



**PhD Program in  
Political Science**

**Ph.D. THESIS**

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**Family Therapy in Organizations**

**Family Counseling for Family-Owned Businesses**

Abstract

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**Institute for Political Science**

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# 1. Research objectives and questions

## 1.1. The research problem

By the second half of the 20th century and the first years of the new millennium, the formation of states based on the rule of law has become a development model valid for the entire world. The model of knowledge-based economy had been developed as one that can guarantee the consistent and long-term sustainability of the norms of the rule of law on the territory of the economic cooperation among human beings. The thesis is concerned with the general research problem regarding the place of the family inside the model of knowledge-based economy. Because family is one of the most important basic institutions that links the individual with the community and with the institutions of the community by – among others – mediating political, production and consumption culture between the two levels. Henceforth, the question is how family can fit in into the knowledge-based economy with its role.

The thesis focuses only on a smaller slice of this comprehensive problem, namely on the situation when family has an own company and family members work to run the business together. The family standing between the individual and the community, its family effect, the application of the achievement of family therapy in political philosophy, sociology or organizational consulting is rather a less researched territory. There is no unified, tested, widely accepted and applied model in social sciences that can either describe the structure of the relationship among the parts of the individual-family-community triad or introduce their dynamics (Adams - Markus 2004, Fiske et al. 1998, Strike 2012). Based on these, the thesis aims to inspect whether the bi-directional effect of the family impacting both the individual and the community can be grasped by the theory of family therapy and can be handled by family therapy interventions.

## 1.2. Theoretical grounding of the research

Connecting to the above mentioned points, first specific goal of the thesis is to point at the interconnection of the individual and entrepreneurial level, of the family and company level and of the social level conveying broader framework for the application of the family therapy. That is to explore the relationship between the individual micro-level on one hand, and the institutions of the societal macro-level, on the other hand, by combining the results of research conducted in social sciences on human values and family therapy.

Second specific goal of the thesis is to inspect the possibility of application of family therapy in an organization, or – being more focused – rather in family-owned businesses. Third

specific goal is to outline a counseling framework and a specific counseling method for family businesses based on family therapy in accordance with the possibilities.

In order to realize these goals, the thesis focuses on the triadic theoretical intersection of the disciplines of family therapy, organizational behavior and family business studies, and political science, alternating its focal point firstly between these disciplines and later between their common intersections

Regarding the family therapy theory, the work is based on the family therapy school based on system theory, or being more precise, on the so called experiential or transformational systemic therapy developed by Virginia Satir and her colleagues (Satir et al. 2006) and the structural school of Salvador Minuchin (Minuchin 2006). Inside the literature of family business studies, the thesis accepts the axiomatic view that handles the family-company duplex in a unified way and considers them as two separate systems that complement each other and are also strongly connected to each other (Carlock-Ward 2006, Jaffe et al 2006, Gibb Dyer 2003). Regarding the theoretical grounding from political sciences, the work applies a specific interpretation of the concept of culture from this discipline that acknowledges that culture does not merely mean a rigid set of behavioral patterns and values, norms, attitudes, beliefs needed for the social cognition and for the interactions and communication between human beings. But also accepts that the latter set evolves from the constant, vivid, bidirectional relationship between the individual and community level and by this relationship this set is also the subject of constant change (Inglehart-Norris 2009, Adams - Markus 2004).

### 1.3. Relationship to the results of previous researches

The research matches the results of the above mentioned disciplines at two points.

Firstly, regarding the family-family firm duplex, there has not been any method that could handle both system in a parallel way and roots purely in family therapy (Strike 2012, Sharma 2004). Family therapy concentrates primarily on the family itself and on individuals as family members, it uses the relational dynamics emerging in the family firm as projective surface at most in order to accompany the family dynamics. On the other hand, business consulting for family firms (including family business consulting solutions) offers principally business consulting either for the firm or for the estate planning and interested in rather only those family dynamics that appear in the family business or in the process of estate planning. There exist two characteristic approaches for handling relational processes. On one hand, interventions from business consulting or organizational development and mediational techniques are primarily applied (Strike 2012, Carlock-Ward 2006) that can not operate as efficiently as family therapy interventions since they had not been invented for managing processes of family relationships. One should put a strong emphasis here on the fact that these

techniques are naturally very effective when applying them in their respective frameworks, for instance when there is no need for family therapy, that is for treating deeper relational issues, but rather for mediation, or primarily for organizational development (and in these situation family therapy can not be an adequate solution). On the other hand, there are other sophisticated models that integrate the focal point of family relationships into the primal goals of the whole consulting process and try to handle this by psychotherapeutic and family therapeutic interventions based on systemic approach (Jaffe et al. 2006, Hilburt-Davis – Gibb Dyer 2003, Kadis-McClendon 2006). Yet, in these cases it still remains true that the models can not ensure a clear framework for the common work of the clients and the consultants: the „targeted” problem in a given consulting process is not the relational problem itself, but the unified operation of the family and company system in which family and its business should be consciously separated from each other in certain areas, while at the same time their overlapping operation should be integrated in other well confinable territories.

All in all, it can be stated that if a business consulting model attempts to incorporate family therapy theory, it is realized in the context of a business consulting process. The helping process will automatically be framed on the ground of the context of business consulting, henceforth circle of opportunities and alternatives will be narrowed for the clients. They are banked on the existence and operation of the firm or on the significance of estate-planning – the applied family therapy intervention appears necessarily in these frames. The thesis describes a new family counseling method for family businesses that aims to heal the above deficiency and to fill the gap between family therapy and family business consulting. This method can implement or replace neither of them, it just complements them – it is neither therapy nor business consulting. The method constitutes a helping process by alloying both of them with very concrete, specific aims that originate from the special characteristics of this situation.

The method itself is banked on a double theoretical support of family therapy (Satir et al. 2006, Minuchin 2006, De Jong – Berg 2013) and strategic management theory (Carlock – Ward 2006) and on their specific matching interventions. It aims to handle and harmonize the process of change in both the family system and the company as a system constituted by human beings at the same time. In order to do so, the method works with the common intersection of the two systems where it represents the importance of both family and company interests. The common section is the subsystem where the emerging content, the factual events and happenings are the same (e.g. the elder child graduates, joins to the operative management of the firm and gets a formal job), but their meanings diverge in the two different systems (the previous example means a shift in family life-cycle, while it refers to the outcome of succession and to the direction of the middle-term professional development from the point of view of the

family company). Both interpretations are right, there's a room for both interpretations in the dual-existence of the family and family firm.

Both the family and the firm are separate systems, with separate identity, separate regulations, structures and borders. One should consider neither of them to be either merely part of the other, or an entity strictly separate from the other. Henceforth, two opposite dynamics run through the whole counseling process: the method deals with the disconnection and linking of the family and company system at the same time.

The common section can be started up and lived in personally by the family member to the extent of their own needs through the method detailedly specified in the dissertation. In practice this means that the method:

- firstly, designs healthy, flexible border for the common section – it hindrances either the manipulation of family system in the firm, or the manipulation coming from the firm to the family, in order to make the family a resource for the enterprise.;
- secondly, supports family members to be able to see and live the unity between their own life, the actual family life cycle, the organizational life cycle of the company and the life cycle of the most important product (or product-line);
- thirdly, also supports the whole family in the second, „integrational” part of the counseling process to make conscious, legitim and efficient decisions on issues emerging in the common section of the family and company system (Carlock-Ward 2006):
  - Do the family really want to have an own business? Do they want and are they able to take the responsibility of ownership?
  - Family members should start clarify and record the dual family-business rules regarding 1.) the involvement of family members into the daily work 2.) the involvement to the strategic decision making 3.) the succession 4.) the fair and effective form and structure of ownership. Deciding on these issues both family and business interests should be taken into account with equal weight at the same time.
- fourthly, offers the family the possibility to establish a „Family Council”, a body that represents the common section. Its job is to nurture the constant clarification process and possible amendements of these rules in the future and its mandate relates only and exclusively to the competencies of the common section, specifically to the issues regarding the existence of the business and the regulations of the relationship between family and business.

Beyond these points, a new model is outlined in the dissertation for the description of the relationship of the individual-family-community triad based on the theoretical grounds of value preference research in political science. The aim of the model is to demonstrate that the impact of the original family's dynamics can be seen in the personal value preference of the individual regarding community values. Because family dynamic gives a further layer of meaning to personal values originating both from individual experiences and decisions, and from community norms since this dynamic permeates the usage of these values as members apply them in their transactions.

Despite the fact that the effect of the family – or of the small group carrying out the functions of a family – are significant regarding the life of the individual and although the existence of family effect in personal value preferences had already been shown by statistical methods (Dolan 1995, Jennings-Niemi 1968), the description of the personal, internal dynamics between the perception of community values and the family effects is a hardly researched area. Thus the doctoral research also attempts to contribute to the research in social sciences on personal values and value preferences.

#### 1.4. Research questions

The first question relates to the problem whether it is worth applying family therapy at all in handling the relationship between businesses and the owning families. Family therapy, organizational sciences, business consulting literature and family business studies do not even consider this issue as a question, everyone accepts the correctness of this statement.

Yet, one should be concerned with it because certain part of the consulting literature, specifically the one on the entrepreneurship studies is based on the axiom that the family and the firm is working against each other, thus they should be strictly separated in their operation. This axiom contradicts the theoretical starting point of the dissertation. By formulating this issue as a research question and as a hypothesis, I wanted to inspect again the correctness of this starting point through the analysis of the data collected throughout this research.

Thus the first statement (hypothesis) is put in the following way: **family therapy (the application both of its theory and interventions) is needed in handling problems of family businesses stemming from the families themselves.**

The second research question relates to the practical application of the first question: it deals with whether common dynamics of family and business systems' operation can be grasped and handled by family therapy theory and interventions or not.

Family business consulting and family therapy literature considers this as an axiom that family therapy is designed to be able to treat dynamics of human communities, systems



constituted by humans – as a first remark, one should add this to the formulation of the second hypothesis. Beyond that, considering the first hypothesis as true, all in all one can make a straight summary that family therapy theory and its instruments are capable to handle the common section. The proving process could be ended by this.

However, since a specific counseling method is recorded in the dissertation, the second statement had been tested through the application of the method. The question should be formulated in the following way: how can the dual of family and the firm be handled by the family business counseling method. What is the process of this method? Does really the process take place throughout testing that had been described in the theoretical introduction of the sixth and seventh chapter? Thus the aim of formulating the second hypothesis is to put the designed new family business counseling method to a process-centered test.

The second statement (hypothesis) thus sounds the following way: **common section of the operation of the family and the business can be handled by family therapy (by the application both of its theory and interventions).**

While previous statement concentrates on the process, there was a need to formulate further research question as well that focuses on the outcome of treating family businesses with family business counseling method: considering all of the circumstances of the method, do we really get what we wanted? Since the specific goal of the counseling method is to start up the common section of the family and business systems, or - with other words – it aims at enabling the common section to operate in a functional way (Minuchin 2006), and - being connected to both larger systems – to fulfill the needs of both systems. Thus the outcome-based testing should observe: to what extent can one speak about functional operation of the common section.

The third statement (hypothesis) had been recorded as the following: **the counseling method described in the dissertation is effective** (operationalizing the concept of effectiveness by analysing the extent of functional operation of the common section of the two systems).

Finally, the fourth, last research question relates to the role of the family in the relationship between the individual and the culture of the community. I assumed in the theoretical grounding of the dissertation that the individual value preference originates from three sources: the first, „external“ source refers to the community’s culture, the second, „internal“ is the result of individuals own decisions based on personal experiences independently from – or perhaps even to the contrary to – the culture. The third one is the family effect that was labeled in the dissertation as adding further layers of meaning beyond the original meaning. This further meaning will not change the factual, cognitive content of the

values from the „external“ or „internal“ source, it just complements them: the values are used by the family dynamics to fulfill its functions, thus it colours them up with new submeaning regarding their secondary emotional, perceptual or expectational application in human relations. My second assumption was that this family effect can be grabbed by the given family's characteristics as described by the family therapy theory. My third assumption was that the content of the values from the second source is independent from the family effect as defined in the above, second assumption. According to my fourth assumption, family characteristics both mediate and moderate the living of the values originating from the „external“ and „internal“, that is living our life according to our values.

The 2-4. assumptions delivers the further explanation of the first one. The second assumption itself is not a hypothesis, but a descriptive statement. The third assumption is a statement as well, but not a descriptive one, hence it should be tested.

The possible proving of the assumptions could be a test on a large sample. In order to do so, interview subjects should fill out a survey on basic values, and given dimensions of community culture and family characteristics. Analyzing the datas on cross table could reveal which survey's datas correlate with the family characteristics. With the application of the Herfindahl-index, the assumed direction of their relationship could also be tested.

Furthermore, the relationship between the personal source of the value preference labelled as „internal“ above and the family effect should also be tested. To do this, each dimensions (values) of the above applied survey on community culture should be questioned personally from each subject by asking them to note if their personal opinion differs from the family position or from the position of their cultural environment at the specific dimension (value). A dummy variable could be introduced to signing the presence of the divergence and – assuming that the family effect modifies the personal value – logarithmic regression can be calculated from the datas incorporating the dummy variable into the regression function. The results could then be compared in a cross table with the given category of the family characteristics.

However, more problematic point can be mentioned in connection with this testing process. Firstly, it is both theoretical problem and an issue of research design how one can make clear difference between basic human values and „applied“ values in a specific culture. Secondly, the core of the assumptions is the hypothesized modell on the dynamics and structure of the relationship between the triad of personal values, family effects and community culture. Although this structure and dynamics is based on „common sense“ and logic, it is merely a mental construction. Statistical testing should only be applied if we knew much more about it, that is, if we already had results from explorative and descriptive research on them, which we are lack of. Thirdly, a thorough survey would not merely need for large sample. If the work

starts, the strongest results can only be delivered if the survey is filled out by all family member of the involved families – this would increase the organizational-financial need of the data collection.

Thinking through all of these arguments, instead of testing all of the assumptions, I preferred to step back and to focus the research efforts on the central element of the statements, namely on the relationship between personal values and the family effect.

Thus, the fourth, final statement (hypothesis) goes like this: **the characteristics of the individual's family have an impact on his or her personal value preference.**

## **2. Research method and design**

### **2.1. Multiple-embedded case study research**

The chosen method of testing the research questions (and hypotheses) is the case study research. The content of the dissertation and the nature of my research questions pointed unequivocally at this methodological instrument.

Research questions ask on „why?“ and „how?“. The goal is to observe a counseling method in operation that had not been tested before – there are no datas from previous research, thus historical analysis could not be applied. Furthermore, it is not possible to realize the total control of participants, participants characteristics and the behavior of the researchers. Contextual factors of the counseling process stemming from the family, family firm and their social and natural environment can also not be controlled. Thus experimental design would have not been applied as well. Case study research should be applied exactly under these circumstances (Yin 1991, Gerring 2007, Golnhofer 2001, Szokolszky 2004).

As case study research professionals highlight, lot of misunderstandings emerge in connection with this research method inside the social sciences. According to one of these beliefs, there are hierarchy among the different research methods: case study research is rather useful in generating hypotheses, while one should apply other, more adequate methods for testing those hypotheses and constructing new models and theories (Yin 2009, Gerring 2007). On the contrary, no hierarchy could be built among the methods either based on their origin, their quality or their logic. Furthermore, the case study itself can be both explorative, descriptive and explanative. The next misunderstanding relates to the belief that a research can not draw general conclusions from one case (or small number of cases), henceforth case study research can not contribute authentically to scientific research work (Flyvbjerg 2006, Golnhofer 2001). The truth is that one can draw general conclusions even from one case. In these cases, our hypotheses can be accepted or refused based on logical inference instead of statistical inference.

Certainly, logical inference can only be applied if the entire research, and the phases of data collection and analysis fulfill special, concrete requirements. The third misunderstanding is that case study research is automatically biased by nature: researcher will write the case study in a way that make it lean toward the acceptance of the hypotheses (Yin 2009, Flyvbjerg 2006). Personal biasedness is evidently a characteristic risk of the case study research. But it can be avoided by following well-defined methods and working on it by adequate procedures. Making it clearly visible and understandable for the readers or supervisors how research question connects with the data collection, research protocol, the collected evidences, the previously fixed methods of analysis and the interpretation of the results is the key factor to make a robust and valid case study research. By this, the researcher can also show how the datas can be reproduced by another future research. All in all, it is quiet a misconception that biasedness would belong to the core nature of this methodological art.

The four hypothesis is tested through multiple-embedded case study research. Multiple – since the dynamics of the operation of common section is observed in several cases. Embedded – since inside each case, it inspects the level of individuals both as family members and as colleagues in the firm, the upper systemic level of the family and the company system, and finally the subsystemic level of their common section at the same time. The primal analytical units are the dual of family and their company, and the common section. The research dealt with Hungarian family businesses.

Entrepreneurs pursuing business in the legal form of „Individual entrepreneurship“ (micro entrepreneurs) were not involved into the research. On one hand – as Judit Filep states – it is not worth appraising their rate among Hungarian economic enterprises since there are a lot of not operating individual entrepreneurship established legally only under pressure (Csákné 2013, 24. p.). On the other hand, even at the case of the operating individual entrepreneurs, since other family members are not involved into the business, the family effect as conceptualized by the dissertation can not be observed.

Participation in the data collection, either in the direct testing of the counseling method or in the control group was free of charge for families and their businesses. I followed three basic criterion when chosing from the applicants. The first criteria was that it should be them who applied with an unequivocal and definite intent for the active participation. Secondly, I always observed wether the counseling process was really considered by them as a chance for change and not as a manipulative instrument for strengthening their old way of functioning and attempting to hindrance to start up the common section. The third criteria was that the chosen company should have been the characteristic representative of the group of Hungarian family businesses both regarding their size, their structure and their industry. Family business, as a separate category is not recorded in the surveys of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office.

However, one can apply the data on SME's featuring the population of family firms since vast majority of the SME's can be considered as family-owned business (Málovics – Vajda 2012, 379. p.).

Before the testing phase I decided that if a firm applied for participating in the testing phase under the above circumstances, the testing process would be conducted without any further investigation or consideration. If I had the opportunity to choose from the firms, which one I prefer, then – based on the statistical characteristics of this population (KSH 2011 5., 10., 11. p.) – one third of the firms drawn into the data and case analysis will be medium enterprise and the other two third will be small-sized enterprise, whose preferably have the legal form of limited partnership or limited liability company and who – also preferably – work primarily in service sector, and secondly in the industrial sector.

## 2.2 Relationship of the research questions, data collection and data analysis – steps of hypotheses testing

The data collection had eight sources: (1) the review and processing of family business study and family therapy literature, (2) the interviews conducted with other family therapist on likewise cases, (3) semi-structured interviews recorded with families participating in the direct testing, (4) the Session Rating Scales filled out by family members being involved into the testing, (5) the FACES IV. survey filled out by the families being involved into the testing twice (before and after the testing process), (6) direct observations of researchers both on the testing process, on the families and on each others work, (7) the FACES IV. survey used in the control group of family businesses, and finally (8) a separate family counseling-like semi-structured interview on one's personal value preferences. Considering the second source: other therapists were asked from their cases where the problem brought by the family emerged in the context of family's business as well. These interviews were structured ones, I asked the same questions from all of the therapists and recorded my own answers on the same questions on my experiences before, after and during the particular interview. Considering the fourth source, its a tested and verified battery elaborated by Miller (Miller et al. 2003). Regarding the FACES survey, or in its long form, the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale, both participants from the testing group and the control group filled out its fourth generational version (Olson 2008), but not on the family system as the aim and target of the original test, but rather on the common section of the family and the family-owned firm.

The below table summarizes the steps of the proving of hypotheses formed based on the research questions and the sources of data applied for the verification process.

**1. statement: Family therapy (the application both of its theory and interventions) is needed in handling problems of family businesses stemming from the families themselves.**

- the above main statement can be divided into two further statements:
  - 1. statement = systems of family and its business overlap each other in their operations
  - 2. statement = (if there is a common section with complementing operation, then) there's a need for family therapy applied in family businesses
- 1. statement = systems of family and its business overlap each other in their operations, that is
  - 1.) they are also operating in factually the same areas
  - 2.) they are complementing each other as they carry out their own functions by the support of the operation of the other system.
- Source of proving
  - Review of literature
  - Cases of other therapists
  - Interviews with members of families involved into the testing
  - Direct observations at the client families
  - results of FACES IV. filled out by the client families
  - results of FACES IV. filled out by the families from the control group
- 2. statement = (if there is a common section with complementing operation, then) there's a need for family therapy applied in family businesses
- Source of proving
  - Review of literature
  - Datas collected from the client (Session Rating Scale and closing interview at the end of the testing)
  - Observation of researcher on the usefulness of counseling method

**2. statement: The common section of the operation of the family and the business can be handled by family therapy (by the application both of its theory and interventions).**

- General theoretical proving
  - Should the 1. hypothesis be accepted + family therapy handles systems of human interactions → family therapy and its interventions are adequate for the handling of common section
- Process-based proving → two possible statements should be verified:
  - 1. The process of the Counseling method is really of family therapy
  - 2. The process of the Counseling method as experienced in the testing is the same as described in the dissertation.
- Proving of the 1. statement
  - Review of literature (the description of the change process in the Satir, structuralist and solution-based models)
  - Direct observation at the client families/firms (whether descriptions in the model can also be identified at the cases)
- Proving of the 2. statement
  - From the Counseling method → building a logic model
    - Assumptions: There is a common section, but it can not operate functionally due to its unclear boundaries and rules + rather family system has an impact on business system than on the contrary
    - 1. step = symbiosis of the two systems are particularly (only throughout the sessions) resolved → separation of the two systems
    - 2. step =

- ✓ entrepreneurial system is purified from the family effect
  - ✓ the method handles either the actual questions or the effect generating by the start of the counseling method into the family system
- 3. step = puts them together again → at first it only fits them together
  - 4. step = it strengthens the outlined common system and its operation
  - 5. integration at individual and at systemic level
- Based on the logic model, there are 2 statements to be verified
  - 1.) Assumptions can be held
  - The above described steps, in the above described order take place throughout the testing
- Proving of the 1.) „substatement”
  - Checking if we really encounter only family effect into the firm (and not inversely) + if there's company effect into the family → it merely was family dynamic embodied in a different form
  - Interview with family members also active in the company
  - Direct observations at the client families
  - Interview with other family therapists
- Proving of the 2.) „substatement”
  - Observation of researcher on the sessions
  - The integration phase at the 4-5. sessions: based on the FACES IV. survey
  - Interview with other family therapists
  - Review of literature: whether results of other counseling/consulting models applying family therapy match the theoretical and testing findings of this research

### **3. Statement: the counseling method described in the dissertation is effective**

- Outcome-based verification → it is conducted by two approaches:
  - 1. Checking whether common factors can be observed in the counseling process
  - 2. The method is effective = the functionally operating common section come into being as a separate subsystem
- The proving of the 1. statement
  - List of common factors and identification of their presence in the testing process (reframing, positive affirmation, desensitisation, giving information and practice of skills, relational interpretation, extending the circle of persons therapy process focusing on, intensive practice of coalition building of the therapist, control of behavior, identifying cognitive processes, integrating emotions, acceptance of client's subjective experience)
  - source of proving
    - observation and description of the counseling processes
    - Session rating scales received from the clients after each session
- The proving of the 2. statement
  - source of proving
    - observation and description of the counseling processes
    - FACES IV. survey
    - Common structured follow-up interview with each member active into the business as well (right after filling out FACES IV.)

### **Counterhypotheses**

- Let us assume that the common factors do not emerge → what will be the dynamics of the two systems like?
  - Counterfactual experiments → based on the observation and description of each counseling process

- Let us assume that functionally operating common system can evolve without the intervention (counseling method)
  - Evolution of common section at those companies being involved into the direct testing?
    - contrafactual experiments → based on the observation and description of each counseling process
  - Evolution of common section at those companies that were not involved into the direct testing?
    - FACES IV. survey
  - Is there really any need for this particular counseling method? If not, how can family therapy be useful for them?
    - These questions to asked from both participants of testing and control group
- Let us assume that the evolution of functionally operating common system is only partially caused by the counseling method → there are other factors that had not been taken into account beforehand
  - Participants of testing → analysis of the geographical and industrial background, search for any past organizational developmental project
  - Participants of testing → analysis of the social and cultural background, and search for any possible therapeutic interventions in the family

#### **4. statement: the characteristics of the individual's family have an impact on his or her personal value preference**

- method of proving
  - 1. step: individual interview with the manager/owner of the family business
    - general survey on personal value preferences from TÁRKI → five concrete questions (value dimensions) on political-economic values
    - recording of the answers at each question (value dimension)
    - linking the received answers with the diagnostic method of Satir → linking the answers with the „family rules” (exploring the subjective experience of the interviewee through his/her „internal iceberg”)
  - 2. step: after the interview → structural analysis at each and every value dimensions
    - Can one relate the given value to any individual-subsystemic-systemic function?
    - How does the family structure support the realization of the given value?

### 2.3. Description of the research

The data collection was thus supported beyond the review of literature by three large sources: cases of other family therapists, separate cases where the entire process had been tested by the participants and data collected from the cases of the control group.

As far as the cases of other family therapists concerned, I sent out a letter on the main mail list of the Hungarian Association of Family Therapy. Two therapists wrote me back, Dr. Bojti István MD, psychotherapist, family therapist and Dr. Komlósi Piroska, psychologist, family therapist, professor at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, at the University of Reformed Church in Hungary. I conducted a structured interview with both of them, they talked about one of their characteristic matching cases.



Considering the direct testing, preparation and organization of the testing itself delivered a lot of valuable information and instructive experience. Although I started to seek for participant in January 2014, til the beginning of June 2014, that is the end of data collection only three families and their businesses decided on initiating the conseling method. Finally two processes started and I followed one case until the formal end, the follow-up meeting.

Regarding the control group, six families and their companies participated in this area of data collection. The structured interviews and survies were recorded between April and October 2014.

### **3. The results of the thesis**

#### **3.1. Hypothesis testing based on the collected datas**

##### ***1. hypothesis***

The first hypothesis is accepted by the literature of the family business study, the matching part of organizational development and family therapy. They all agree that family therapy is perfectly adequate to inspect and handle the relational patterns of family members in other systems constituted by them – due to the grounds of family therapy in system theory. Henceforth evidences from the literature unambiguously verify the correctness of the first hypothesis.

One should mention two important notes here. Firstly, this statement is only accepted in general form. This means that the agreement is not about the concrete usage of given interventions, nor the application of specific family therapy schools in their wholeness, but they rather accept the rightness of family therapy approach in these situations. This also means that nobody states that family therapy methods could have been applied without any modification or further consideration in the environment of family businesses and also nobody has delivered clean-cut evidences so far.

The other point refers to the fact that the statement behind the hypothesis still should be inspected, since another part of the entrepreneurial literature emphasizes the opposition of the family and the firm, and thus also their separation. Because of this I formulated further subhypotheses (see 1. and 2. substatements in the above table). One can clearly see based on the informations gained throughout the data collection that, on one hand, the overlap in the operation of both systems (substitution and complementation of each other) appeared in each and every inspected cases without any exception. On the other hand, these overlaps can positively be treated by family therapy interventions. Both families from the control group and participants from direct testing put an emphasis that they found the idea of this method very

useful. Participants of the testing based on their personal experiences added to this that without this counseling method they had not been able to find out what kind of problems hindrances them and to find solutions for these problems.

All in all, I accepted the first hypothesis.

## ***2. hypothesis***

On one hand, it has already been fixed that family therapy literature consider this as an axiom: family therapy is adequate to handle dynamics of human communities, systems constituted by human beings. Besides, having the first hypothesis accepted, the datas that have been used at the process of its proving regarding the usefulness of family therapy are still valid at the case of the second hypothesis and can also be applied. Putting these two statement together, one can state: family therapy theory and interventions are adequate for treating the common section. The proving would reach an end here.

However, the testing of the second hypothesis is not only about its general validity but also about the process-based testing of the counseling process outlined in the dissertation.

Referring to that, one can state that the process of the counseling is of family therapy by nature. Not only because obviously even the process is brimful of family therapy interventions at its surface because its theoretical and formal framing is based in family therapy. Beyond that I also compared the datas with the steps of change (family therapy process) described by the Satir, structural and solution-focused schools: as a result, I realized that the phases formulated by the theory of the schools appeared in all of the observed cases, again without any exception. On the other hand, I also checked that in the observed cases that process took place that had been described in the 7. chapter of the dissertation. Firstly, it had been shown that the assumptions behind the logic model can be held independently from the particular characteristic of the specific cases. Furthermore, the steps of the logic model behind the counseling method are the following:

1. Counselor joins to the systems – both at individual level and at systemic level
2. Decision on the common work
3. Contracting
4. Separation of the family and company system
5. Decision of the family on the (responsibility of) ownership of the company
6. Living in the common section and making it work – re-integration of the family and company system
7. Follow-up, control of the outcome, closing of the process

I found that the steps of the process followed each other according to the described way with one exception. Here the steps occurred not because I followed a certain protocol, quiet on

the contrary. The first three steps really belong to the basic steps of a helping process, they definitely appear. But from that point on, I followed the change process of the client – without any constraint or prescribed protocol. The process experienced and led by them followed the steps of the logic model – on the whole: I experienced that the integration of the 6. step evolved fully only at the follow-up session, that is at the 7. step – this was the meeting when the individual level and systemic level integration became harmonic with each other.

The counselor, the helping person can only offer the possibility and the frames for the integration. Formal integration might even occur between the two systems, but real integration depends on personal decisions of the individual family members. Integration can take place when it is time for that – one can not be more specific on the certainty of the emergence of integrative processes. Integration definitely happened at the inspected cases – but it could not give any direct orientation when the process in other families would end up.

All in all, the logic model in its wholeness can certainly be generalized – the dynamic described by the model is independent from specific cases. However, it is only valid with this addition: the 6. and 7. step may overlap each other.

Based on the above points I accepted the second hypothesis.

### ***3. hypothesis***

While the second hypothesis targeted the testing of the counseling method based on its process, the third hypothesis inspects its effectiveness by focusing on its outcome.

Firstly, I observed whether those so called „common factors” occurred throughout the process of counseling from which it was shown that always appear when the outcome of the helping session is effective (Sprenkle et al. 1999, Goldenberg-Goldenberg 2004 425. p.). I found that these elements emerged almost without exception in each sessions.

Secondly, I also inspected whether the functionally operating common section really existed or not - since that was one of the most important goals of the procedure. I was not able to draw a clear conclusion on that point. Several occurrences, data, patterns and the results of surveys showed that the common section became more open and more autonomous: its boundaries got on one hand stronger, and more flexible regarding the functionally needed areas on the other hand. However, a certain smaller circle of decisional mechanisms had not been evolved throughout the process of integration that would be needed by the common section in order to fulfill its functions.

Along the counseling process at the case of a medium-sized company operating in the light industry in Fehér County, a significant boundary was reestablished/drawn between the owner-managing director son and the founder-co-owner mother. This process showed itself on the sessions of the integrational part. It was not only me who realized it, but the assistant had

similar experiences whose work was to observe me and the whole process from an outer point of view. Establishing healthy boundaries could be seen from happenings occurred between our sessions: like mother and son could finally reach an agreement on regulations of cash-management, or like they could finally close issues regarding shares of ownership of family members that were open since years or a decade. However, just on the last session, at the middle of the integrational part, both the managing director and his wife, the sales director reported sadly that they had never received a compliment from the founding mother/mother-in-law – it reflects that the detachment from mother took place only partially. This latter observation is a data against the effectiveness of the process. All in all, the hypothesis regarding the operational effectiveness of the common section (see the above table, 3. hypothesis, 2. statement) could be neither accepted, nor rejected.

Thirdly, because of the difficulties of the proving at this hypothesis, I formulated more counter-hypothesis with the aim that the inspection of these counter-statements would deliver further experiences and evidences regarding the effectiveness of the method (see above tables, counter hypotheses). Based on the datas, all counter-hypotheses were rejected, not only regarding the inspected case, but in general as well.

All in all, despite the various direct and indirect evidences I did not accept the third hypothesis based on maximum caution – it is also true that I could not even reject it.

#### ***4. hypothesis***

Honestly speaking, based on the gained experiences in my work as a professional helper I was absolutely sure that the external values would be connected to the family rules just as the fourth hypothesis stated. The acceptance of the hypothesis is certainly not banked on statistical inference since I worked with the data of three interviews, but on logical inference.

Yet, I was interested wether one can identify a pattern regarding the occurence of the family effect. My observations concerning the previous point will be presented in the next subchapter. Besides, the aim of the hypothesis testing was to underline the significance of the application of family therapy in the value research in social sciences.

All in all, the fourth hypothesis was accepted.

### **3.2. Summary of findings and further results**

I accepted the hypothesis concerning the application of family therapy, the hypothesis concerning the focus and process of the counseling method, and the hypothesis concerning the family effect having an impact on how individuals absorp community-level values based on the data analysis. I could neither accept nor reject the third hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of the counseling method.

It became obvious that there's a need for family therapy and the outlined counseling method in the case of family businesses.

A further pattern also emerged that had not been expected before the data collection: it seemed that in all cases being involved into the research (it was obvious at the tested family and their business and at the cases delivered by other family therapists; I was able to collect only indirect evidences at the cases of participants of the control group), business system complemented the family system in a very special way. Transactional patterns leading to tension and quarrel between family members appear in the company and the members play them again and again with the aim of resolving them in the business system. This process is augmented on one hand by the fact that the physical and mental environment in the firm is different than that of the family, thus it is easier for the members to re-play those transactional pattern in a way that lead to new, unexpected solutions. On the other hand, the profit-orientation in the company and the rational cognitive decisional framework formed by core managerial and economical issues also modify the emotional charge of those same family interactions: they might play the same relational process, but they can disregard the emotions or alter them, and these emotions can be projected on and lived in through a very specific managerial problem.

A clear relationship had been unfolded between the individual application of the external, community values and the family effect. This relationship is certainly not built on statistical inference, since I've used the datas of three interviews, but on logical inference. Further patterns regarding the relationship between values and family effect also emerged that had not been expected previously.

Firstly, I found that value dimensions that are different based on their content (for instance the extent of rejection of corruption or significance of the maintenance of equal opportunities for all) can be tightly linked by the family effect: the same family rule can be applied for them. Mentioning these values, the same intrapsychic experience was activated in the given participant. Naturally, decrypting backwards, based on the content of the specific family rules we can elucidate why the given rule can be applied to more than one value dimensions. For instance, the same family rule activated in the case of the managing director husband regarding values of „equal opportunities for all” and „corruption” at company level: „There's a war out there: either I tread on the others or I will be treaded on.” Behind the family rule, his subjective experience was that his mother does not love him enough and he has to fight with his younger sister for the maternal love. What's interesting here is that values banked on different rational, cognitive content can be banked on the same deep longing of the individual, and the matching of personal yearning – external value can characterize the specific family.

The second observation regards the way how the community value structure is absorbed by the individual from his or her parents, how this structure descends as a heritage from one

generations to the other. Thus the internal experience regarding the given value is coloured up by family and community happenings overarching generations. The husband highlighted that uttering the words „There’s no truth!” it sounded for him as if it had been a statement from his grandparents whose large estates were socialized in 1950. He knew that it traumatized the family but he did not suspect that their complaint live so much on the surface in him. The wife mentioned the same („As if I had heard my parents and grandparents.”) when thinking for herself the family rules of „The rules should always be maintained! Shame on you!” and the tragedy came to mind when the grandparents lost their land properties in the 1950s due to socialization. Thus they both had the same, universal yearning for security as a core of their personal subjective experience. They both have it as a family heritage, based on happenings two generations ago.

As a third remark, I’d like to put an emphasis on one of the consequences of the tightly interlocking external value and its intrapsychic representation. Applying again the example of the managing director husband, from the three subquestions belonging to the same value dimension „corruption”, it was only two at which cases the same intrapsychic experience activated. Concealment of personal income and concealment of real company revenues from the tax authority belonged for him to the family rule of „There’s war outside.” and to its respective subjective experience. However, the second question of the corruption part, which was about the concealment of personal income for gaining more benefit and aid from the state activated the internal experience of the family rule „There’s no truth!”. Henceforth certain questions may belong to one value category based on the rational content of the value dimension, but if the subquestions activate different internal experiences inside the individual, the participant in a survey will answer for two different questions – quiet contrary to the original intent of the organizers of the research.

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