



**Doctoral School of
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THESIS SYNOPSIS for

JÚLIA SZABÓ

**The Hungarian youth from Transylvania
in the social structure**

titled Ph.D dissertation

Supervisors:

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1. Background and overview

The aim of this dissertation is to determine the place of the Hungarian youth from Transylvania in the social structure, based on youth research from the last fifteen to twenty years. We examine the changes of young people's situation on different levels, like their socio-economic, labour market, and educational situation; as well as the changes in their social status and the factors influencing it. The emphasis in our analysis is on the examination of social differences in cultural consumption of youth.

The relationship between social inequality and patterns of cultural taste and consumption is the subject of a wide sociological debate, two prominent approaches describing social stratification. The first one is based on "classical" theories and states that social differences can be originated from economic factors. These theories separate the social classes to those in the possession of capital and means of production and those who sell their labour for living. This led to the dilemma of social division, namely that the validity of classical classes should be rethought, as – due to the increased geographical mobility and the context of postmodernism coming with the globalization – the earlier explanatory variables cannot properly explain phenomena in today's modern world.

In recent decades a number of theories have emerged, stating that the traditional class-based division of societies (Ferge 1969; Erikson–Goldthorpe–Portocarero 1988; Tóth–Huszár 2016) was replaced by consumption-based division and the social place of individuals is increasingly determined by consumption (Clark–Lipset 1991; Hradil 1995; Pakulski–Waters 1996; Beck 1999; Schulze 2000; Csizs–Kovács–Kristóf 2006), which represents the second approach of describing social stratification.

An important question in segmentation literature is whether it is caused by the "hard" traditional factors (occupation, extending to the narrowly defined occupational class concept, education, and income) or rather the "soft" factors (lifestyle, consumption, gender, age) determine it. In this respect there is no consensus about the variables that can be considered relevant, especially when the focus is on the place of youth in the society. Describing the stratification of youngsters is hard because they are still in "searching phase", e.g. they rarely have an "occupational position". These

people either still live with their parents or the other part of them started their own families, meaning that often there is a huge deviation within these criteria. These differences raise the methodological concern of whether these two classes should appear separate or not. In other words, the question is whether we should consider the young status (occupation) or its “inherited status” into consideration when doing the analysis. In our analysis we consider “students” and “workers” as different categories.

The most common factor for describing stratification is occupation. The traditional approach to analysing social stratification is based on the classification of occupations and the labour market, setting categorical differences within society. These traditional factors cluster the society even after the change of political regime (specifically in Central and Eastern Europe). However, new identifying elements in structure identification begun to appear, like lifestyle and consumption, and these have a major effect on young people’s status.

One of the main questions of our research is whether the traditional paradigms are sufficient to describe the Hungarian youth in Transylvania, or whether we should also include the consumption-based characteristics to better describe the social space. In our analysis we are searching for the approaches that describe more precisely the young people’s social stratification. The other important issue of our research is the identification of the factors by which this stratification among young people can be explained.

We aim to describe the youth segmentation with a multidimensional stratification model by adapting of both the old and new structure-forming factors. Therefore, we analyse today’s youth by harmonizing the dimensions of occupation and financial situation, as well as the elements of leisure and cultural consumptions. Regarding the class and stratification structure of the Hungarians from Romania, comprehensive research is still lacking even after the turn of the millennium: there are a very few numbers of analyses of the stratification of young people, therefore the doctoral thesis seeks to fill this gap.

2. Research questions and methods

The last decade witnessed heated debates regarding structure-analysis and the youngster's place in society. The debates were about two dominant paradigms: that of Bourdieu's class-based approach (Bourdieu 1978, 1984) and Beck's paradigm-changing suggestion stating that there are important structural changes coming with the modernism. There are alternate usages the class structure and the stratificational approaches and researchers try to figure out whether the lifestyle- and milieu-research is a valid alternative for the classical stratification models.

Throughout our analysis we are examining if the "traditional" approach, the vertical division is sufficient, (Bourdieu 1978a, 1978b; Erikson–Goldthorpe–Portocarero 1988; Huszár 2012; Tóth–Huszár 2016), or whether we should include other, more recent factors into our analysis, like free-time or cultural consumption (Csite–Kovács–Kristóf 2006; Kovách–Kuczi–Jókuthy 2006; Savage et al. 2013; Fekete–Prazsák 2014).

In our work we adhere to Róbert Angelusz's metaphor about the "distorted mirrors of visibility" (Angelusz 2000) which plastically draws the attention to the deterioration of the "clear sight" when observing society, the reduced transparency of large social groups, as well as the disappearance of some groups. With the above, we treat social differentiation as a multi-dimensional – multi-component – phenomena, therefore requiring a more careful analysis. It is important to add attributes that can be related to the habits of cultural consumption, of course this addition is to the classical dimensions related to the material and occupational structure and this is especially important for the young generation that we analyse.

Our research questions are rooted in the debates from above and these are:

1. Which approach of stratification theory can most effectively describe the stratification of young people?
2. Which are the factors that can best explain youth stratification?
3. Is there a dominant factor describing young people's social stratification or there are more at the same time?

After the presentation of the socio-demographic characteristics of the Hungarian youth from Transylvania, our analysis is divided into two:

In the first part we examine the social determinants of status, based on MOZAIK 2001 and the Hungarian Youth Research 2016.

We analyse the correlations between young people's social status and their socio-demographic attributes. In order to describe youth stratification, we create a complex indicator - a status index - based on the following dimensions: housing circumstances, financial situation, and leisure consumption. Furthermore, using regression analysis we examined how explanatory power of the following independent variables (1) gender and age, (2) education, (3) rural or urban, (4) father education and occupation, (5) occupation status of the subject (student, worker, or none).

Considering the horizontal differences, namely the differences in consumption (Fábián–Róbert–Szívós 1998) means that the usage of free-time also determines the place of young people in society. Our questions in the chapter entitled “The social determinants of status” are the following:

- (1) How the different socio-demographic attributes (like gender, age, type of location) explain status?
- (2) What effect does young people's provenance (the father's education and occupation) have on their social status?

In the second part we focus on the cultural segmentation of young people. This chapter draws the ideas of the second one even further: our key question is the extent of the correlation between the vertical and horizontal variables. Earlier stratification analyses (Fábián–Kolosi–Róbert 2000; Savage et al. 2013) proved that social inequalities are greatly determined by the social differences of a cultural nature. That is why we find the analysis of cultural consumption important.

Throughout this second part we used the data of GeneZYs 2015, because it provided the most detailed examination of young people's leisure consumption. We have determined the typical cultural consumption segments with cluster analysis, and analysing these groups. Our questions related to the chapter “Cultural segmentation among Transylvanian Hungarian youth” are analysed with logistic- and multinomial regression models. The research questions are:

- (1) Which are the attributes of cultural consumption based on which the Transylvanian Hungarian young people differ?
- (2) What factors affect their habits of cultural consumption and their belonging to different groups?
- (3) In which extent is it true among Transylvanian Hungarian young people that the occurrence of “cultural omnivore” breaks up class-based discrimination regarding cultural consumption?

3. Presentation of data

After the turn of the millennium there have been many sociological surveys of youth in Transylvania. One of these large-scale surveys was the MOZAIK 2001. Another milestone of the youth sociology research was the National Minority Institute's research from Cluj-Napoca in 2008. The following took place in 2013 thanks to the Kós Károly Academy Foundation and the Centre for European Studies. The GeneZYs took place in 2015 in the cooperation of MCC, MTA TK Minority Research Institute and the Foundation for Informational Society. The last one, the Hungarian Youth Research 2016 took place for the request of the "New Generation Center".

The surveys MOZAIK 2001, the GeneZYs 2015 and the Hungarian Youth Research 2016 are representative surveys (regions, age, gender and type of location) regarding the youth aged of 15–29 from the Hungarian regions of the Carpathian Basin (Transylvania, the Highlands, Vojvodina and Transcarpathia). We are using these three large-scale youth researches' data to answer the questions of our analysis.

MOZAIK 2001 is the continuation of an earlier research from Hungary, this time examining the transborder Hungarian youth with survey methods. Sample size: 1200 in Transylvania, 750 in "Székely Land", which makes 1950 young people in total.

GeneZYs 2015 was realized with the interview of 2700 transborder Hungarian (1000 from Transylvania, 700 from the Highlands, 500 from Vojvodina and 500 from Transcarpathia).

The Hungarian Youth Research 2016 is a sequel of earlier large-scale sociological surveys (Youth 2000–2008; MOZAIK 2001–2011, Hungarian Youth 2012). Sample size: 2000 young Hungarian people (1000 from Transylvania and Partium and 1000 from "Székely Land").

All three surveys used stratified sampling combined with quota sampling. These surveys were not specifically made with the aim of structure research, which presented difficulty throughout the analysis, as we had to deal with some methodological constraints. Another difficulty was that during the design of the 2016 survey, the research was based on Hungarian questionnaire, therefore the chance of comparing it to MOZAIK 2001 has decreased. We are describing the changes in young people's social construction (education, occupation, financial status) and the determinants of their social status based on MOZAIK 2001 and The Hungarian Youth Research 2016.

For the description of the cultural segmentation of youth we have used the data of GeneZYs 2015, as this was the one which provided the most detailed analysis of young people's leisure consumption.

4. Conclusions of the thesis

4.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of Hungarian youth: 2001-2016

The first important difference between 2001 and 2016 regarding the socio-demographic attributes of the Hungarian youth from Transylvanian is that the demographic decline affects the Hungarian population, also the young. Looking at the education of youngsters, we can witness a positive tendency as the presence in higher education is increased, and more of them have higher levels of education than their parents. There are significant differences between the education of men and women on every level of education. The percentage of education in women has raised, especially in higher education, while the number of men with vocational qualifications is higher than that of women. There is also significant correlation between the father's and subject's education level in both years. The location type also influences education level raising the issue of social inequality, but these differences seem to alleviate through the years.

Examining the financial situation, we state that the relative wealth of youngsters is significantly improved, but this increase is due to a general increase, rather than due to the decrease in social inequalities. There is also a significant positive correlation between the education and occupation of the father and young people's perception of welfare. In the analysis of the occupational structure, the changes are similar to the full population: the unemployment rate has decreased, there are fewer unskilled/physical workers among the young, while the rate of entrepreneurs and leaders is increased. The education and occupation of the father and "own occupation" are also significantly correlated, which anticipates a vertical differentiation. The higher the father's education, the more possible that the interviewed young adult is a leader or has "intellectual profession". Reversely, the children of parents with primary or vocational education tend to be workmen.

4.2. Social determinants of status

For the description of young people's placement in the social hierarchy, we used the MOZAIK 2001 and the Hungarian Youth Research 2016. To describe the

stratification of youth, we created a complex indicator – a status index – from the following dimensions: (1) housing conditions, (2) financial and economic situation and (3) leisure consumption. The income – as a variable – was excluded from the analysis, as only the half of the subjects worked. Our research questions:

- (1) How the different socio-demographic attributes (like gender, age, type of location) explain status?
- (2) What is the effect does young people’s provenance (the father’s education and occupation) on their social status?

4.2.1 Results of the regression analysis of the social class

Based on regression models, education, especially higher education is the most important factor in the explanation of social class in both cases. Youth’s social status is affected by their father’s occupation, but is only significant for leaders. Significant correlations between the type of location and status could only be found in the 2001 data. The age and gender variables are also correlated with the “status”, though slightly less than the factors mentioned before. This means that the younger and female subjects have a more stable financial and leisure-time consumption situation, presumably they still live within their parents.

Examining the social determinants of status, we conclude that father’s occupation is not always relevant, whilst education – cultural capital – remains the most important factor. Thus, the level of education is one of the most decisive factors determining status. This is in line with Bourdieu and Zinnecker’s theory that concludes that the more favourable the family background, the better the social situation. We also conclude that – in general – youth segmentation is based on the parents’ social class (Zinnecker 2006), but this only holds if we narrow down the meaning of “class” to the “occupational class structure”.

In what followed, we analysed the effect of “parent’s occupation” since the majority of youngsters are still inactive, but our analysis shows that this factor is not relevant: this occupational aggregation cannot reveal class-based characteristics, holds specifically for youngsters (Crompton–Scott 2014). We also conclude that the traditional approaches can hardly be applied to this segment of society.

4.3. Cultural stratification

Examining the social differences in cultural consumption, we formulated the following questions: (1) what are the cultural consumption attributes that differentiate youngsters; what are the consumption classes that can be identified? (2) what are the factors governing cultural consumption (3) what is the validity of the claim that “*the emergence of “cultural omnivores” dissolves traditional class structure*”.

We first performed cluster analysis – using hierarchical clustering – where we identified four main groups: the “(highbrow)culture-orientated”, the “omnivores”, the “screenagers”, and the “passives”. In trying to establish the validity of our relation between cultural consumption and stratification, we first used a logistic regression model and identified the factors behind clusters. The same analysis was repeated using multinomial regression, presented next.

4.3.1. Factors influencing cultural segmentation

Based on the groups of the cluster analysis, a new consumer group emerges: the omnivores. Socio-demographically, this group strongly differs from the other three. Omnivores mostly come from urban environment, they are younger and most of them are women. Regarding their fathers’ occupation, they are mostly descendants of parents with higher positions. The second group, the “screenagers” are mostly men, also younger ones, between 15 and 19, and mainly with a high school degree, their fathers, in turn, mostly have a high school vocational degree, or they work as employees. The third group, the “(highbrow)culture-orientated”, are mostly urban and between 25–29, mostly men. Regarding their education, they have BSc or high school degree, and most their parents also possess a BA or an MA/MSc degree. The passives are also dominated by older men, mainly from rural environment. Most of them only finished the 8th grade or have vocational studies. They are the children of lower educated parents and they either make a living from casual jobs or they are completely inactive.

We concluded that both method we used – the logistical and the multinomial regression – had very similar conclusions: the group of the omnivores is mainly determined by age and “father’s occupation”, but education is also an important factor. This conclusion coincides with the statements of Chan and Goldthrope (2007, 2013),

according to whom the “highbrow” and the “omnivore” group are clearly visible; they all are well educated and young people with a high social status.

The reference group in multinomial regression were the “passives”. Compared to this group, we observe that (1) if parent is higher educated, then its child is more likely to become a “screenager”, even more likely to be “highbrow”, most likely to become “omnivore”; (2) if parent has leader position, then its descendant is most likely as “omnivore”.

The group of “omnivores” remarkably detaches from the other segments of cultural consumption, while the type of “univores” is mostly characterized by the group of the passives – especially in the context of Eastern Europe. Therefore, cultural behaviour in the case of Hungarian youth from Transylvania is similar to that of the Hungarian society: the main division line is not located on the axis of “omnivore-univore” but rather on the axle of “omnivore-deprived” (Bukodi 2010; Sági 2010).

4.4. Conclusions

We conclude that both horizontal and vertical differentiation among Transylvanian youngsters is present and “lifestyle groups” did not replace the traditional class models – yet. This is in line with population studies from Hungary (Bukodi–Róbert, 2000) and Romania (Marian, 2010). However, our analysis concludes that the emergence of the consumer society changed the dynamics of the cultural stratification among youngsters, and the horizontal differentiation and lifestyle typologies will be an important field of research.

In our opinion, vertical and horizontal interpretive frameworks should be used together in youth research. Based on Bourdieu's theory, who – in addition to economic capital – also emphasizes the importance of cultural and social capital, we also recommend the establishment and development of a multidimensional model.

We consider the usage of “classes” quite problematic, particularly in the case of youth, and especially if we agree with Éber's observation, which affirms that class-analysis shouldn't be understood as the classification of the observed elements of the sample taken from population, but rather as an interpretation of the actual social, economic, and industrial conditions (Éber 2015, 2020). Neither Éber, nor Bourdieu speak about real, actual, existing classes, they just use the term “probable classes” (Bourdieu 2013). Ferge also, uses the term “classes” only in brackets: to quote her: “I have a big

problem with the category of “classes”, therefore I have used the term of social class more or less in brackets.” (Ferge 2012).

The aim of the thesis is to join into this debate about the dilemma of the “paradigm shift” or the renewal of the “old model”, and to contribute to the emergence of a social structure which urges the exploration of the complexity and multidimensional nature of inequalities.

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