), .79 (trustworthy), .29 (cooperative), .81

(forgiving), and .56 (patient/tolerant). Thus, the factors pointing toward cooperation and tolerance, two concepts that have taken on rather confusing meanings during the transition to democracy for East Europeans in general, and Romanians in particular, reveal somewhat dissimilar meanings in our samples on this measure. Overall, the equivalence tests did not show a high agreement in meaning between the two countries for the SIS.

Ethical Orientation Scale (EOS). Formerly known as the Basic Beliefs Inventory (BBI), the EOS was developed to measure "people's relative degrees of communitarian versus individualistic orientation toward social values and social participation" (Tavis, 1990). Although the original instrument included 32 items, only 12 items were used for the present study due to time demands on respondents (the goal was to keep average time for completion of the instrumentation below 1 hour). The 12 items were chosen for their high item-total consistency ratings. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items include "The feeling of being part of a community of people with shared purposes is very important to me" and "I have become who I am largely as a result of my own efforts" (negatively scored).

For the EOS, internal consistency estimates were .65 (*Romanian*) and .75 (American). Factor analyses converging on three factors for both countries revealed a strong similarity of meaning for one of the factors, which we could label "for the common good" (equivalence coefficient of .88). The other two factors referring to "self-responsibility" and "a comfortable life" revealed very low equivalence coefficients of .17 and .37, respectively.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). Although measuring life satisfaction has often been tackled by using single-item scales, many problems have been associated with such methods (Diener, 1984). The SWLS was developed to address the need for a multi-item scale to measure the cognitive-judgmental process used in phenomenologically understanding one's sense of satisfaction with life. Overall, the SWLS purports to measure the respondent's "judgments of satisfaction..., dependent upon a comparison of one's circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard" (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

Internal consistency estimates on the SWLS proved to be .75 for the *Romanian* sample and .85 for the American sample. Factor analyses for both samples showed convergence on one central factor, consistent with previous analyses of this scale (Diener et al., 1985). There was substantial agreement of psychological meaning found between the two samples for this scale (Tucker's $\phi = .997$).

RESULTS

Addressing our first set of hypotheses regarding aspirations in general, Table 1 displays information for the aspiration index, including overall scores on each dimension (importance and likelihood) as well as each subscale (e.g., self-acceptance, affiliation, etc.).

In accordance with our first hypothesis, we found a resounding difference between *Romanian* and American scores on the overall likelihood that one's aspirations will be attained; the difference between the means ($t [398] = 7.77, p < .001$) pervaded each of the other t tests for likelihood of the four aspirations of interest. As for our second hypothesis, the difference between the two countries on the aspiration of affiliation was highly significant ($t [414] = 5.92, p < .001$), with American subjects unexpectedly placing greater importance on this aspiration than did *Romanian* subjects. Aspiring for financial success was found to be significantly more important ($t [413] = 3.54, p < .001$) for the *Romanian* sample than for the American. As indicated in the last section, the structural equivalence of this measure was low, pointing to dissimilarity of meaning of the scale across the two countries; the nature of this difference is explored in the next section. Even so, *Romanian* subjects scored significantly lower on the likelihood dimension of financial success, suggesting that this is a worthy aspiration that may be perceived as somewhat difficult to attain. Addressing our third hypothesis, a significant difference ($t [410] = 7.05, p < .001$) was found between the countries on the likelihood (but not importance) of community feeling, with *Romanian* subjects scoring lower than Americans on this measure.

Overall, American subjects ranked affiliation to be the most important aspiration, followed by self-acceptance, financial success, then community feeling. The same ranking of aspirations held true for the American sample on the measure of likelihood. For the Romanians, self-acceptance was considered most

important, followed by affiliation, then financial success, and lastly community feeling. Likewise, the same ranking of aspirations held for the likelihood dimension for the Romanians. Caution should be used when examining the aspiration of self-acceptance, however, as reliability of measurement for this particular aspiration was not impressive.

Further analyses address our fourth and fifth hypotheses, relating the relative holding of central life aspirations to psychological well-being (i.e., the dark side theory). To measure centrality, we first computed a relative score for each subscale by determining its impact given the total score for a particular dimension (importance or likelihood). The resulting figure was then correlated with the measure of well-being showing the strongest congruence in meaning between the two countries: satisfaction with life. The other three measures of psychological well-being were not used for comparative purposes because structural equivalence tests revealed that different meanings of each scale were discerned by the two country samples.

Table 2 shows the relative centrality of aspirations and their relationship to satisfaction with life for both the American and *Romanian* samples. When importance of community feeling is considered a most central aspiration, positive correlations were found for both countries. However, when financial success is held to be the most central goal, a significant negative relationship is found for the American sample (our fourth hypothesis); no relationship was found for the *Romanian* sample disconfirming our fifth hypothesis. As for the dimension of likelihood, the same pattern for financial success was found: Americans showed a negative relationship with psychological well-being, whereas the *Romanian* sample reveals no such relationship. In addition, for the dimension of likelihood, the American sample revealed a positive relationship between well-being and the chances for attaining goals of self-acceptance. For the *Romanian* samples, expecting to attain goals related to community feeling (likelihood) correlated positively with psychological well-being.

Further tests were run to examine the similarities of the relationships between the two countries regarding relative centrality correlations. This analysis was carried out using Fisher's r for Z transformations, thereby computing a Z test of the differences. Of the correlations presented in Table 2, two pairwise comparisons were found to be significant: self-acceptance (likelihood) and SWLS (1.71, $p < .04$), and financial success (likelihood) and SWLS (-1.92, $p < .03$). All other correlations did not differ significantly.

FINDING PSYCHOLOGICAL MEANING IN THE TWO COUNTRY SAMPLES

The search for similarity in meaning of the constructs measured in this study opens up new questions to tackle. How does the meaning of financial success differ in Romania as compared to the United States? We used the data collected from the extensive Schwartz Value Survey with these same two samples, offering further opportunities for deciphering the meaning of the constructs studied thus far. Because the overall mean for this scale was significantly greater for the *Romanian* sample than for the American sample, a relative mean score for each value was used in all analyses. Hence, the relative mean score was the result of the scale mean per sample less the mean score per value (per sample). Using a relative score in this way resulted in a more conservative method of analysis.

The data from the Schwartz Value Survey was used in three general ways. First, because the aspiration of financial success was found previously to have a statistically different meaning between the two countries under study, correlations were run with the 56 Schwartz values to determine associations with financial success within the two countries. Though several values for both countries were related to financial success, we have listed only the top five correlations for each sample (for both importance and likelihood) as shown in Table 3. It should be noted that there were no significant values correlating negatively with financial success.

Both samples include the value "wealth", however, the American sample shows a much higher correlation than does the *Romanian* sample. The American sample's values also contain an element of "security" ("clean" "healthy"), whereas the *Romanian* sample includes values of "self-direction" ("choosing my own goals," "independent") that the American sample does not.

Second, because structural equivalence tests had shown a discrepancy in the meaning given to "financial success" correlations were run to examine which Schwartz values were related to financial success for

Romanians as differing from the Americans. Rather than use individual values here, however, clusters of values (Schwartz' motivational types) were used to determine the groups of values that might help to discern differences in meaning. These correlations (see Table 4) were further tested for significant difference between the two country samples. Differences were determined, again, by using Fisher's r to transform the correlations to allow for Z tests of the differences. For the importance of financial success, a significant difference was found for values clustering around "power." Though this power category correlated positively with the *Romanian* meaning of the construct ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), the American sample showed a much stronger association ($r = .63$, $p < .01$), and the difference between the two correlations was significant ($z = 3.62$, $p < .001$). There was also a difference for the cluster labeled "security" ($z = 2.33$, $p < .01$) based on the American correlation of $.48$ ($p < .01$) and the *Romanian* correlation of $.28$ ($p < .01$). It should be noted that these findings coincide with the correlations of the individual values shown previously in Table 3. As for the dimension of likelihood, there was one cluster where differences were found: self-direction ($z = 2.18$, $p < .01$). For the correlations making up this difference, it is the *Romanian* sample relying on this cluster to describe financial success (*Romanian*: $r = .39$, $p < .01$; American: $r = .19$, $p < .01$). Thus, based on the findings when value clusters are considered, it appears that the *Romanian* sample uses values related to self-direction to define financial success whereas the American sample uses power.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that a qualification be made to the research on the dark side of the American dream. Perhaps it is only when financial success is construed as a means of power (as opposed to, say, self-direction) that we can say that the dark side truly exists. Romanians, who are obviously experiencing a severe economic and social transition from a totalitarian state to a democratic one, do not appear to experience the same negative relationship between the relative centrality of financial success and well-being. It appears that for Romanians financial success is not construed in the same fashion as it is for Americans, and this difference in meaning seems to change the relationship between the relative centrality of financial success and psychological well-being.

These results raise the question regarding what the specific differences in the meaning of financial success are between Romanians and Americans. Our further investigations of this construct when compared with the Schwartz Value Survey results show that the values composing the value clusters of power and self-direction appear to be where the differences lie. The individual values that make up the values cluster of power are social power, authority, wealth, preserving one's public image, and social recognition. The American sample had a higher and significantly different correlation between financial success and power. With wealth being one of the values in this category and with this individual value's high correlation with financial success (importance dimension) for the American sample, it seems clear that Americans deem financial success as a means to gaining money (a rather extrinsic endeavor). We must also note that the American sample's definition of financial success also seems to incorporate values related to security. This finding rang true in comparisons both of the individual values and the value clusters. Thus, Americans seem to see a clear link between financial success and the security that this success will bring. These values are clearly related more to the individual than other values making up the cluster (national security, family security, etc.), which pertain to larger groups.

For Romanians, in terms of importance, financial success certainly means wealth, but only to an extent (and not the extent that it does for Americans). Just as important are values related to self-direction, particularly "choosing my own goals" and "independent." From these results, it appears that Romanians place vast importance on financial success being a mark of endeavors achieved due to one's own ability, effort, or both. This finding is substantiated by the fact that the only significant difference between the two groups in terms of likelihood was for the value cluster of self-direction (again, with Romanians deeming these self-direction values to be more likely involved where financial success is concerned). This finding also coincides with previous research showing that Romanians uniquely construe achievement values to be related more closely with self-direction than other countries tend to show (Frost & Schwartz, 1997). Thus, for Romanians, financial success is like other types of success: It takes freedom and the ability to pursue one's own method of achievement to lead to success.

Though this study further substantiates previous findings that there is most likely a dark side to the American dream, it appears that this dark side may apply only to affluent countries that have come to construe financial success largely in terms of wealth and that see financial success as providing necessary

security. Romanians do not construe financial success to mean security; indeed, perhaps they have had enough of the type of security they know (i.e., secured job status under communism, national health care, etc.). Our data seem to suggest that financial success means opportunity and possibilities of self-expression. Perhaps the findings here do support a theory like that presented by Inglehart (1997). Though we do not have longitudinal data to track the level of well-being along with the rising GNP in Romania, we suspect that this culture may, in fact, fit Inglehart's description of a country not yet affected by the diminishing returns in well-being along with a rising GNP.

Aside from financial success, we must also consider the results in terms of the literature on intrinsic (e.g., community feeling) versus extrinsic (e.g., financial success) aspirations. Interestingly, when the intrinsic value of community feeling was ranked by *Romanian* and American students as more important than all other aspirations, both samples showed positive relationships with psychological well-being. Even though Americans and Romanians mean-ranked community feeling the least important aspiration, this aspiration was related to higher levels of well-being when relative centrality was considered. Our data suggest further research is warranted to examine this positive correlation between community feeling as a central aspiration and its relation to psychological well-being.

One unexpected finding, that affiliation was a more important and more likely attainable aspiration for the Americans than for the Romanians, demands explanation. The finding might be explained by reference to the "learned distrust of others" brought about by Ceausescu's secret police (Securitate) and program of secret informers (Curry, 1996). Although individuals in Romania and across Eastern Europe eventually managed to band together for several months to fight Communism, this solidarity was not "enough to keep them together once the 'enemy,' Communist rule, was gone" (p. 67). But perhaps our finding has less to do with the demise of affiliation by Romanians than it does with the emphasis placed on affiliation by Americans (who ranked affiliation highest of all). It may be that Americans, though not historically known for being committed to one primary in-group, feel confident about the many in-groups they may have at their disposal. Nevertheless, we are confident that research investigating this particular aspiration must be a multidimensional effort (Triandis, 1995).

Perhaps one of the most consistent findings of this study is the dissatisfaction with which Romanians view their present condition. This conclusion is based on both their low scores on the SWLS and on the low ratings for likelihood that they will attain their aspirations. Similar findings come from a recent Gallup International Association ("Survey Shows," 1997) poll: Of 55 countries surveyed, including those in Eastern Europe, Romanians were the most pessimistic about their future welfare--citing political chaos and bleak prospects for future employment opportunities. This dismal picture makes the *Romanian* emphasis on one's self (indicated by the rank-ordering of aspirations) more understandable: When one does not have confidence in one's economic future or the community at large, a turn inward may be a prevalent reaction.

There are certainly many areas of difference in terms of the rating of values as shown by the results of the comparison of the Schwartz Survey values. In comparing the general value clusters, noteworthy is the extreme difference in value of the cluster labeled universalism. When examining the individual values in which the two countries differed significantly, there are six: protecting the environment, a world of beauty, unity with nature, wisdom, a world at peace, and social justice. Given the environmental disaster that Romanians have experienced in the last half of this century, where industrialization charged forward without regard to any negative effects, the valuing of the environment, nature, and beauty of the world in general seems understandable. As Nelson (1996) has noted, "the Ceausescu regime produced environmental tragedies on a grand scale" (p. 205).

For the difference found in conformity, it appears that the deciding individual value was "obedient," where, surprisingly, Americans rate higher than Romanians. Rokeach (1973) reminded us that individuals often favor values they may not currently live by but for which they aspire. Likewise, this process may also work in the reverse: We reject those guiding principles that we may currently live by but that we would rather discard. Given the extreme paternalism that began with Ceausescu and filtered on down through the family, it appears clear that young members of this post-totalitarian state yearn for opportunities for self-direction and rebel against paths that someone else may have set for them. Indeed, these may be the guiding principles, even if they are not being fully realized today.

A limitation of this study includes the use of only one measure of psychological well-being for the relative centrality comparisons. Though the SWLS was a solid instrument to use, given its strong congruence in meaning between the two cultures, other measures could have (dis)confirmed the dark side hypothesis. It should be noted, however, that the main instrument used in previous dark side studies, the Self-Actualization Scale, not only showed poor reliability with the *Romanian* sample, but the Romanians did not interpret the items of the scale in any similar way to the Americans. Indeed, this scale, as many others at psychologists' disposal, is well-rooted in the Western notion of freedom and breaking away from the barriers placed on the individual by outside forces (i.e., Item 12: "I can express my feelings even when they may result in undesirable consequences."). Without a lengthy experience with this kind of living and knowing, it is not surprising that there was confusion with regard to the meaning of this scale as well as with the Social Interest Scale and the Ethical Orientation Scale.

Further research into the study of East European nations is needed in psychology. Though much work has been done in the field of economics and political science, studies by psychologists examining the values and aspirations of East Europeans during this transition decade have been sparse. And on a larger scale, the study of the connections between one's values and one's psychological well-being is sufficiently important, complex, and culturally layered as to require the careful and sustained attention of researchers. The present study attests to the importance of future work in the area, and it confirms the importance of considering the contents of individual aspirations as well as the processes of goal attainment.

TABLE 1 Aspiration Index: Comparing Means by Country

Legend for Chart:

- A - Scale
- B - United States M
- C - United States SD
- D - United States n
- E - Romania M
- F - Romania SD
- G - Romania n
- H - t

A	B	C	D	H
	E	F	G	
Overall importance	4.08	.50	199	
	4.02	.52	210	1.24
Overall likelihood	3.96	.54	197	
	3.50	.64	203	7.77 [***]
Subscales				
Self-acceptance				
Importance	4.58	.54	200	
	4.50	.57	215	1.32
Likelihood	4.24	.67	199	
	3.95	.70	211	4.34 [***]
Affiliation				
Importance	4.63	.53	201	
	4.29	.64	215	5.92 [***]
Likelihood	4.39	.59	199	
	3.81	.74	214	8.86 [***]
Community feeling				

Importance	3.62	.90	201	
	3.54	.80	214	.89
Likelihood	3.58	.81	200	
	2.98	.91	212	7.05 [***]
Financial success				
Importance	3.67	.89	200	
	3.96	.79	215	-3.54 [***]
Likelihood	3.72	.81	200	
	3.50	.81	214	2.64 [**]

p < .05. [**] p < .01. [***] p < .001.

TABLE 2 Pearson Correlation Matrix for Relative Centrality of Aspirations

Legend for Chart:

B - SWLS American Sample
C - SWLS **Romanian** Sample

A	B	C
Importance of aspiration		
Self-acceptance	.04	.07
Affiliation	.05	-.09
Community feeling	.16 [*]	.19 [**]
Financial success	-.17 [**]	-.12
Likelihood of aspiration		
Self-acceptance	.19 [**]	.02
Affiliation	.04	-.10
Community feeling	.05	.10
Financial success	-.22 [**]	-.03

NOTE: SWLS = Satisfaction With Life Scale.

[*] p < .05. [**] p < .01.

TABLE 3 The 5 Highest Positive Correlations With Financial Success for the Romanian and American Samples

Romanian

Importance

Choosing my own goals	.47 [**]
Independent	.44 [**]
Wealth	.41 [**]
Preserving my public image	.40 [**]
Reciprocation of favors	.38 [**]

Likelihood

Capable	.43 [**]
Preserving my public image	.41 [**]
Independent	.40 [**]
Choosing own goals	.36 [**]
Pleasure	.36 [**]

American

Importance

Wealth	.50 [**]
Successful	.48 [**]
Clean	.45 [**]
Healthy	.39 [**]
Ambitious	.37 [**]

Likelihood

Successful	.42 [**]
Wealth	.39 [**]
Authority	.34 [**]
Ambitious	.33 [**]
Clean	.27 [**]

[**] p < .01.

TABLE 4 Results Using Value Clusters (Motivational Types): General Differences and Correlations With Financial Success Between American (n = 195) and Romanian (n = 207) Samples
Legend for Chart:

A - Value Clusters

B - t

C - Mean Cluster Ratings American

D - Mean Cluster Ratings **Romanian**

E - Correlations Financial Success (Importance) American

F - Correlations Financial Success (Importance) **Romanian**

G - Correlations Financial Success (Likelihood) American

H - Correlations Financial Success (Likelihood) **Romanian**

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
Power	4.46 [***]	2.29	2.8
.63 [**]	.36 [**]	.46 [**]	.43 [**]
Achievement	0.62	3.97	3.92 [a]
.46 [**]	.34 [**]	.41 [**]	.43 [**]
Hedonism	3.88 [***]	3.75	3.29
.44 [**]	.38 [**]	.28 [**]	.36 [**]
Stimulation	0.15	3.18	3.16 [a]
.32 [**]	.26 [**]	.26 [**]	.24 [**]
Self-direction	3.71 [***]	3.77	4.08
.32 [**]	.27 [**]	.19 [*]	.39 [**]
Universalism	5.35 [***]	3.31	3.77
.13	.13	.12	.19 [**]
Benevolence	1.09	3.86	3.95
.18 [**]	.11	.23 [**]	.22 [**]
Tradition	3.92 [***]	2.51	2.14
.16 [*]	.02	.14	.08
Conformity	2.35 [*]	3.52	3.3
.25 [**]	.11	.26 [**]	.17

Security	1.92	3.5	3.67
	.48[**]	.34[**]	.31[**]

[a.] n = 206.

[*] p < .05. [**] p < .01. [***] p < .001.

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