Babeș-Bolyai University

Values and Opportunities in the Age of Multiculturalism
The Role of Traditional and 'New Culture', 'New Cultivation' and
'New Media' at the Turn of the Millennium

BAUER Béla, doctorandus

PhD value contribution dissertation
Theses

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Cluj – Budapest, 2018. september

1. Resume

 The starting point of my dissertation is that as a result of social changes and processes, the reception space of receptors, especially students, has changed. The function that mainly libraries have fulfilled for several centuries is now taken by the internet and the use of online spaces by young and less young people. My dissertation presents the relationships of cultural and social capital and its changes and processes in the offline and online spaces. For this, I offer a comprehensive theoretical and historical overview, in which I present the most important Hungarian and international research related to the topic. On the other hand, I use empirical (qualitative and quantitative) research methods to show how cultural consumption and related discourses have transformed, and how culture consumers can be grouped and characterized.

I present, how a 'new culture' emerged and created new social spaces in virtuality, and how it restructures the communicational spaces – in line with the interests of those with social advantage, as well as how cultural transfers can be interpreted through virtual socialization. Using the term 'new cultivation' I describe, how the accumulation of objectified cultural goods becomes counter to the information available on the Internet. It also turns out, that the assumption that online spaces becoming widespread would eliminate social and cultural differences of consumption proved to be an exaggeration.

Keywords: *Internet, social capital, digital inequalities, virtual socialization, attitudes, online–offline*

2. Contents

3. Selection of the dissertations topic

During more than two decades of teaching and researching, I have come to the conclusion that, as a result of social changes and processes, the reception space of receptors, especially students, has changed. What does this mean? While in the beginning of my career traditional reading habits and forms were widespread, library usage was a natural state, by today it has radically transformed. The function that mainly libraries have fulfilled for several centuries is now taken by the internet and the use of online spaces by young and less young people. As a student of mine said, "What's not on the Internet or cannot be found on Google, does not exist!" I got the idea that a 'G-society' has been formed along the lines of the above-defined idea and has become a determinative of our times. This way of thinking and knowledge-acquiring also means that today's society emphasizes partial knowledge rather than comprehensive processes that transform information into knowledge. The inexhaustible thirst for cognition of parts overwrote the possibility to strive for transparency of processes. Thus, in modern social and interpersonal communication, knowledge and systematic knowledge is less and less called for, because this principle can lead to unpleasant social, cultural and economic situations.

My aim is to present in the dissertation the relationships of cultural and social capital and its changes and processes in the offline and online spaces. This is partly done by the reviewing earlier research and theories.

4. The conceptual network of the dissertation

Youth culture, which is linked to young people and appears in the mid-twentieth century - along with responses to technical changes - has become a 'new culture' for the 21st century, which rearranges and reinterprets the traditional forms (Tibori 2000, Bauer–Tibori 2002). It creates new social spaces in virtuality and restructures the communicational spaces even more – in line with the interests of those with social advantages. In the way of access to cultural values and in the evolution of these values, elements of family socialization also appear that are the consequences of the technical shift of the era. These, among other things, include the fact whether the family had a computing device and access to the internet at the turn of the millennium (Nemeskéri 2002b, 44-45, Laki-Szabó A.-Bauer 2001).

1. This phenomenon can be interpreted as *virtual socialization*[1]. However, this process has several outcomes that raise the question of whether cultural knowledge and ways of young people of virtuality can be interpreted along the knowledge that previous generations had.

2. Under *New Cultivation*, I (also) mean the phenomenon in which the accumulation of objectified cultural goods becomes obsolete, and its place and role is replaced by information available on the Internet. These basically define the reception of different 'cultural' experiences and knowledge.

3. *New Culture*: trough the concept of 'new culture' that appeared with the emergence of the World Wide Web, I aim to interpret the phenomenon that modifies the codesystems inherited from parents and grandparents along specific changes in the individual and public social life (ie. the spread of the Internet and the "overthrow" of virtual spaces).

4. Under *new media* I understand, that in contrary to the role of the audience, which was formed in the previous centuries, "cyber space" was developed in which man and machine constantly blended together (Briggs-Burke, 2012, 310). In the interpretation of Sándor Forgó (2017), "the notion of new media means not only the variants of a chronologically (modern, post- and late modern) evolving media environment (offline, online tools and network applications) of an era (modern, post- and late-modern), but the individual and communal possibilities of a

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[1] Prensky, Marc (2001) describes the "carrier" of the phenomenon in two ways: digital natives and digital immigrants. Detailed discussion is made in a later chapter.

user (civil) content organization / creation, in which unique versions of narrative creation appear. "(Forgó 2017, 14-15)

Coleman, an American sociologist, who contributed to the spread of the concept, defined social capital as a resource for action to introduce the social structure into the paradigm of rational decisions.

5. The methodological principles of the dissertation

My dissertation is based on two methodological approaches: on one hand, a comprehensive theoretical and historical part, in which I present the most important Hungarian and international research related to the topic and the results and conclusions thereof.

On the other hand, I use empirical research methodology in the second part of my dissertation. The first research presented - The characteristics of culture consumers in Hungary in 2016 - consists of a quantitative and qualitative part/section/segment/side. In my second research I examined some of the specific aspects of the topic about online. I selected the Hungarian Facebook-pages of Madách Theater, Hungarian National Theater, National Theater of Győr, Móricz Zsigmond Theater of Nyíregyháza, and the Facebook page of Trafó House. I have conducted a content and discourse analysis of these pages through contents representing theaters' and audeiences' communication.

The relationship and communication of the Hungarian theaters and their audiences are extremely diverse, it is not easy to conduct research on all aspects. When processing the results, following the principle of the triangulation method, I approached the question from several directions, helping to increase the reliability, validity and credibility of the results. The notion of triangulation in research methodology got widespread with the emergence of qualitative trends. There are several types of potentially complementary variants known, but in the broader use, the triangulation method (common use of multiple research methods) has spread most widely. "Method-triangulation works as a kind of horizontal repetition, checking whether different data collection procedures result in the same direction" (in Szokolszky 2004).

In the dissertation, I have made five hypotheses.

H1: In the first two decades of the 21st century, the spaces of consumption have transformed, two types of spaces came into existence in parallel, sometimes competing with one another: the online and the offline space. The online and offline space defines the social, economic and cultural character of consumers, while also defining the quality and quantity of consumption.

> Q1: How can this be demonstrated by the use of traditional methods of research, along with the questions of what are the typical factors that determine the extent and appearance of these differences and their spaces of appearance and forms?

H2: I claim that users of both online and offline cultures are more open and receptive to alternative cultural content and forms. Behind this is the common impact of social and cultural capital.

> Q2: What types of cultural spaces have shaped individuals in the consumption of culture during the period of school socialization?

> Q3: Which socialization effect was more decisive for the education for cultural consumption, the impact of family socialization / transfers or the impact of school?

H3: The forms, types and modes of cultural consumption in the 21st century are similarly related to social disparities as in earlier periods. The assumption that the common use of online spaces eliminates social differences in consumption is exaggerated.

> Q4: What are the factors and social processes that affect the equalization of cultural inequalities in the virtual space and what are ones that lead to sharper inequalities?

> Q5: What are the economic, cultural and social factors that put traditional cultural media such as paper-based books, LPs, cassettes, CDs, DVDs into the background, pendrive?

H4: The impact of social transfers which also have dominance in the cultural space can fundamentally change the previous practice of interpreting culture and cultural reception. The more objectified and incorporated capital the releasing medium has, the better it can pass its ideas, approaches and values accumulated from the knowledge coming from transfers.

> Q6: Which are the aspects that might further widen the cultural and value gaps between different social groups and within society?

> Q7: Which transfers are emerging as the ones that create new values while transferring, and which are the ones that are becoming exluded through social processes from the categories defined by the cultural elites as values?

H5: Communication in online spaces changes the process and quality of opinion formation.

> Q8: Which social groups are becoming dominant in this communication space and what kind of opportunities make them decisive?

6. Structure of the dissertation

I have built my doctoral dissertation as follows.

Introductory thoughts - motivations in which I reason my choice of topic.

Research on culture in Hungary – a review of literature, in which I present the most important and inspirational researches of the last two decades, of which I rely on during my dissertation.

Cultural Processes at the Second Millennium, in which I present the process that leads from the hegemony of offline culture to the spread of online culture.

Characteristics of cultuel consumers In Hungary in 2016, an analysis and interpretation of the empirical (qualitative and quantitative) research carried out in Századvég Foundation

The opinion forming role of online space and its place in cultural consumption through opinions on Facebook pages of theatres – the chapter demonstrates and proves through a less widely used method (triangulation) that online and offline spaces are supplementary for certain groups of culture consumers and provide an additional content for those who take part in this group.

In the *Summary of the main theses of the dissertation and verification of the hipotheses; conclusions*, I summarize the most important results of my dissertation and indicate the possible directions of further approach.

7. The most important findings of the empirical research

Results related to culture consumption

In the light of the quantitative and qualitative results of the research carried out in 2016, I conclude that the relationship to culture – not surprisingly – consists of extremely complex factors. These factors have a different weight in different social groups. Based on the results of the research, we can say that social groups that relate to online and offline culture differently have become measurable and analyzable. It has also been proved that among the factors determining cultural openness, the social impact of family socialization, home and the environment is outstanding, in which the conscious use of online and offline space is emphasized.

Based on the consumption patterns of Hungarian society, five clusters can be distinguished: consumers of high culture; consumers of mass culture; stay-at-homes, omnivorous consumers and movie-watchers. An important result of the dissertation is that it can be demonstrated: childhood socialization defines adult cultural habits too. Based on the relationship to culture and culture consumption and attitudes, five groups of clusters were formed: culturally deprived, culturally self-exclusionaries, moneyless consumers, culture consumers and active unconcerned.

According to the qualitative part of my research, associations related to culture can be structured into different discourses, which are also not independent from cultural transfers.

The character of cultivation in the culture consumers group brought very positive associations without exception, a sort of civilian ideal was drawn out of the comments.

Two discourses can be distinguished related to the support of the Hungarian culture beyond the borders: those against had arguments related to welfare chauvinism and the emphasis on the majority state framework, while those for the support emphasized the values of belonging to one nation and communality.

The power of online space in opinion formation

Reactions to textual opinions on theaters often evolve into communication threads, where the theatergoing audience can engage in dialogue with the institution, thus gaining additional information and at the same time converging previously distant positions.

Based on the results of the research, we can conclude that those who are involved in online communication feel that on one hand their opinions are at a level and quality that they can be considered as important to share with others, and on the other hand their opinions create a space that they have not been able to experience in their previous relationships. At the same time, it is striking that the majority of online users do not expect specific feedback on their value judgment. The online interface functions like the *guestbook* of offline spaces. Basically, I found that in the context of a play, parallel opinion are emerging.

8. Summary of the dissertation, results of the hypotheses

The purpose of my doctoral dissertation was to present the connections, changes and processes in offline and online spaces of cultural and social capital. I present the most important results of the dissertation by presenting the results of the hypotheses.

According to my first hypothesis, the first two decades of the 21st century transformed the spaces of consumption. Two types of spaces came into existence parallelly, sometimes competing with each other: the online and the offline space. The online and offline space defined the social, economic and cultural character of culture consumers, while determining the quality and quantity of consumption.

The results of the dissertation basically supported my suggestion. Based on my empirical research from 2016, it can be stated that a cultural space has emerged where higher status, primarily urban, metropolitan (female) culture users have created distinct groups that are capable of sufficiently representing their views in the traditional and virtual spaces. The cumulative advantage of these groups, both in economical status and in education, continued to open the gap of which the literature (Prensky, Bourdieu) presupposed that virtual spaces can narrow. In my second hypothesis, I have

argued that users of online and offline culture are more open and receptive to the alternative cultural content and forms. Behind this lies the common impact of social and cultural capital.

This hypothesis was only partially proved by my own research since the reactions to the concepts were not clear in the different test methods. It seems, at least temporarily, that the qualitative methodological tools are the ones that can more accurately and precisely demonstrate the existence of cultural openness. The reason of this can be found in the inaccurate and underdeveloped use of concepts, thus the precise and understandable wording which is needed for quantitative studies is not yet found. The concepts of new culture and new cultivation could not be interpreted by a huge proportion of the respondents; only a small group, the cluster of omnivores resonated with these terms. My research couldn't fully determine the extent to which they were more open and receptive to alternative content. Focus group conversations, however, suggest that the spread of virtual spaces not necessarily lead to bigger openness to alternative culture. This strengthens my first hypothesis that the spread of the virtual space does not necessarily narrow social and cultural gaps. The appearance, diffusion and dominance of new cultural and receptive forms (new culture, new media, new cultivation) are actually widening the cultural gaps among various strata of the society.

My third hypothesis can be well conncected to these. According to the hypothesis, the forms, shapes and modes of cultural consumption in the 21st century are similarly related to social differences as in earlier periods. The assumption that online spaces becoming widespread would eliminate social and cultural differences of consumption (also) proved to be an exaggeration.

The role of objectified cultural capital (eg. paper-based books, cultural data carriers, LPs, CDs, DVDs) phrased as a value in traditional cultural space has changed. Their presence within families also shows the ability of cultural transfer within the family. This provides an opportunity for objectified cultural capital to accumulate as cultural capitals specific of online spaces, but not yet fully refined. The knowledge gap between generations and the use of information based knowledge also raises a communication problem, since either the knowledge of the baby boom or those belonging to the following one or two generations is based on a built-in, incorporated knowledge, compared to those belonging to the X, Y, Z generations, whose knowledge is "acquired" in virtual space, and which is mostly user-based.

In my fourth hypothesis, I supposed that the effect of social transfers that dominate in cultural space can fundamentally change the practice of cultural understanding and reception. The more objectified and incorporated capital the releasing medium has, the better it can pass its ideas, approaches and values accumulated from the knowledge coming from transfers.

Knowing the qualitative results of my research, we can conclude that most of the respondents consider it important to pass cultural values, and consider family environment its most important element. In some focus groups, cultivation was clearly associated with cultural contents (sometimes explicitly with the concept of culture). Cultivation y in this sense is equal to the traditional high culture that is found in the offline space. The question arises, how to define knowledge and cultivation according to the Zeitgeist, the intellectual standards of the era with the dominance of online spaces. Based on the results of my research, I can conclude that types of knowledge related to new cultivation are not clear even to those who belong to the high culture, while those excluded from cultural benefits are not sensitive either to notice, or to understand this phenomenon. They aim "merely" to be beneficiaries of being part of processes that had not been characteristic of their lives prevoiusly. The phenomenon of Google-society is most likely to cause further losses to those who do not have the knowledge to check the infinite information that is displayed online.

The analysis of discourses on theaters particularly shows that my hypothesis is basically valid. Participants of communication in the online world perceive that on one hand, their opinions are at a level and quality that they are worth sharing with others, and on the other hand, they create a space through their opinions that was not characteristic in their previous relations. At the same time, it is striking that the majority of online users do not expect specific feedback on their value judgments. An exception to this is if the Facebook user is considered to be a primary user in the opinion of users.

All in all, the most important finding of my dissertation is that at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, the current tools of science can not describe precisely the process that can change the concepts and methods of knowledge used over the centuries as a result of the coexistence of traditional and online culture. Perhaps we are at the beginning of a process that is comparable to the debates of the major transformations of the Gutenberg Galaxy and the problems arising from the transformation of cultural life. The phenomenon that is difficult to name today, promotes the acquisition of knowledge that's sources, accuracy and reliability are doubtful. In this sense, we return to the period before the Gutenberg Galaxy appeared, where the reality of the knowledge spreading through the human word was also difficult to check. As a result of the above, I describe this phenomenon that surrounds us, as I have already stated, as a Google-Society where the seemingly inexplicable knowledge comes from uncontrollable buzz of the virtual space.

9. Literature used in theses

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