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FORUM

REVIEW

VOLUNTEERING AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS AS PART OF INDIVIDUAL CAREER MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT: *In this study, we examine the motives behind higher education students' volunteering and its determinants based on a survey (N=2,199) conducted in five Central and Eastern European countries. The literature shows that, besides traditional volunteering, which has the objective of helping others, it is also common for the former to engage in career-focused volunteering, which is aimed at networking and the acquisition of work experience and professional knowledge. Our regression results suggest that career-building motivation is more pronounced among women and among those who have close relationships with friends outside higher education institutions, but is considered less important among students in Hungary and those who study sciences, computer science, and engineering. Further regression results show that the likelihood of volunteering being related to the field of study is higher among those with an unfavorable financial situation in the family, students who have a close relationship with faculty, those who study in Romania, and students on teacher training programs.*

KEYWORDS: *motivation for volunteering, higher education students, quantitative analysis, Central and Eastern Europe*

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, volunteering is increasingly popular among higher education students in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition to traditional volunteering, which has the objective of helping others, a novel, career-focused form of volunteering is also on the rise (Bocsi et al. 2017). The latter has the aim of assisting young people to obtain work experience, build relationships, and deepen professional knowledge, and offers a chance for students to test themselves with more than one employer (which the literature calls "revolving-door" volunteering). Based on this, it is possible to consider students' volunteering to be a form of individual career management, as it enhances their subsequent career progress and helps them obtain better positions.

The theoretical part of this study discusses definitions and types of volunteering, as well as the factors which influence students' motivation. We also address the link between volunteering and career management among young people. After formulating our hypotheses, we turn to the empirical section of the study, in which students who did volunteer work during their university years were selected based on data from a survey implemented in five Central and Eastern European countries. A composite index based on four sources of motivation which are related to career-building was then created, and linear regression was used to investigate the relationship between the strength of career-building motivation and background variables (students' gender, age, cultural and financial background, social resources, as well as the country and field of study). We also identify the factors which affect whether voluntary activity is related to the field of study.

DEFINITION, TYPES, AND SOURCES OF MOTIVATION FOR VOLUNTEERING

The three most important characteristics of volunteering are that it is a non-compulsory activity (that is to say, school community service in secondary schools, introduced in 2012 in Hungary, is not included in the definition), it benefits others (individuals, organizations, or society as a whole), and it is not remunerated. Voicu and Voicu (2003) define volunteering in a narrower sense, considering volunteering to be an activity undertaken within a formal (organizational) framework. Conversely, Wilson (2000) contrasts organizational volunteering with non-organizational volunteering, which is program-centered and does not require formal membership in an organization.

Several authors point out that volunteering is not a purely altruistic activity as it also creates individual benefits. According to Meijs et al. (2003), the more the costs of a specific activity outweigh its benefits, the more it can be considered voluntary activity. Overall, altruistic or egoistic sources of motivation may also lead to volunteering, while a mix of types of motivation is not uncommon, either. Nowadays, the altruistic nature of volunteering is declining, but the subjective value of volunteering, which includes the need and motivation for pleasure and entertainment, is on the rise. So-called leisure volunteering has also appeared as a phenomenon, although leisure activities can only be considered volunteering if they involve work for the benefit of others (Kaplan 1975; Stebbins 1996). Wollebæk and Selle (2003) found a decline in traditional, value-based volunteering and the increasing importance of cultural and leisure volunteering, volunteering for sports associations, disability support organizations, and neighborhood groups. This novel type of volunteering is characterized by shorter periods of commitment and a high level of fluctuation in organizations.

According to Inglehart (2003), volunteering is not declining; only its nature is changing. Young people are volunteering (especially in charitable and sports organizations) within a new, more flexible, less permanent organizational framework. In addition to leisure volunteering, 'postmodern volunteering' is also common among young people. In the latter, participation itself is important because of the positive feeling of being with others, and because membership provides an identity, as is the case with participation in 'green' and peace-supporting organizations (Inglehart 2003).

Czike and Kuti (2006) distinguish two types of motivation: practical-pragmatic motivation, which is mainly common among young people, and altruistic-idealistic motivation, which is characteristic primarily of older religious people. Czike and Bartal (2005) and Perpék (2012) also identify two types of volunteering. On the one hand, there is traditional volunteering, which is based on altruistic motivation ('it is good to help others') with an important element of social interaction and community. On the other hand, the motivation for the modern, novel form of volunteering includes career building, personal and professional development, spending leisure time in a useful way, networking, and obtaining work experience.

Among Romanian university students, Stefanescu and Osvat (2011) distinguished self-interested and professional experience-oriented sources of motivation (networking, meeting people with similar interests, spending leisure time in a useful way, learning and engaging in sports and cultural activities, information acquisition, skills development, increasing employability) and altruistic motivation (considering the benefit to society, acting for others,

protecting one's own and others' rights and interests). According to their results, young people in Romania are rather characterized by mixed forms of motivation, whereby career-building goals and the intention to help are both important.

THE LINK BETWEEN CAREER MANAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

According to Soós (2007), a career usually involves professional advancement as well as social and financial success. A career includes a person's time spent at work, an individual's professional path and development, skills improvement, and self-realization. Career management is part of human resource management, which can occur at the individual or organizational level. At the organizational level, the company creates development and advancement opportunities for its employees (Koncz 2002). However, career management can also be interpreted at the individual level. Nowadays, when planning their careers, employees primarily focus on satisfying their own needs and engaging their interests, but it is possible to coordinate individual and organizational goals (Soós 2007).

"Career awareness" can also be associated with young people in the sense that they may become aware of career opportunities and related requirements when choosing a profession. At the end of secondary school, career-conscious students decide on a higher education program based on the ease of finding a job after graduating, the prestige of the profession, and the income thereby attainable (Tuckman 1974; Molnárné 2014).

According to Mohácsi and Fényes (2020), career-conscious university students, when deciding whether to study further, primarily take into account the components of the human capital model (the wage advantage of a degree, having a prestigious profession, and shorter job search), and are also committed to completing their studies and are willing to make efforts to that end. According to their empirical findings, career-conscious attitudes are stronger among women, those from rural areas and from objectively well-off families, and students who study business or economics.

As regards the sources of motivation for volunteering, it is clear that a new type of volunteering has appeared among young people that is aimed at career building. In addition, it is important to emphasize that young people find it a substantial barrier to job searching that many employers require them to have completed multiple years of internship (Soós 2007). According to Handy et al. (2010), students sometimes do volunteer work with the intention of including it in their curricula vitae. However, this source of motivation is not as strong in

Central and Eastern Europe as it is, for example, in the US and Canada. The majority of employers there take into account in job interviews whether someone has been a volunteer, while in our region this is still a rarity. In addition, Handy et al. (2010) also point out that higher education students' career-building sources of motivation are not necessarily egoistic but rather signal to the employer that a candidate is career conscious and better suited to the job than someone who has not volunteered. In this case, however, it is important that the volunteer work should align with students' career plans, and potentially even with their field of study, inasmuch as they wish to pursue a profession in that field.

A concept which is related to the above is "experimental socialization," which requires more activity from young people and is characterized by experimentation, change, and a novel start. In accordance with the concept, young people frequently engage in so-called "revolving-door volunteering," which lasts for a relatively short period of time but has the potential of offering variety and allows young people to try themselves out at several organizations, which may help them find a suitable job later (Hustinx 2001). In the case of revolving-door volunteering, it is also possible that after trying some jobs students' career plans will change and they will make more conscious choices when looking for a position after graduating, which also benefits employers as it decreases the risk of mismatch.

Another feature of young people's volunteering is capital conversion (Bourdieu 1986). Although no remuneration is offered for volunteering, young people thereby make useful relationships and obtain knowledge (cultural capital), which they can later turn into economic benefits. It can also be assumed that disadvantaged students who might not receive these forms of capital at home may compensate for their disadvantages through volunteer work. Additionally, volunteering has the advantage of socializing young people into the world of labor. It can teach them the basic rules of jobs, as well as about norms, teamwork, conflict management, etc., which they might not have mastered during higher education.

In the United Kingdom, a number of studies have examined the effectiveness of higher education students' volunteering in terms of building their careers. According to quantitative analysis by Hoskins, Leonard and Wilde (2020), students from an unfavorable background have limited access to volunteer work in the private sector that may easily be converted be into favorable jobs, so the positive impact of volunteer work on later employment cannot be clearly demonstrated. In many cases, students from unfavorable social backgrounds experience that volunteering does not pay off as an investment. According to the authors' qualitative interview analysis, three types of volunteer students can be differentiated: career-specific volunteers; volunteers who wish to improve

their career-related skills; and finally, students for whom volunteering is a kind of punishment due to its compulsory nature (since it is part of the curriculum, and academic credit is awarded for it). The interviews reveal that volunteering does not have a positive effect on employment if it is "compulsory" or is not related to the field of study. Barton, Bates and O'Donovan (2019) showed, using data from interviews carried out in the United Kingdom, that many students reported positive experiences in connection with volunteering (in terms of help with career development, for including on a résumé, for helping find a job in which they can succeed, and contributing to learning through experience and skills development), but the volunteering experience was sometimes negatively assessed in job interviews when it was not related to career goals. Anderson and Green (2012) are also skeptical of the claim that volunteering helps students in all situations, especially if it is part of a curriculum (i.e., is mandatory).

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MOTIVATION FOR VOLUNTEERING

The international literature mostly addresses traditional volunteering, which is based on altruistic values and devotes little attention to modern volunteering, which is more popular among young people. Furthermore, higher education students' motivation for volunteering and its determinants are examined very rarely. Usually, it is only psychologists who investigate the types of motivation, but they often fail to examine social background and similar factors as explanatory variables.

The results of international surveys of young people aged 18–30 show that diverging demographic and social backgrounds are associated with differences in volunteering (Flash Eurobarometer 2019) and forms of motivation (Meier–Stutzer 2008). The evidence suggests that relatively more women are involved in voluntary activities than men (Oesterle et al. 2004), and their primary motivation for volunteering is to help others. Female higher education students are characterized by traditional volunteering and membership in voluntary organizations, while males are more likely to take part in modern volunteering in sports associations, cultural and non-governmental organizations, nature conservation groups, and political organizations (Fényes–Pusztai 2012a). It is also apparent that urban residents are more willing to participate in voluntary activities than rural residents (Juknevičiusa–Savicka 2003; Flash Eurobarometer 2019), but with respect to motivation, altruistic motives may be more common among those who live in villages due to the higher degree of group solidarity

(Wirth 1973). According to Fényes (2015), having an urban residence in childhood strengthens mixed volunteering motivation among higher education students.

Several studies have found that religiosity has a positive effect on volunteering (Becker–Dhingra 2001; Wilson–Janoski 1995; Wilson–Musick 1997). In particular, Paxton et al. (2014) found that individual religious practice (e.g. regular prayer) is more decisive, while others argue that collective religious practice (e.g. church attendance) increases the likelihood of volunteering more (Wilson–Musick 1997; Becker–Dhingra 2001; Voicu–Voicu 2003; Ruiter–De Graaf 2006; Van Tienen et al. 2011). Storm (2015) explains this by the fact that there are many opportunities for voluntary activity in religious communities, and that church teachings compel religious people to regard the act of helping as a moral obligation. Psychologists have shown that altruism and religiosity are positively correlated with volunteering among higher education students, but the attitude of wishing to help others (altruism) is a more important predictor of volunteering than religiosity itself (Eubanks 2008). Findings by Fényes and Pusztai (2012b) suggest that religious students are not overrepresented in traditional volunteering. A cluster analysis based on six different sources of motivation for volunteering revealed no significant relationship between different dimensions of religiosity and cluster membership. Fényes (2015), in a factor analysis that incorporated 21 sources of motivation for volunteering, also found that religious students were not more likely than others to participate in traditional volunteering. The reason may be the lack of sources of motivation that are unambiguously traditional or modern, as helping others seems to be also important for modern volunteers.

Of the countries examined in this study, Fényes and Pusztai (2012b) showed that Romania had more modern and career-building volunteers than volunteers who only had the objective of helping others. At the same time, there were more purely help-oriented volunteers in Ukraine and Hungary, where modern volunteering with mixed sources of motivation was also present, albeit with no importance attached to the inclusion of volunteer experience in curricula vitae. Fényes (2015) showed using data from 2014 that mixed sources of motivation were stronger in the Romanian and Ukrainian subsamples than in Hungary. According to another analysis by Bocsi et al. (2017), mixed sources of motivation were present in similar proportions in the four examined countries (Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, and Serbia). In the Ukrainian subsample, however, volunteers were not at all influenced by other volunteers among their friends and family, or by the potential inclusion of volunteer experience on their résumés. This was explained by the relatively low level of development of volunteering culture in Ukraine compared to other countries.

HYPOTHESES

H1: Based on the literature (Hustinx 2001; Inglehart 2003; Meijs et al. 2003; Handy et al. 2010; Stefanescu–Osvat 2011; Fényes–Pusztai 2012a; Perpék 2012; Fényes 2015; Bocsi et al. 2017), we assume that higher education students are also driven to volunteering, besides having a desire to help, by the motivation to obtain professional experience, to acquire knowledge and develop professionally, to make new friends and acquaintances, and to include the experience on their résumé.

In another research question, we investigate the factors which affect the strength of career-building sources of motivation, as well as whether volunteering is related to the field of study. As regards demographic variables, Mohácsi and Fényes (2020) argue that women in higher education have greater career awareness than men, and Fényes (2015) has found that help-focused and simultaneously career-building sources of motivation are more prevalent among women than men.

H2A: We assume that career-building motivation is more pronounced among women, and that volunteering is more often related to the field of study among them.

H2B: Based on Hustinx (2001) and Fényes (2015), we assume that older students are disproportionately characterized by having a career-building motivation for volunteering, and that volunteering is more often related to the field of study among them.

As regards higher education students' social background, we investigate the effect of their financial, cultural and social resources, as well as the impact of their place of residence at the age of 14. Fényes (2015) argues that an unfavorable subjective financial situation increases career-building sources of motivation, whereas Mohácsi and Fényes (2020) find that broadly defined career awareness is greater among children from families with a favorable objective financial situation.

H3A: We hypothesize that the effect of financial background could be ambiguous, and that parents' educational attainment does not affect the strength of career-building sources of motivation.

As Perpék (2012) highlights, social resources have a stronger impact on volunteering than the usual socio-demographic variables.

H3B: We presume that an extensive network of relationships strengthens career-building motivation, and that the likelihood that volunteering is related to the field of study is especially increased by a close relationship with faculty.

H3C: We assume that urban residence increases the likelihood of career-building motivation (Wirth 1973; Fényes 2015), although Mohácsi and

Fényes (2020) find greater career awareness in the general sense among students from a rural environment.

We present findings for two indicators with respect to the characteristics of training – namely, the country, and the field of training.

H4A: We assume that in those countries we examined where the culture of volunteering is more advanced and the non-profit sector is more developed, career-building motivation among students is more pronounced, which can be explained by the larger diversity of volunteering opportunities (Fényes–Pusztai 2012b; Fényes 2015; Bocsi et al. 2017).

H4B: Finally, we assume that career-building goals are more likely to prevail among students engaged in helping professions, wherein volunteer work is to a large extent related to the field of study, as opposed to programs in business, economics, sciences, computer science, and engineering.

DATA, METHODS, VARIABLES

The database consists of a large-sample student survey[2] (N=2,199) conducted in the academic year 2018/19. The survey was carried out at higher education institutions in Eastern Hungary[3] and in four other countries[4] (Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, and Serbia). The Hungarian subsample (N=1,034) was collected using quota sampling and is representative with respect to faculty, field of study, and form of funding. At institutions outside Hungary, groups of students in randomly selected university or college courses were surveyed exhaustively (N=1,165). The sample consists of full-time bachelor's students in their second year, and second-year or third-year students from undivided programs which offer a master's degree.

We selected students from the sample who had done volunteer work with some frequency during their studies (46.8%). We then performed cluster analysis and factor analysis using the sources of motivation for volunteering (see

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2 The title of the research project was "The Role of Social and Organizational Factors in Student Attrition."

3 University of Debrecen, University of Nyíregyháza, Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Saint Athanasius Greek Catholic Theological College.

4 Babeș-Bolyai University (BBTE), Emanuel University of Oradea, Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Mukachevo State University, University of Oradea, Partium Christian University (PKE), Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, J. Selye University, University of Novi Sad, Uzhhorod National University.

Table 1 for the eight possible sources of motivation used in the questionnaire, with their importance judged by respondents on a scale of 1–4), but the results were difficult to interpret. As a result, we decided to create an index based on four sources of motivation which represent career-building features (obtaining professional experience; obtaining knowledge and developing professionally; making new friends and acquaintances; including volunteering on a résumé).

Subsequently, we conducted linear regression analysis to explore the relationship between the strength of career-building sources of motivation (index) and background variables. We also carried out logistic regression to examine the determinants of whether volunteering was related to the field of study.

In both regression models, explanatory variables include gender (30.1% male and 69.9% female) and age (with a mean of 21.6 and a standard deviation of 1.62). We examined students' social background based on Bourdieu's (1986) capital theory, as we differentiated between students' cultural, financial, and social resources. We proxy cultural background using the father's and mother's years of education (with a mean of 12.7 and a standard deviation of 2.54, and a mean of 12.9 and a standard deviation of 2.6, respectively). Concerning financial status, we have four indicators. The family's financial situation was measured by the possession of durable consumer goods[5] (objective financial situation index 0–9, with a mean of 6.9 and a standard deviation of 1.63) and by a relative financial situation indicator, which compares the family's financial situation to the student's peers (on a 1–5 scale, where 3 is the average situation, with a mean of 3.3 and a standard deviation of 0.77). To capture the students' individual financial situation objectively, we created a composite index indicating the possession of durable goods[6] (0–6, with a mean of 1.8 and a standard deviation of 1.5) and a subjective indicator of individual financial situation[7] to explore whether the student can afford a significant purchase or is unable to cover even their basic expenses (1–4, with a mean of 3.2 and a standard deviation of 0.62). Finally, the variable for the place of residence at the age of 14 (1: urban, 0: rural)

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5 Components of the index: Does the family possess any of the following items? An apartment or house, a five-year-old car or younger, a flat-screen television, a personal computer or laptop with broadband internet access at home, a tablet or e-book reader, mobile internet (on the phone or computer), a dishwasher, an air-conditioner, and a smartphone.

6 Components of the index: Does the student possess any of the following items: An apartment or house, a car, an above-average smartphone (e.g. iPhone), an above-average computer or laptop, a tablet or e-book reader, and savings for a house purchase?

7 1: Often I do not have enough money for basic everyday necessities. 2: Sometimes I do not have enough money for everyday expenditures. 3: I have everything I need but cannot afford larger expenditures. 4: I have everything I need and can also afford larger expenditures.

is also included (with 62.2% of respondents as urban residents). Students' social resources are represented by four indices, measuring the frequency of social activities with parents[8] (6–30, with a mean of 19.6 and a standard deviation of 3.44), faculty[9] (0–18, with a mean of 4.2 and a standard deviation of 4.19), fellow students from the same program or institution[10] (0–11, with a mean of 8.3 and a standard deviation of 2.84), and friends outside the institution[11] (0–11, with a mean of 7.7 and a standard deviation of 3.16).

We also investigate the effect exerted by the characteristics of education, as represented by two variables. The country of education has the following distribution in the sample: 47.5% Hungary, 32% Romania, 9.3% Ukraine, 6.4% Slovakia, 4.8% Serbia (we created dummy variables with Serbia as the reference group). We classified the fields of study into five categories: arts and social sciences, 21.5%; economics and business, 12.7%; computer science, engineering and sciences, 15.9%; previously unclassified teacher education, 25.7%; other 24.2%; and we created four dummy variables, where the reference group was the "other" category.

RESULTS

Among those who had done volunteer work with some frequency (46.8% of the sample, N=939), Table 1 presents the sources of motivation of volunteering in order of importance.

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8 During the years spent in higher education, have your parents done any of the following activities with you? Having a conversation; asking about your studies and exams; providing financial support; planning activities together; planning sports activities together (the frequency of the activities is specified on a 1–5 scale, with Cronbach's Alpha at 0.793).

9 Do you have a professor or lecturer with whom you do any of the following activities? Talking about the curriculum outside lectures; talking about topics not specified in the curriculum; talking about literature or art; talking about questions of politics; talking about private matters; talking about plans for the future; maintaining regular e-mail conversations; paying special attention to your career; talking about sport and healthy lifestyles (1: there is one such professor; 2: there are more; 0: there is none; with Cronbach's Alpha at 0.879).

10 Do you have a fellow student in the program or at the institution with whom you do the following activities? Talking about academic problems; talking about private matters; spending leisure time together frequently; discussing future plans; visiting in case of illness; borrowing textbooks or study material; talking about scientific questions; talking about culture or questions of politics; talking about art; studying together; doing sports together (1: yes, 0: no; with Cronbach's Alpha at 0.842).

11 Do you have a friend outside the institution with whom you do the following activities? See the list for fellow students (1: yes, 0: no; with Cronbach's Alpha at 0.873).

Table 1. *Sources of motivation of volunteering in order of importance (1–4 scale, mean, standard deviation, share of 'important' and 'very important' answers)*

	Mean	Standard deviation	'Important' and 'very important'
To help others	3.30	0.71	90.1%
To obtain professional experience	3.08	0.84	79.9%
To obtain knowledge and develop professionally	3.07	0.86	81.5%
To feel better	3.05	0.76	81.9%
To make new friends and acquaintances	2.99	0.83	76.1%
To include it on my résumé	2.35	0.98	44.7%
Because of my religious beliefs	2.28	1.05	43.6%
Because friends or family members also do volunteer work	2.25	0.96	39.7%

Source: Authors' calculations based on PERSIST 2019

Based on our results, the most important source of motivation among students was helping others: over 90% of volunteers marked this as an important or very important aspect. Career-building sources of motivation (to obtain professional experience, to gain knowledge and develop professionally, to make friends and acquaintances) were somewhat less important (76–82%), while the inclusion of volunteering on the respondents' résumé as a source of motivation was important only for 45% of students in the examined region. Interestingly, even among those with pronounced career-building goals, one-third of the volunteer work was not related to the field of study, which might imply that some people compensate for a misguided choice of career or study program with volunteering and prefer to gain experience for a subsequent profession through voluntary activity. Another conceivable explanation is that respondents believe that, even if their volunteer work is not related to the field of study, they could still benefit in their subsequent career from the acquisition of professional experience in another field through networking and professional development.

In the following, we present linear regression results with respect to the effect of background variables on the index for career-building sources of motivation[12] (Table 2).

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12 The components of the index were the following: to obtain professional experience; to obtain knowledge and develop professionally; to make new friends and acquaintances; to include volunteering on my résumé.

Table 2. *The effect of various factors on the index for career-building sources of motivation – linear regression betas and their significance (N = 939)*

	Beta	Sig.
Gender (1: male)	−0.082	*0.036*
Age	0.015	0.700
Mother: years of education	0.051	0.247
Father: years of education	0.012	0.783
Family's objective financial situation based on the possession of durable consumer goods (index, 0–9)	0.009	0.831
Family's relative financial situation compared to the student's peers (1–5)	0.066	0.128
Student's objective financial situation based on the possession of durable consumer goods (index, 0–6)	−0.042	0.321
Student's subjective financial situation (1–4)	0.020	0.634
Place of residence at the age of 14 (1: urban)	−0.009	0.807
Index for relationship with parents	0.070	0.068
Index for relationship with faculty	0.025	0.533
Index for relationship with university peers	0.075	0.059
Index for relationship with external friends	0.118	*0.003*
Hungary	−0.120	*0.049*
Romania	0.009	0.878
Ukraine	−0.083	0.060
Slovakia	−0.031	0.472
Arts and social sciences	0.025	0.588
Business and economics	0.016	0.713
Sciences, computer science, engineering	−0.137	*0.001*
Teacher education	−0.019	0.712
Adjusted R-squared	0.087	

Source: Authors' calculations based on PERSIST 2019

Career-building sources of motivation were significantly (p < 0.05) increased by students' gender (female) and close relationships with external friends (from outside the institution). The opposite (negative) effect can be observed for Hungary and for the fields of sciences, computer science, and engineering. We also undertook logistic regression analysis to examine the extent to which the background variables we included affected whether volunteering was related to the field of study, which is also an important variable in terms of the career management of higher education students (Table 3).

Table 3. *Determinants of the nature of volunteering (1: related to the field of study, 0: not related) – logistic regression Exp(B) and the significance of Wald statistics (N = 939)*

	Exp(B)	Sig. Wald statistics
Gender (1: male)	0.741	0.141
Age	1.085	0.199
Mother: years of education	1.050	0.230
Father: years of education	0.978	0.590
Family's objective financial situation based on the possession of durable consumer goods (index, 0–9)	0.870	*0.033*
Family's relative financial situation compared to the student's peers (1–5)	1.280	0.061
Student's objective financial situation based on the possession of durable consumer goods (index, 0–6)	1.069	0.338
Student's subjective financial situation (1–4)	1.025	0.882
Place of residence at the age of 14 (1: urban)	1.289	0.169
Index for relationship with parents	0.995	0.850
Index for relationship with faculty	1.057	*0.011*
Index for relationship with university peers	1.062	0.129
Index for relationship with external friends	1.030	0.370
Hungary	0.904	0.723
Romania	1.948	0.017
Ukraine	0.396	*0.046*
Slovakia	0.377	*0.033*
Arts and social sciences	1.411	0.176
Business and economics	0.461	*0.012*
Sciences, computer science, engineering	0.398	*0.001*
Teacher education	2.216	*0.004*
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.218	

Source: Authors' calculations based on PERSIST 2019

According to the results, the likelihood that volunteering is related to the field of study is significantly higher among those with an unfavorable objective (family) financial situation, students who have a close relationship with faculty, those who study in Romania as opposed to Ukraine and Slovakia, and students who are training as teachers. Volunteering is less likely to be related to the field of study among students of economics, business, sciences, computer science, or engineering.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature (Hustinx 2001; Inglehart 2003; Meijs et al. 2003; Handy et al. 2010; Perpék 2012), we assumed that higher education students are also driven to volunteer, besides the desire to help, by the wish to advance their careers. Our data show, however, that the most important motive is still helping others, and career-building sources of motivation are somewhat less important, so our first hypothesis only partly supported. The explanation may be that motives for volunteering in this region are mixed: in most cases, career-building motives are combined with altruistic ones (see Stefanescu–Osvat 2011; Fényes–Pusztai 2012a; Fényes 2015; Bocsi et al. 2017).

Interestingly, even among those who have strong career-building goals, one-third of volunteer work was not related to the field of study, which may be because students use volunteering to make up for a misguided choice of study program. It is also possible, however, that students find work experience, social capital, and knowledge obtained from other fields to be important for building their current careers.

We created a composite index based on four career-building motives (to obtain professional experience, to gain knowledge and develop professionally, to make new friends and acquaintances, and to include volunteering on a résumé). We carried out linear regression analysis to investigate which variables increase the strength of these motives. We also revealed through logistic regression analysis the factors which affect whether volunteering is related to the field of study.

Regarding demographic variables, females have stronger career-building motives than males, in line with our second hypothesis and the literature (Mohácsi–Fényes 2020; Fényes 2015), but we found no effect with respect to the age of students, in contrast to findings by Hustinx (2001) and Fényes (2015). The reason may be that the sample was quite homogeneous in terms of age.

As regards higher education students' social background, our data show only one significant effect – namely, that students with an unfavorable objective family financial situation are more likely to do volunteer work related to the field of study, which is a positive result and is partly in line with our third hypothesis and previous findings by Fényes (2015). As for students' social resources, we found that a close relationship with faculty increases the likelihood that volunteering is related to the field of study, in accordance with our third hypothesis. We also found that a close relationship with friends outside the institution increases career-building sources of motivation, which is also in line with our hypothesis.

As regards the characteristics of training, volunteering is more frequently related to the field of study in Romania as opposed to Ukraine, while career-building motives seem to be more pronounced among students outside Hungary,

so our fourth hypothesis was not supported and the results are not in line with the literature either (Fényes–Pusztai 2012b; Fényes 2015; Bocsi et al. 2017). The reason may be that students in Romania receive academic credit for volunteer work which is related to their studies. Furthermore, career-building motives may be stronger outside Hungary because most of the surveyed students in the other four countries were students of teacher training, which is a helping profession, and career goals in connection with volunteering may be more pronounced among them.

As expected, students in helping professions, which in this case covered mostly students of teacher training, were much more likely to associate volunteering with their field of study compared to those in economics, business, or STEM (engineering, computer science and natural sciences) programs, a finding which is in line with our fourth hypothesis. Career-building motives are also stronger outside the fields of sciences, computer science, and engineering.

Policy recommendations

As explained in the theoretical part of our study, volunteering in contemporary higher education assists students to plan their careers (e.g. by helping them try themselves out in several fields during "revolving-door volunteering"), as well as in building it (through the acquisition of useful knowledge, relationships, and professional experience). Furthermore, it is conceivable that students who enjoy volunteer work at organizations may decide to work at the latter permanently. Career guidance has been a major goal of school community service which was introduced into secondary schools across Hungary in 2012. In addition, volunteering may also be useful for establishing professional relationships and obtaining professional knowledge in practice, if such volunteering is related to the field of higher education studies, thus complements traditional higher education. Due to the above advantages, we recommend that universities in the examined Central and Eastern European region should encourage volunteering among students, even in an organized way, and potentially reward it with credits (e.g. in Romania, volunteering has been recognized as a form of internship since 2014 – which is not common in the other countries under analysis, however). It is also recommended to operate career offices at faculties and departments where students may be offered voluntary and paid work opportunities which are related to the profession, and are manageable alongside academic requirements. In addition, higher education institutions can employ dedicated professionals to coordinate volunteering and discuss related experiences. We must mention, however, that certain studies in the literature (which are presented in the

theoretical section and based on UK data) show that the career-building motivation for volunteering is not prevalent among students with an unfavorable social background if volunteering is compulsory, and if it is not related to the field of study, which should be taken into account by education policy actors. Our findings show, however, that volunteering is more likely to be related to the field of study in our examined region for students with an unfavorable objective financial situation in the family, which is a positive result.

According to our additional findings, career-building goals associated with volunteer work are more pronounced among females, students with close relationships with friends outside their own educational institution, and students of fields other than sciences, computer science, and engineering. In addition, volunteering is more often related to the field of study among students of teacher training compared to students of sciences, economics, and business, indicating that the former might manage to take better advantage of the career-building potential of volunteering. Consequently, higher education policy should also pay attention to students who do not have a career-building attitude towards volunteering by drawing their attention to the positive impact volunteering could have on their development. An additional finding is that having a close relationship with faculty increases the likelihood that volunteering is related to the field of study. This implies that professors and lecturers can also contribute to the realization of students' subsequent career plans by offering them suitable volunteer work.

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EVOLUTION OF THE INTERPRETATION OF POVERTY IN HUNGARY BETWEEN 2007 AND 2019

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ABSTRACT: *The author applies the cultural consensus model to the domain of poverty and investigates the subjective interpretation of poverty. Inglehart's modernization hypothesis is tested in a peripheral county in Hungary through the interpretation of poverty. The results of data collection in 2019 are compared to the results of two similar surveys from 2007 and 2011. The finding is that consensus theory proves to be adequate for examining the public interpretation of poverty. The paper concludes that poverty is mainly linked to material values and that the values of the adult population did not change significantly from 2007 to 2019. This time period was probably not long enough to modify the basic values of the adult population and the subjective interpretation of poverty.*

KEYWORDS: *interpretation of poverty, systematic data collection, value change, Hungary*

INTRODUCTION

The paper examines how the interpretation of poverty changed from 2007 in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, one of the poorest areas in Hungary, and how this is linked to the hierarchy of human goals. The examined period includes the global economic crisis and the subsequent recovery. The research work aims at revealing the changes in the interpretation of poverty that happened during these times of remarkable economic change.

The paper aims at testing the validity of the modernization hypothesis, put forward by Inglehart (2000), in relation to the interpretation of poverty. It examines whether there were any changes in the value priorities in the examined period. According to Inglehart's scarcity hypothesis, if a significant part of the population experiences existential insecurity, material values take priority. When, however, the satisfaction of basic human needs can be taken for granted, post-materialist values become dominant. According to the socialization hypothesis (Inglehart 2000), value changes are possible only in the long term, as the value priorities of adults hardly ever change.

The novelty of the current research is its methodology. It uses cultural consensus theory and the methods of systematic data collection to obtain information about the interpretation of poverty. Consensus theory in cultural anthropology is used to estimate the knowledge shared among informants in relation to the domain of interest (Webster et al. 2002). The methods of the systematic collection of data take into account the cultural competence of the population, which can contribute to a remarkable decrease in the sample size that is necessary, while the reliability of the research results remain high. Moreover, these methods do not use predefined attributions about the specific field, but informants are first asked to list items they associate with poverty. This ensures that the items to be used in the last step of the data collection are culturally relevant.

Another novelty of the research is that it covers a period of over a decade and makes the examination of changes in the interpretation of poverty since 2007 possible. Statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) of the European Union refer to similar topics (like life satisfaction and income level), but focus on individuals' beliefs about their own position instead of their interpretation of poverty.

I first describe theories about the relationship between economy and culture and give a short overview of the socio-economic conditions of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County. I next outline the procedure for collecting data in 2019. I then present the main features of the interpretation of poverty in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County in 2019, make a comparison over time, and discuss the implications of my findings.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The relationship between economy and culture

Experts have long debated the relationship between economic conditions and cultural values. Mainstream economics argues that they are independent of each other. Another approach argues that cultural values change with economic development (DiMaggio 1994). Three different theories are associated with this approach: economic materialism, cultural determinism, and modernization theory (Havasi 2009).

Economic materialism argues that economic relations take priority, and they determine the value system (Clark 1998). This implies that acquiring material possessions is the main goal of human life and the key to happiness. Success is determined by individuals' material wealth and the material goods they can acquire (Richins 1994). Contrarily, cultural determinism implies that culture determines economic and political arrangements. Weber (1979) argues that the Protestant ethic contributed to the development of capitalism, to many people starting to work in the secular world, and to wealth being obtained. Modernization theory argues that economic and cultural changes are intercorrelated. This implies that "economic development is linked with coherent and, to some extent, predictable changes in culture" (Inglehart–Baker 2000: 21).

Evidence from the World Value Surveys supports the claim that economic development is associated with major changes in value systems (Inglehart–Baker 2000). Inglehart and Baker (2000) measured economic development using annual per-capita gross national product and survival/self-expression (linked with the rise of the service economy) and traditional/secular dimensions (associated with the transition from agricultural societies to industrial societies). Inglehart (2000) argued that individuals in advanced societies with significant economic growth have given priority to post-materialist values (like the need for self-actualization or self-expression). He distinguishes between scarcity and socialization hypotheses regarding the relationship between economy and culture.

The scarcity hypothesis is an interpretation of Maslow's hierarchy of human goals and the law of diminishing marginal utility. It implies that as long as the satisfaction of basic human needs cannot be taken for granted and scarcity prevails, materialist needs, which are biological requirements for survival, take priority. These needs, directly related to human survival – like the satisfaction of hunger, thirst, the need for rest, shelter, sustenance, or physical security – are more pressing than post-materialist values, unless they are satisfied. When material needs are satisfied, however, priority will

be given to post-material needs like belonging, intellectual satisfaction, recognition, self-expression, personal freedom, self-esteem, or protecting the environment.

Financial conditions and value priorities, however, do no adjust to each other immediately. According to Inglehart (2000)'s socialization hypothesis, the adjustment of cultural values to socio-economic conditions needs some time and is not possible in the short term because the basic values of adults are largely fixed. Cohorts that have often experienced scarcity award high priority to material values (basically related to psychological needs and safety needs), while cohorts that have experienced economic boom conditions consider post-materialist values to be more important. The basic values of individuals are determined by the circumstances that they experienced before their becoming adults. Cohorts that grow up among good economic conditions will have post-materialist values (Inglehart 2000). The value priorities of adults do not change significantly; therefore, changes in value priorities are possible only intergenerationally. A new generation needs to grow up to make value changes possible (Rokeach 1968). Duch and Taylor (1993) also concluded that whether the satisfaction of material needs can be taken for granted during an early period of an individual's life has a strong and long-lasting influence on post-materialist attitudes later in life.

Siposné Nándori (2016) concluded that, except for some slight changes in the subjective interpretation of poverty (demographic circumstances became less important, while financial conditions became more relevant from 2007 to 2011), the value priorities of the adult population did not change from 2007 to 2011, thus the basic nature of the interpretation of poverty among residents of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, remained unchanged. The fact that the time period between 2007 and 2011 was not long enough to modify the value priorities of the adult population and the interpretation of poverty supports the socialization hypothesis. The covered time period, however, might have been too short. Extending the time frame of the analysis by adding results from 2019 might make it possible to examine the value changes of adults.

Money-metric and subjective poverty

As described above, Inglehart (2000) concluded that value priorities are linked to material conditions. One's financial condition can be described by money-metric measures of poverty, among other ways. Absolute concepts of poverty assume that the basic necessities of life are independent of space and time. Poor people are those who are not able to satisfy their basic needs. This definition

makes it possible to make a comparison of poverty across countries or over time. Another way of measuring poverty is to use relative poverty indicators. Relative concepts of poverty define the poor as individuals whose income level is a defined percentage below some relative poverty threshold, such as below 60% of the median income level. The relative poverty threshold can also be defined as an income level below which a certain part (e.g. one-tenth or one-fifth) of the population live (Hegedűs–Monostori 2005).

Values can translate living conditions into subjective well-being (Campbell et al. 1976; Diener 1995; Delhey 2004) and into the interpretation of poverty. Existential security changes value priorities, and therefore the public perception of poverty.

Value priorities can be reflected by interpretations of poverty, which is one form of subjective poverty (Spéder 2002). The latter refers to which individuals people consider poor, and how people define poverty. The other form of subjective poverty is associated with individuals' beliefs about their own position in the system of inequalities, and their perceptions of their own material situation.

The socioeconomic position of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County

Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County is situated in Northern Hungary. The bulk of its settlements belong to peripheral backward areas (Pénzes 2014). The county is faced with multiple disadvantages. It has a low ability to retain its population. The high rate of emigration is due to an adverse labor market and income positions and the lack of prospects (G. Fekete et al. 2013). The unfavorable socioeconomic position of the county is reflected in its labor market characteristics as well. The unemployment rate has been higher than the national average for several decades.

In relation to poverty (refer to Figure 1), both the at-risk-of-poverty rate (the proportion of persons with a disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median disposable income) and the severe material deprivation rate increased after the financial crisis of 2008. However, both measures have decreased since 2013, reaching their current value of around 15% in 2019. Disposable per-capita income has increased since 2010. The evolution of these measures suggests that Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County's economy has fully recovered from the financial crisis.

Figure 1. *Selected poverty measures and before-tax per-capita income (Hungarian forints) in the Northern Hungarian region, 2008–2019*
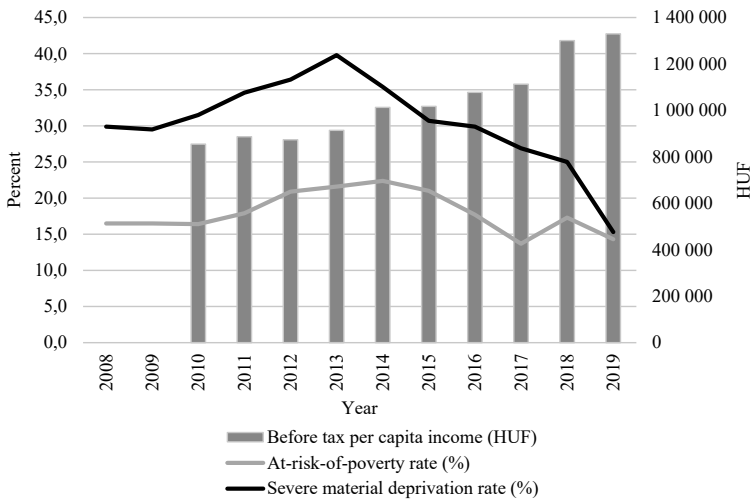
Source: Author's compilation based on data from Eurostat and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The paper aims at analyzing changes in the interpretation of poverty since 2007 in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Hungary. It examines how the list of poverty-related items perceived by the population changed from 2007 to 2019. It also examines how the perceptions of precise meanings of poverty-related items changed over time.

Based on the scarcity hypothesis, the importance of material aspects of poverty might have changed in the examined period. During the crisis years (between 2007–2011) it might be expected that material aspects of poverty would have become more important, while during the recovery period (2011–2019) material aspects of poverty could have been expected to decline in importance.

The analysis compares the subjective assessment of poverty in three surveys (2007, 2011, and 2019) and reveals changes over time.

The primary data collection effort of 2019 was carried out in order to:
– obtain knowledge about the interpretation of poverty in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County and,
– enable comparison over time using the results of two similar surveys from 2007 and 2011.

The first step was to define the public interpretation of poverty. Using qualitative research methods, the items most often related to poverty and their precise perceived definitions were determined. Interviews were first conducted to elicit a list of poverty-related items using the method of free listing. In the other part of the interviews, informants were asked to rank these items to identify those most closely/most often related to poverty, and to describe their perceived precise meaning. As ranking a large number of items can be difficult and take a lot of time, consensus theory and the method of systematic data collection were used to simplify the task, therefore reducing the time required for data collection. Formal methods of systematic data collection (like quicksort, balanced incomplete block designs, and rating scales) can contribute to increasing the understanding of experimental and observational data (Weller–Romney 1988). These methods are also applied because they make comparison over time possible, as the interpretation of poverty was also examined with these methods in Wave 1 and Wave 2 (for details, refer to Siposné Nándori (2011; 2016)).

Consensus theory, used mainly by cultural anthropologists, is applied to answer research questions when the investigator does not know the answers to questions ahead of time (Weller 2007). It has been used in a variety of fields like with judgements of personality (Webster et al. 2002), disease classification (Romney et al. 1986), beliefs about occupational prestige (Romney 1989), beliefs about plants (Boster 1983), and illnesses (Pachter et al. 2002; Weller et al. 1999). Consensus theory in cultural anthropology is used to determine the number of informants necessary for obtaining reliable answers. It uses the degree of agreement among informants and provides an estimate of cultural competence ("culturally correct answers"), which is the probability that the informants know the answer to a given question. Cross et al. (1989: 4) defines cultural competence as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations." The latter study focuses on that part of the culture that is stored in the minds of its members (Roberts 1964; Siposné Nándori 2016) and adopts the methodological tools from cultural anthropology.

Consensus theory makes the reconstruction of "culturally relevant" answers to a specific question possible (Romney et al. 1986) and provides an estimate for the degree to which individuals know this answer (Weller 2007). It is assumed that agreement between the answers of any two informants is a function of the extent to which each is correlated with the culturally correct answers (Nunally 1978).

According to consensus theory, the number of respondents necessary for obtaining reliable results depends on the average level of competence, the confidence level, and a minimum rate of questions that should be classified correctly (Weller–Romney 1988). Consensus theory makes the following three assumptions:

There should be a high level of agreement in the responses of informants (the average level of competence should be at least 0.5).

– Each informant should provide answers independently of others. This is made possible by eliciting answers from individuals, not from groups of people.
– Each question should be in the same domain of interest and at the same level of difficulty (Weller 2007).

Free listing

The first step of a study is understanding what is being studied. Free listing is an appropriate technique for collecting data about the domain of interest and ensuring that the items used in the final research step are culturally relevant (Weller–Romney 1988). Informants are asked to list all the items that come to mind in relation to a topic. In this study, free listing was used to obtain a list of poverty-related items for use in the final research step.

At the beginning, the following questions were asked:

– Who do you think is poor today in Hungary?
– Do you know any poor people?
– What makes you think they are poor?

Based on the informants' answers, further questions were asked, when necessary, to elicit as many poverty-related items as possible.

The minimum number of informants involved in free listing depends on the amount of agreement in the responses of the informants, and cannot be less than 30 (Weller 2007). During free listing in this study, stability of order was found at around 40 informants, so a sample of 41 was drawn. For this, multistage sampling with stratification was applied. First, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County

was divided into three parts: town with county rank (the city of Miskolc belongs to this category), other towns, and villages. The sample was drawn to respect the share of the population in the three categories (Table 1). Informants were selected using the random walk method from Miskolc, two randomly selected towns (Ózd and Felsőzsolca), and three randomly selected communities (Tiszalúc, Ároktő, and Bükkaranyos).

Table 1. *Sample decomposition based on the distribution of the population of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Hungary*

	Population (2018)	Sample size for free listing	Minimal sample size for formal interviews	Actual sample size for formal interviews
Town with county rank	155,650	10	3	4
Other towns	224,770	14	5	7
Villages	267,796	17	5	8
Total	*648,216*	*41*	*13*	*19*

Source: Author's compilation based on HCSO data.

Free listing elicited a total of 45 items. Out of these, 21 were chosen for further research, taking into consideration the purpose of the study, the frequency of the items mentioned in the free listing,[2] and the type of formal data collection applied (De Munck–Sobo 1998; Siposné Nándori 2016). The items selected for further research can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. *Items selected for further research based on free listing results (in alphabetical order)*

1. Addiction (drugs, alcohol)	8. Low education level	15. Problems with clothing
2. Debt	9. Low income level	16. Problems with shelter
3. Illness	10. Low willingness to work	17. Public work scheme participation
4. Integration problems, discrimination	11. Macroeconomic problems	18. Retirement
5. Isolation	12. Malnutrition	19. Roma ethnicity
6. Lack of savings	13. No access to basic needs	20. Unemployment
7. Large family	14. Poverty cycle	21. Unfavorable mentality

Source: Author's compilation.

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2 Items mentioned by fewer than five informants were excluded from the final research step.

Defining the sample size for formal interviews

Based on the list elicited by free listing, the sample size needed for further research can be defined using the guidelines of cultural consensus theory. Boster (1983) estimated that the competency for dichotomous variables is equal to the average proportion of matches across individuals. In this case, free listing is considered as a list of dichotomous variables. A value of one indicates that the given item was mentioned, while zero indicates that it was not mentioned by the given informant. Using these binary codes, it is possible to determine the proportion of matches across each pair of individuals (Boster 1983; Siposné Nándori 2016).

Weller (2007) draws attention to the importance of differentiating among strong beliefs and random answers that do not imply any cultural preferences. This is necessary because random answers should not be taken into consideration when defining the average competence level of the informants. A binomial test is appropriate for testing whether cases of dichotomous variables indicate deviation from chance. The binomial test assumes that the product of the probability of an outcome (p) and the sample size (n) is at least ten in the case of both outcomes, i.e.

$$p \times n > 10 \tag{1}$$
$$q \times n > 10 \tag{2}$$

where $q = 1 - p$.

Provided that the hypothesis tests whether the answers differ significantly from 0.5, $p = 0.5$. The sample size (n) is equal to 41, so

$$p \times n = 0.5 \times 41 = 20.5 > 10 \tag{3}$$

Because the assumption is met, a Z-test can be used to test the hypothesis. Z-values and decisions about the hypothesis (whether answers indicate a strong belief or not) for each item selected for further research are summarized in Table 3. Out of the 21 examined items, the answers for questions related to five items (unemployment, problems with shelter, malnutrition, no access to basic needs, and illness) do not indicate any strong beliefs; therefore, they were excluded when defining the average competence level of the informants.

Boster (1983)'s methodology is used to find the informants' average competence (reliability). First, the proportion of matches across each pair of individuals needs to be determined. Then, the arithmetic mean of these values gives the average proportion of matches across individuals. Its value is 0.688.

Provided that it exceeds 0.5, sample size can be determined using consensus theory. The two further assumptions of consensus theory are also met, as the informants were asked separately so they could not discuss their responses before answering, and all of the questions were about poverty, therefore each question deals with the same field of interest.

Table 3. *Z-scores and decisions about the hypothesis concerning whether the answers indicate strong beliefs*

Poverty-related item	Z-score	Decision
Low income level	1.7	Failed to be rejected
Unemployment	0.5	Rejected
Problems with shelter	0.2	Rejected
Malnutrition	−0.5	Rejected
No access to basic needs	−0.5	Rejected
Illness	−0.5	Rejected
Unfavorable mentality	−3.0	Failed to be rejected
Low education level	−3.0	Failed to be rejected
Retirement	−3.9	Failed to be rejected
Problems with clothing	−3.9	Failed to be rejected
Isolation	−3.9	Failed to be rejected
Addiction (drug, alcohol)	−4.2	Failed to be rejected
Macroeconomic problems	−4.2	Failed to be rejected
Debt	−4.2	Failed to be rejected
Low willingness to work	−4.2	Failed to be rejected
Poverty cycle	−4.5	Failed to be rejected
Large family	−4.5	Failed to be rejected
Public work scheme participation	−4.5	Failed to be rejected
Integration problems, discrimination	−4.5	Failed to be rejected
Lack of savings	−4.5	Failed to be rejected
Roma ethnicity	−4.8	Failed to be rejected

Source: Author's compilation.

The average level of competence is nearly 0.7. At least 99% of the questions should be classified correctly at the 0.99 confidence level, therefore the minimum number of informants is 13 (Table 4).

Table 4. *Minimum sample size needed to classify a desired proportion at the 0.99 confidence level for different levels of competence*

Proportion of questions	Average level of competence				
	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9
0.80	15	10	5	4	4
0.85	15	10	7	5	4
0.90	21	12	7	5	4
0.95	23	14	9	7	4
0.99	*	20	13	8	6

*Well over 30 informants needed
Source: Weller–Romney (1988: 77)

Informants were selected with the method of multistage cluster sampling with stratification (Maxfield–Babbie 2009) in the same way as for free listing. Three informants were selected from Miskolc, and the randomly selected town was Sárospatak, where five informants were asked. This time, the randomly selected villages were Bogács and Alacska where five individuals were selected (Table 1). During the survey, more informants were reached than necessary, resulting in a total sample size of 19.

Formal interviews

During the formal interviews, each informant was asked the same set of questions. The primary data collection phase had two aims: to find out…
  (1) what factors are thought to be related to poverty, and
  (2) the precise perceived meanings of these factors.

To find the answer to the first question, the quicksort method was used. This is a kind of rank-order method. Items written on cards are randomized and then a card is selected as a standard. Informants are then asked to compare all other items to the standard and group them into two categories: items greater than and those less than the standard. This process is repeated for each group until all items are ordered. This method shortens the ordering task and makes comparison easier (Weller–Romney 1988; Siposné Nándori 2016). In the current survey, quicksort was used to rank poverty-related items according to the extent to which they are related to poverty.

To find the perceived precise meanings of the items, where there can be ambiguity, rating scales are used. These are usually expressed as four-to-eleven-

point scales. Their reliability increases with the larger the number of points that they have (Weller–Romney 1988), therefore scales with as many points as possible were created.

Free listing was conducted between July and September 2019, while formal interviews took place during October – December 2019.

RESULTS

The interpretation of poverty and its change over time

Poverty-related items mentioned by the informants in free listing in 2007, 2011, and 2019 are listed in Figure 2. "Unemployment" was among the top three items in each survey and "low willingness to work" was among the top two items in 2011 and 2019. It can be concluded that labor-market-related items did not become less important in the examined period. "Low income level," while mentioned in first place in 2007 and third place in 2011, ranked only sixth in 2019. "No access to basic needs" and "poverty cycle" did not change in importance much since 2011 (ranked at seventh and ninth). "Addiction" (mentioned as alcoholism and smoking in 2007) became less closely related to poverty, as it fell from sixth place to tenth place. Five further items were mentioned in all the three surveys. "Low education level" moved from rank 9 to 5 and then back to 8. "Unfavorable mentality," including hopelessness and the lack of prospects, was always situated is the second part of the list (ranking 11, 15 and 14 in the three surveys respectively) and the same applies to "isolation" with rankings 17, 17 and 21 in the surveys. "Illness" became less closely related to poverty from 2007 to 2011 (falling from fifth to fourteenth place) and remained almost at the same place (ranking 15) in 2019. "Large family" became less closely related to poverty, falling from tenth and twelfth place in 2007 and 2011 to nineteenth place in 2019. The other family and child-rearing items mentioned in 2007 ("single parent," "early founding of family," and "child benefit") were not listed in 2011 or and in 2019.

Some items were mentioned only in 2011 and 2019. "Having debt" had the same (fourth) position in both years, "macroeconomic problems" had almost the same position (sixteenth and seventeenth), while "integration problems" and the "lack of savings" became less closely related to poverty (the former fell from thirteenth to sixteenth place and the latter fell from tenth to eighteenth place). "Roma descent" and "retirement" were mentioned in relation to poverty in 2007 and 2019. The former one fell from second place to fifth place, while

"retirement" fell from sixteenth to twentieth place. Four items were mentioned only in 2019. "Malnutrition," "poor clothing," and "problems with shelter" were probably included in "no access to basic needs" in 2011. In 2019, however, these items were mentioned separately. "Public work" was also first mentioned in the last survey, even though this kind of employment existed in Hungary as early as in 2007.

Figure 2. *Rank order of poverty-related items in 2007, 2011, and 2019 (a score of 1 refers to the item most often related to poverty)*
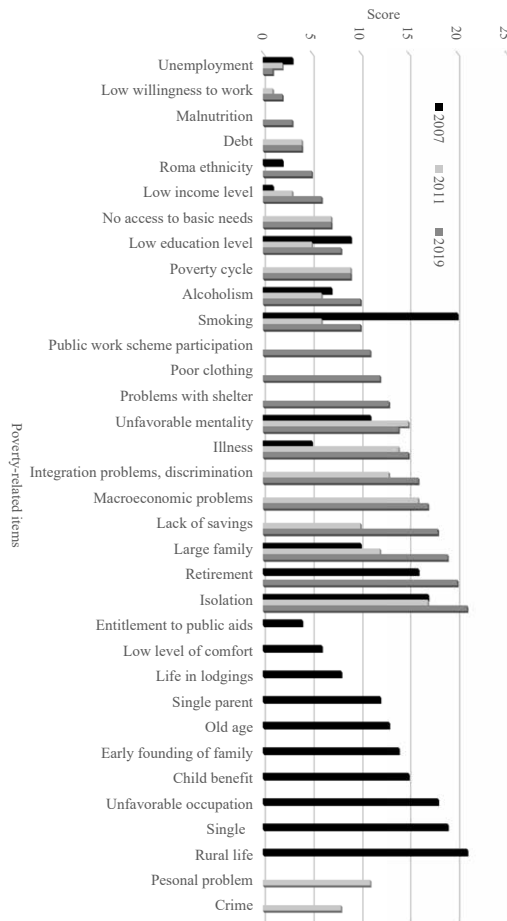
Source: Author's compilation.

Table 5. *Change in the ranking of poverty-related items between 2011 and 2019*

Poverty-related item	F (sig.)	t (sig.)	Mean	
			2011	2019
Low willingness to work	5.328 (0.027)	–2.248 (0.033)	4.5789	8.3158
Unemployment	0.806 (0.375)	–0.832 (0.411)	5.5263	7.1579
Debt	0.005 (0.943)	–1.381 (0.176)	6.6316	9.0000
Low income level	5.109 (0.030)	–1.953 (0.060)	6.4211	10.3158
No access to basic needs	9.063 (0.005)	–1.178 (0.248)	7.1579	9.5000
Low education level	12.999 (0.001)	–2.370 (0.025)	6.7368	10.9737
Poverty cycle	7.838 (0.008)	–1.633 (0.113)	8.3158	11.2105
Addiction	8.458 (0.006)	–2.853 (0.008)	6.9474	12.6579
Unfavorable mentality	0.724 (0.400)	–0.034 (0.973)	11.8947	11.9474
Illness	5.721 (0.022)	–1.249 (0.221)	11.8421	13.8421
Integration problems	2.278 (0.140)	–1.361 (0.182)	11.7368	13.8158
Macroeconomic problems	2.064 (0.159)	–1.754 (0.088)	12.5789	15.2105
Lack of savings	0.131 (0.719)	–3.201 (0.003)	10.0526	15.4474
Large family	2.595 (0.116)	–3.262 (0.002)	10.7368	15.6842
Isolation	0.239 (0.628)	–4.733 (0.000)	13.3158	18.0526

Source: Author's compilation.

In the case of 15 items, it is possible to test whether changes from 2011 to 2019 were significant. The number of poverty-related items included in quicksort was 18 in both waves, therefore their scores are comparable. F-test and t-test results (Table 5) highlight that the importance of the bulk of the poverty-related items (60%) did not change significantly in the examined period. Six items became less closely related to poverty.

To test whether there were any changes in value priorities in the examined period, the top seventeen items mentioned in the free listing are compared in the three waves (Table 6). Most of the items are related to material aspects of poverty, especially to physical needs (like no access to basic needs, malnutrition, life in lodgings, and low level of comfort) and to financial circumstances (like low income level, entitlement to public aids, debt, and lack of savings). Unemployment is also related to material aspects of poverty following the criteria of Abramson and Inglehart (1995) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005). Self-actualization (like low education level) is classified as item related to non-material aspects of poverty. Non-material aspects of poverty are associated with

the concept of social exclusion, which primarily focuses on the process leading to poverty (Havasi 2002) and emphasizes non-material aspects of poverty such as low education, poor health, isolation, or exclusion from cultural life.

Table 6. *Top ten items in the three waves and their classification into value categories*

Item category	2007		2011		2019	
	Item	Rank	Item	Rank	Item	Rank
Items related to material aspects of poverty	Low income level	1	Low income level	3	Low income level	6
	Entitlement to public aid	4	No access to basic needs	7	Malnutrition	3
					Debt	4
	Illness	5	Debt	4	No access to basic needs	7
	Life in lodgings	8	Lack of savings	10	Public work scheme participation	11
	Low level of comfort	6	Crime	8	Poor clothing	12
	Single parent	12	Illness	14	Problems with shelter	13
	Child benefit	15	Macroeconomic problems	16	Illness	15
	Unemployment	3	Unemployment	2	Macroeconomic problems	17
					Unemployment	1
	Average	6.75	Average	8.0	Average	8.9
Items related to non-material aspects of poverty	Isolation	17	Isolation	17	Low education level	8
			Personal problem	11		
	Low education level	9	Low education level	5		
	Average	13	Average	11	Average	8

Source: Author's compilation.

Some items (like Roma ethnicity, retirement, old age, or poverty cycle) are considered family values, therefore cannot be classified as unambiguously related to material or non-material aspects of poverty (Roales-Nieto et al. 2013). The same applies to items that are more strongly connected to the potential consequences of poverty, such as alcoholism/smoking or crime, and to items that are mostly the driving factors of poverty, like early family founding, large

family, low willingness to work, unfavorable mentality, integration problems, and discrimination. These items are not easily categorized as reflecting material or non-material aspects of poverty, therefore they are considered non-classifiable values.

Comparison of the importance of items related to material aspects of poverty is possible with F- and t-tests. The changes in the importance of items reflecting non-material aspects of poverty are not tested with statistical methods because of the small samples. The results (Table 7) show that there are no significant differences in the average rank of the items related to material aspects of poverty between each pair of waves. Neither economic recession with growing poverty nor economic recovery with growing existential security was associated with significant value changes. This strengthens the socialization hypothesis and implies that the time period that was covered was not long enough to modify the adults' value priorities.

Table 7. Comparison of the importance of items related to material aspects of poverty in the three waves

Year	2019			
	F (sig.)	t (sig.)	F (sig.)	t (sig.)
2007	0.460 (0.510)	−0.474 (0.643)	0.786 (0.388)	−0.882 (0.391)
2011	–	–	0.012 (0.912)	−0.334 (0.743)

Source: Author's compilation.

After determining the items most closely related to poverty, further specification of the perceived precise meanings of the items was necessary in certain cases. In the survey of 2019, the meanings of the following items needed further specification: low income level, large family, education level, and number of connections. Rating scales were applied to find out the precise perceived meanings of these items (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Questionnaire for rating scales

1.What is the per capita monthly net income (in HUF) below which the bulk of people are poor?

40,000	60,000	80,000	100,000	120,000	140,000	160,000	180,000	200,000–

2. Having how many children makes the bulk of families poor?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6–

3. What is the educational level below which the bulk of people are considered to be poor?

Less than 8 grades	8 grades	Secondary school with professional qualification, without general certificate	Secondary school with general certificate	Secondary school with general certificate and with professional qualification	College	University

4. Many people believe that not having friends can make people poor. What do you think about this? Most people are poor if they can count on people to help them in case they need it.

0	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 or 8	9 or 10	11–

Source: Author's compilation.

The precise perceived meanings of the items of interest can be found with the use of estimation. For this, a 0.95 confidence level is applied (see Table 8). Where possible, the table also includes the results of the rating scales from the previous waves.

Table 8. *Results of the rating scales in 2007, 2011, and 2019*

Item	Year	Sample size	Mean	SD	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Monthly net income	2007	13	41,538	16,756	31,407	51,670
	2011	20	48,400	22,772	37,742	59,058
	2019	19	87,368	37,836	69,132	105,605
Number of children	2007	13	3.46	0.88	2.93	3.99
	2011	20	4.00	0.97	3.54	4.46
	2019	19	3.79	1.23	3.20	4.38
Education level	2007	13	2.15	1.07	1.51	2.80
	2011	20	1.53	0.50	1.29	1.76
	2019	19	1.63	0.83	1.23	2.03
Connections	2011	20	1.47	1.98	0.55	2.35
	2019	19	0.61	1.16	0.05	1.17

Source: Author's compilation

For income, the perceived poverty line was between HUF 31,407 and 51,670 in 2007, and between HUF 37,742 and 59,058 in 2011. By 2019, it had increased to between 69,132 and 105,605. This increase is remarkable. To decide whether it is significant, further calculations were needed. In the case of large families, in 2007 people thought that the majority of large families could be considered poor (in relation to the large number of children) if they were bringing up more

than three or four children. By 2011, the limit was four children. In 2019, it was again between three and four. The mean education level below which the majority of people are considered poor because of their low qualification level is between eight grades (indicated by an average slightly above 2, Table 8) and with a professional qualification without a general certificate (indicated by number 3) in 2007, while the level decreased to between less than eight grades (indicated by number 1) and eight grades (indicated by number 2) in 2011 and 2019. The number of connections below which most people are considered poor because of their isolation was examined only in 2011 and 2019. The survey revealed that individuals with fewer than one or two friends were considered at risk of poverty in 2011, while the number declined to one or no friends in 2019.

The change in the perceived meaning of poverty-related items seems to be remarkable in some cases. To test whether the changes were significant, the F-test and t-test were used (Table 9). It is possible to compare the precise meanings of the poverty-related items in 2011 and 2019 for four items: number of children (as an indicator of a large family), number of connections (as an indicator of isolation), income level, and education level. The results highlight that the subjective interpretation of isolation, large family, and low education level did not change in the nine years that were examined. The subjective income poverty line, however, increased significantly from 2011 to 2019.

Table 9. *Comparison of the rating scale results in 2011 and 2019*

Items	Levene's test for equality of variance			T-test for equality of means				
	F	Sig.	Conclusion	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean diff.	SE diff.
Children	3.734	0.061	Equal variance assumed	0.579	36	0.566	0.211	0.363
Connections	1.683	0.203	Equal variance assumed	1.294	36	0.204	0.632	0.488
Income	2.019	0.164	Equal variance assumed	−3.816	36	0.001	−38947	10206
Education	8.147	0.007	Equal variance not assumed	−0.470	30	0.642	−0.105	0.224

Source: Author's compilation.

CONCLUSIONS

Cultural consensus theory proved to be appropriate for examining the public interpretation of poverty. Informants showed high levels of consensus in all three surveys, thus consensus theory was appropriate for estimating the cultural perceptions of informants about poverty.

The analysis of the interpretation of poverty in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Hungary, revealed that items related to material aspects of poverty made up of the bulk of poverty-related items in each survey. This implies that the values of the adult population did not change significantly from 2007 to 2019. The time that had passed was probably not long enough to modify the basic values of the adult population, and therefore to modify the subjective interpretation of poverty. This supports Inglehart's socialization hypothesis, which argues that a new generation needs to reach adulthood before values change. This finding is also in line with the findings of Duch and Taylor (1993), who concluded that existential security or insecurity during the early period of individuals' lives has a strong and long-lasting influence on post-materialist attitudes later in life. The research could be extended over time by repeating the survey in the future to test whether the improvement in poverty indicators is associated with changes in value priorities, and whether existential security leads to changes in value priorities and, accordingly, in the perception of poverty in the long term.

In terms of categories, labor-market-related items like unemployment or a low willingness to work did not change in importance. A remarkable change over time occurred with family-related items, which became less closely related to poverty from 2011 to 2019. The Hungarian government has re-defined its family policy and introduced many kinds of child benefits (family allowances, a family tax allowance, and housing subsidies) (Sági et al. 2018), many of which were designed for parents of three or more children. Further research is needed to find out whether such government policies that encourage people to have more children affect these judgements.

The 2019 study took place before the recent COVID-19 events. Kluegel and Smith (1986) argue that cultural values might temporarily change during times of unusual social and/or economic strain. To test whether the pandemic did change the value priorities of adults, and therefore the interpretation of poverty, further research is needed.

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INFORMAL FAMILY CARERS' NEED FOR STATE-GUARANTEED SUPPORT. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY?

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ABSTRACT: *The article uses an interpretive and qualitative framework to analyze elderly care policy with a focus on the instrumental effectiveness of this policy. The framework of the research offers an understanding of informal family carers' need for formal support at the level of social policy measures. The micro-level inquiry – interviews with informal family elderly carers –, which both reveals the caregiver burden and evaluates the latter's need for formal (social policy) support – demonstrates how qualitative inquiry can inform about shortages associated with this policy. The findings of the research suggest that formal support for informal family caregivers in Lithuania is not adequate for their multifaceted care burden and should be therefore developed to encompass both direct and indirect support measures.*

KEYWORDS: *informal family care, care burden, need for formal support, social policy measures, qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION

The extent and type of formal support (in this article understood as state-guaranteed support) available to informal caregivers largely depends on the extent to which the public elderly care system is relied upon, and how much the commitment of informal carers is promoted (Cooney–Dykstra 2011). Looking

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further ahead to forecast demographic changes (such as rapid population ageing and pressure on social security systems thereto closely related, the active participation of women in the labor market, and the increasing prevalence of smaller family units), many authors suggest that the role of informal care will substantially grow in the future (Jegermalm 2004; Colombo et al. 2011; Kehusmaa et al. 2013; Pickard 2015). Colombo et al. (2011) found that one-third of people aged 50 and over provide personal care for an elderly family member. According to a Eurofound survey (2020), 12% of individuals aged 18 and over care for one or more disabled or infirm family members, neighbors or friends, of any age, more than twice a week in EU countries. Taylor-Gooby (2004) qualifies this situation as a "new social risk" that threatens the wellbeing of carers unless they are provided with adequate support from the state.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that the topic of informal care has become such a demanding research field, addressing issues like the peculiarities of informal care work (Jegermalm 2005; Bettio–Verashchagina 2010; Triantafillou et al. 2010); health- and personal-freedom-related problems faced by informal carers (Cassie–Sanders 2008; Elsa 2014; Puig et al. 2015); the unattractiveness of the care sector and difficulties in attracting and retaining staff (Rubery et al. 2011; Franklin 2014); and the impact of family carers' responsibilities on their careers and stress at work (Neal–Wagner 2002; Dow–Meyer 2010; Trukeschitz et al. 2013; Heger 2014). There is a separate research field that focuses not only on support for informal caregivers in general within the context of demographic change (Jegermalm 2004; 2005), or states' intentions to reduce spending on social security (Kehusmaa et al. 2013, Chari et al. 2015), but which also more deeply analyzes the factors that attract informal carers to take on care responsibilities (Groenou–De Boer 2016), as well as evaluates support for informal carers within all systems of social policy measures (Triantafillou et al. 2010). The importance of research on the latter has increased in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rodrigues et al. (2021) and Bergmann and Wagner (2021) have pointed out the vulnerability of informal carers to the consequences of the pandemic and noted the impact of the pandemic on the prevalence and intensity of informal care. The burden of informal caring has increased during the pandemic due to prolonged periods of social distancing and general regulations aimed at closing down some local services and community facilities for the period of the pandemic (Mak et al. 2021; Rodrigues et al. 2021).

The topic of informal care is attracting increasing attention in Lithuania too, first of all due to traditional family ties which are still rather strong in Lithuania, and the constitutional duty of children to take care of their parents in old age. Moreover, Lithuania is outstanding for being a country where the rate of population

ageing is one of the fastest in the EU, and the level of emigration of the working-age population is very high. In Lithuania, over the period from 2000 to 2020, the proportion of the population aged 65 years or more grew from 13.7 percent to 19.9 percent (Eurostat, Population: Structure indicators). According to Statistics Lithuania, in 2018, 32,206 persons emigrated from Lithuania, of whom 85.4 percent were aged 15–59 years (Population of Lithuania 2021). Obviously, such a demographic situation creates uncertainty about the availability of informal care resources for the elderly in the future. At the present, in Lithuania, there is a large scale of informal care. This is due to both prevailing traditions of family care and the fact that the formal care sector is lacking capacity and private services are expensive. Therefore, family members, mostly women, take care of the elderly or disabled family members. Although it has been acknowledged that informal care constitutes a cornerstone of elderly care, and that the role of informal care will remain very important in Europe (Zigante 2018), this is not reflected in Lithuanian social policy. Lithuanian systems of personal social services, employment policy, and health care policy involve some separate state support measures for persons caring for elderly family members. However, in general, in social and health policy documents informal care is not treated as an integral part of elderly care policy, and informal family carers are left in the shadow of this policy. National strategies, such as The Action Plan for Promoting Healthy Ageing in 2014–2023 (Republic of Lithuania 2014), The National Strategy for Overcoming the Consequences of Ageing (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania 2004) support action aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of elderly care services for users and improving their quality of life; however, they say nothing about support for informal carers. On the other hand, Lithuania is not the only country in the EU where the need for the support of informal family carers is an issue. Courtin et al. (2014) notes that in most EU countries informal care support policies are at an early stage of development, and countries still do not have any practices for identifying informal carers' needs for support. The present article analyses findings obtained from interviews with informal family carers for the elderly that were conducted in Lithuania, seeking to reveal informal family carers' need for formal support, while looking through the lens of understanding the care burden and structure of social policy measures. In this article, informal family carers are defined as individuals – spouses/partners, children, and other family members – who provide elderly care services on an unpaid basis and without a contract. Qualitative inquiry has become a promising strategy for social policy research, helping to create a more nuanced understanding of policy, and leading to more focused and in-depth investigations of policy implementation (Smit 2003:4). Thus, the aim of the article is to evaluate if the objective care burden of

carers is covered by social policy support measures, and whether these measures address the subjective care burden.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Two concepts – the concept of the *care burden* and *the framework of informal carer support* – will be used when explaining the categories developed from qualitative data in this paper. The concept of *the care burden* allows for the structuring of the caregiver burden in psychological, emotional, social, and financial terms (Chou 2000) or for distinguishing between the objective and subjective burden (Montgomery et al. 1985). Objective care burdens are defined as perceived infringements or disruptions of tangible aspects of a caregiver's life (e.g., restrictions on caregivers' vacations due to care responsibilities, and the amount of time carers have for their own use). In other words, the objective burden refers to the time burden and the number of activities for which a care-receiver requires assistance (Tough et al. 2020:2), whereas the subjective care burden is understood as caregivers' attitudes about care, or emotional reactions related to care-giving experiences (Montgomery 2002; Montgomery et al. 1985). The subjective burden is a state characterized by fatigue, stress, perceived limited social contact and role adjustment, and perceived altered self-esteem (del-Pino-Casado et al. 2018:3). The objective and subjective care burden are closely related (Bastawrous 2013).

Another concept used in this article – *framework of informal carer-support policy measures* – was taken from Triantafillou et al. (2010). This framework was chosen because of two main considerations relevant to our study. First, this framework permits the classification of support measures through the lens of social policy, and second, it makes it possible to see the links between formal and informal care. *Specific policy measures,* according to Triantafillou et al. (2010), are those that target informal carers to help them undertake their caring tasks. These measures may not require the input of formal carers (specific direct measures) or may entail a 'hand-in-hand' approach between formal and informal carers (specific indirect measures). *Non-specific measures* are those that target both the older person and the informal carer: direct measures are those that primarily target informal carers, while *indirect measures* target the older person (Triantafillou et al. 2010).

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

Data collection method and characteristics of informants

The article discusses the results of qualitative research conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews with informal family carers. The interviews were conducted as part of a project funded by the Research Council of Lithuania.[2] The interviews seek to disclose how informal family carers perceive that elderly care policy affects them in terms of caregiving activities, and what difficulties in care-related responsibilities they experience.

Nineteen interviews with informal family carers were conducted from June to August 2016. The contacts of the informants were obtained through non-governmental organizations and municipal social service offices (using the snowball principle). Respondent selection was based on three main criteria: the respondent should be caring for an ageing family member (spouse, parent, other relative) at home; the care recipient should be receiving cash-for-care benefits (meaning that the care recipient has high care needs); and the care recipient should not receive public home-help services. In addition, when selecting the interviewees, account was taken of the employment status of informal carers (with a view to including working and nonworking carers). As a result, 17 women and two men were selected for the research: 13 informal carers provided home care for their parents, and two informal carers each looked after a spouse, parent(s)-in-law, or grandparent(s). The interviewees were aged from 40 to 70, and the average age was 55. Of the 19 participants, seven reported to being in full-time employment, three were employed on a part-time basis, and the remaining participants reported being unemployed or retired. The sample of informants helped reveal the many-sided needs of carers, as various researchers claim that informal carers' need for support is related to caregivers' age and sex (Montgomery et al. 2016), education and financial situation (Tough et al. 2020), and employment status (Arksey 2002).

Strategy of data analysis

The data were analyzed using a literal transcription strategy, and conventional content analysis. Following the conventional content analysis approach, we used a strategy of inductive category development involving three phases: preparation,

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2 The project "Transformation of elderly care sector: demand for services and labour force and quality of work" was implemented between October 1, 2015 and April 30, 2017 (No. GER-012/2015).

organizing, and reporting (Schreier 2014). Accordingly, the interview data were divided into subcategories and then grouped into categories which were finally used to create the themes.

Ethical considerations and informed consent

The research was conducted in compliance with the main principles of research ethics: respect for individuals' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, an attitude of beneficence and avoidance of harm to the research subject, and justice. Research participants were informed about the purpose of the research. They were also provided with the broad explanation that the information received during the interviews would be used for scientific purposes and for making proposals intended to improve social policy in Lithuania. The interviewees' decision to participate in the research was voluntary, and the interview material has been cited and coded to ensure informants' confidentiality. Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Ethics Commission of the Lithuanian Social Research Centre.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Two themes referring to the formal support needs of informal family carers and the care burden that is experienced were chosen for the analyses in this article. The first theme concerns difficulties with day-to-day routines of informal family care, and the second expresses carers' need for formal support.

"You are completely excluded from life"

Difficulties with day-to-day routines identified during interviews with informal family carers for the elderly support the assumption that caring for a loved one at home is both a psychologically and physically demanding activity. The analyses of interviews revealed that the infinity of caregiving tasks competes for time and energy with other duties, such as paid work, and for activities that are enjoyable, such as going to the theatre. Also, the informal family carers we interviewed complained about their own physical health problems related to constant lifting or bathing the person they care for, and about psychological health problems related to emotionally demanding care work. Moreover,

informal family carers were unsatisfied both with the compensation for nursing supplies and transport costs, as this represents an additional financial burden, and with the lack of information about nursing-related issues. The bureaucracy involved in the process of identifying care needs for cared-for persons was also mentioned in the list of difficulties (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Difficulties experienced by informal family caregivers related to their care activities*

Difficulties of informal family caregivers	Supporting quotes
Plenty of work related to the hygiene-related and daily living needs of the person being cared for	"First, what we do: get up, wash, comb, eat, give medicine, then massage, then relax, sit, then again – food, medicine, again the procedures and so on; then in the evening, in the evening, again the same – dinner, then massage again, then there are still days when you need to wash everything." (Interview 03)
Reconciling caregiving tasks and paid work	"You just get tired of that reconciling, and that constant thinking. If you are at work, you are here and there [but at home], you can't be like that – if you are at work, then at work, if you are at home, then at home, you can't be in two places all the time and, just, [it is] psychologically [challenging]." (Interview 09)
Reconciling caregiving tasks and personal life	"There's none. None. I'm telling you, eight years of my life just thrown away [...]. I mean, there's no [private] life and you can't go out anywhere, you simply can't [...]. You are completely excluded from life, [going] nowhere." (Interview 16)
Unsuitable housing and environment for a disabled person	"... when an ambulance arrives, they have problems taking the patient. They say "ask some men for help." Then you knock at each neighbor's door looking for males able to help carry the person. Because sometimes only a nurse arrives and she is not always able to carry them, and this is the situation we have." (Interview 14)
Health-related problems	"I am an oncological patient myself, and for me in general it's hard to do everything, because I have had three surgeries, I find it difficult to lift her when needed, I hire [people to help]." (Interview 09). "And then I try to deal with myself as much as possible, although one's face very often betrays that it is not very easy." (Interview 18)
Emotional and psychological fatigue, tension	"You won't say it's hard work, but it's psychologically hard. [...] There were all kinds of emotions. [...] good and bad, and not so bad [....]" (Interview 06)

Additional financial burden	"The second thing, it costs a lot of money, even though there is that nursing [care allowance], he gets it, but I work for 'thanks,' let's say. […] The patient needs a lot more, and what is very bad is that the expanding [range of] medicinal products [that are required is] not reimbursed […]and what is bad is when you go to the hospital, you don't get diapers, you no longer are prescribed them, and the hospital does not give them. And sit as you want - [if you] have money, [you can] buy, [if not] [you] do not buy." (Interview 10)
Lack of information about nursing-related issues	"There is a lack of information, a great lack […]. There is a lot of information about violence for sure, but when it comes to diseases, the sick, especially old people – there is a great lack, I don't know." (Interview 13)
Bureaucracy in the process of identifying care needs for cared-for persons	"First of all, that's what…, first of all, it's clear that caring at home, it takes time – all those walks to the doctors, a lot of time, as for a working person, it's just very difficult, because it's the biggest bureaucracy there, from the beginning, just handling the same nursing, the same paperwork, no one is there with you […]." (Interview 15)

The quotations provided in Table 1 show that the informal family caregivers experience plenty of difficulties in many areas of life that may be related to the objective care burden. Moreover, the interviews results also revealed that caregiving work has an emotional and psychological impact on informal caregivers' lives too. Informants mentioned feelings and states of mind such as fatigue, tension, helplessness, and stress when trying to combine paid work with informal care or personal life, which – looking at the research of Montgomery (2002), Montgomery et al. (1985), del-Pino-Casado et al. (2018) – can be qualified as subjective care burdens.

What would help to reduce worries that are a part of everyday life?

Research on the experience of informal family caregivers revealed not only the burdensome nature of providing care activities for the elderly, but also indicated informal family carers' need for various types of support, which they expected to receive through state social policy.

The informal family carers who were interviewed highlighted the importance of measures related to the facilitation of their daily duties; in particular, such as housing/accommodation and adaptation to meet the special needs of the person being cared for (for example, staircases, the installation of lifting mechanisms, the replacement of bathtubs with wheelchair access, etc., meals on wheels, and

special transportation services). There is insufficient access to transportation services in emergency cases, and reimbursement for transport costs is minimal:

> *What we need most of all, as I say, is an addition to all those transport costs. It's not enough. The amount they compensate per month is not enough for anyone. Let's say, one month you may not need transportation, maybe, but what if you have to go three or four times per month? (Interview 10)*

Both the need for more information about care and training for carers and advertising stands and leaflets, as well as specialist consultations at home or nursing courses were mentioned:

> *[...] there must be something, some more information ... it might be even some special day or hour when carers would be trained during some special courses. Something that would be helpful. From time to time, one day a month [...]. (Interview 11)*

In order to balance care and work, research participants referred to additional rest days – i.e. the possibility to take one or two days off from work per month without losing their salary for these days. With regard to the possibility of taking at least a short break from routine care duties, the informants identified the problem of the accessibility of respite care:

> *But I don't ask for them [days off/respite care]. I don't need it. You have to pay for it. But it is also a municipal institution. I've made inquiries. I also wanted it. Because here, although you are not imprisoned, the feeling is similar. Sometimes you want to go, well, to the cinema or theatre. But you can't. And then you stay the whole winter at home. So what? It's nothing. Or if you need a such service, you have to pay quite a lot for having a respite worker from an agency to let you go out, for example. (Interview 01)*

Caring for an elderly person at home is physically and psychologically draining work, and informal family carers lack peace of mind, so the interviewees also admitted that they need psychological assistance to …

> *[...] learn how to balance all those things, how to push away the worries that are part of our everyday lives. And if it [caring responsibilities] lasts too long, who knows what can happen then.*

Informants indicated that higher levels of compensation for nursing expenses and higher levels of financial assistance for nursing supplies, particularly diapers, would be very helpful:

Look, they compensate you for one diaper, but you have to change three or sometimes four diapers a day. This means you have to pay full price for the rest you need. (Interview 01)

The formal procedure of establishing the need for care and being awarded benefits is a heavily bureaucratized process, creating additional care burdens for informal family caregivers:

In fact, this bureaucratic indicator related to processing documents should be simplified in essence. I've heard a lot of stories about the service for the disabled, and the numerous evaluations required there…. That the institution for disabilities and capacity for work, the disability office, does evaluations very subjectively, on the basis of nobody-knows what. So, in some cases it would be reasonable to have a commission to visit a person at home and evaluate the situation. Not one or two persons, and not necessarily from the disability office, but possibly more persons. (Interview 14)

DISCUSSION

Informal family carers are in need of different types of formal support in Lithuania, starting with better access to information about care, and ending with various services and financial support. Our findings support the results of research conducted in other EU countries that claims that family carers need complex forms of support that cover a wide range of measures (Courtin et al. 2014; Stoltz et al. 2004). Additionally, our results underline that these support measures should be aimed at alleviating both the objective care burden – i.e. the impact of caregiving tasks on resources such as time, physical health, and finances –, and the subjective care burden (the emotional impacts of caregiving tasks). Courtin et al.'s (2014) study, which was based on assessments by EU experts rather than by carers themselves, states that across the EU the support for informal carers varies significantly. However, the most commonly expressed need of carers is for financial benefits and respite care and training, as confirmed by the results of our study.

In order to take a systematic look at the results discussed above, we applied *the framework of informal carer support policy measures* explicated by Triantafillou et al. (2010), which entails a variety of social policy instruments in the area of elderly care. Using this framework, we not only obtain a broader picture of informal carer support from the elderly-care policy perspective, but can also evaluate gaps in the structure of this policy in the country (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Informal family carers' need for formal support measures according to qualitative research data*
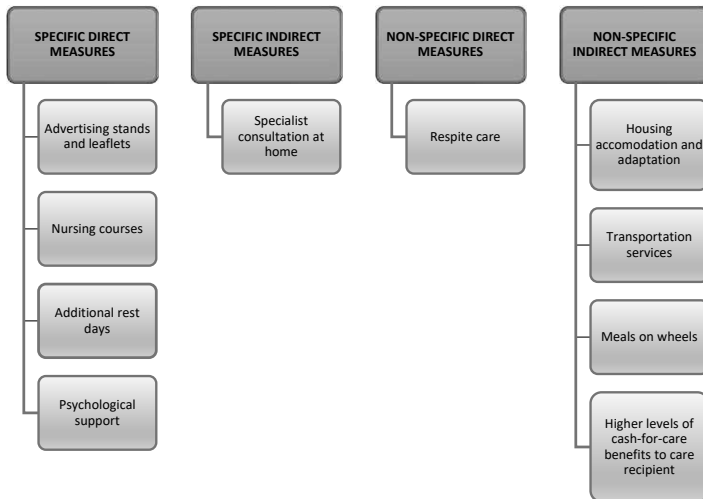
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results reported here confirm that informal family carers emphasized the need for both specific and non-specific, as well as direct and indirect, formal support measures. This qualitative research, of course, does not allow for the quantitative assessment of which measures are requested more frequently, and which less. However, some studies conducted in the area of support for informal caregivers demonstrate that direct and indirect support measures are not evenly distributed. For example, findings of the study carried out by Jegermalm (2004) show that formal direct support measures for informal carers are far less common in practice. The author identifies two main reasons for this. The first one is the often vague and uncertain relationship between carers and the public sector. Carers are neither clients nor patients, but are a part of the system consisting of the public sector, informal care, and voluntary organizations

(Jegermalm 2004: 9). The second reason why measures directly targeting caregivers are too thinly spread is, according to the author, the lack of awareness of informal carers about the support measures available to them. Inter alia, our study results support the claim that information dissemination and the clarity of various issues is a quite relevant problem for informal family caregivers, as they complained about the lack of information about elderly nursing and the complicated process of identifying care needs.

In terms of specific policy measures (i.e. measures that are targeted at helping informal carers accomplish their caring tasks), our research informants mentioned the need for more specific and direct policy measures (i.e. measures that do not require the input of formal carers), as opposed to specific indirect ones (i.e. measures that entail a 'hand-in-hand' approach between formal and informal carers). Other studies (Triantafillou et al. 2010; Hengelaar et al. 2018; Wittenberg et al. 2019) also pay attention to the gaps that exist in the care sector between formal and informal carers regarding working 'hand-in-hand' that emerge due to the unwillingness of professional care providers to integrate their skills with the practical skills of informal carers, the lack of mutual trust, and an inability to cooperate. Wittenberg et al. (2019) propose that caregivers' disposition to share care with professionals depends on personal and situational characteristics (for example, the gender of the carer, their health, the recipient's specific impairment, the relationship between caregivers and care recipients, etc.).

In addition, it is obvious that the opinions of our study participants reflect the great need of informal family carers for support in kind as opposed to cash support. However, when it comes to the required cash support, informants reported the need for higher levels of cash-for-care to support recipients, but did not mention that carers might need such allowances for themselves. Although some European countries use carer allowances for caregivers as a social policy instrument, this is not the case in Lithuania. This circumstance echoes the earlier findings by Colombo et al. (2011) and Triantafillou et al. (2010) which provided evidence that in European countries cash-for-care benefits paid to care recipients are more widespread than cash-for-care benefits paid to carers.

There is reason to finish the discussion by mentioning some facts about the elderly care policy instruments that are used to support informal care in Lithuania. In terms of support measures aimed at balancing informal family caregivers' work and care responsibilities, it is noticeable that in Lithuania family members are entitled to paid leave and unpaid leave to care for a sick family member (including elderly persons) (Republic of Lithuania 2000; 2016a). However, persons caring for adult family members are not given any additional

paid days off (in Lithuania, only employees who are raising a disabled child under the age of 18, or two children under the age of 12 are given one extra day off per month). Regarding other specific formal support measures mentioned in our study (that is, those related to the need for more information about care and training for carers), it can be concluded that formal carers, according to their job descriptions, should inform and consult informal family caregivers (Republic of Lithuania 2006a). Unfortunately, there is a lack of systematic practice and action in this regard in the area of informal elderly care.

In terms of non-specific support policy measures – first of all, respite care – it is important to note that until 2019 in Lithuania informal carers for the elderly were entitled to respite care only once a year in the form of placing the cared-for person in a social care or nursing home for a period of up to one month (since 2019, respite care has been available in the form of home help, day social care, and temporary social care) (Republic of Lithuania 2006a). However, these services were launched only in some municipalities, and covered only about 180 elderly persons in 2013 (Lazutka et al. 2016). When it comes to higher levels of cash-for-care benefits to care recipients, it should be noted that there are two kinds of benefits in Lithuania which are allocated to elderly persons in need of care to compensate for their care needs: these are called special compensations for nursing and attendance benefits, and cash benefits for help (Republic of Lithuania 2006b; 2016b). However, the level and coverage of these payments, especially when it comes to the cash-for-help benefit, are low. In 2019, this benefit was paid to as few as 103 elderly persons (Statistics Lithuania 2021). Participants of our study mentioned the need for measures such as housing accommodation and adaption, transportation services, and meals on wheels, which are also specified in Lithuanian legislation; however, not all of these measures are available to informal family caregivers. For example, in accordance with the currently valid procedure, meals on wheels are available only to persons who receive home help services from their local authorities, and those who are cared for only by their family members are not eligible for them (*Description of the Procedure… 2010*).

It can be concluded that although most of the support policy measures for informal caregivers are set out in Lithuanian law, informants are nonetheless lacking such support in reality. A similar conclusion was the result of research about the informal carer support system in Sweden, which stated that it is unclear whether carers benefit from government policy support measures (Stoltz et al. 2004). Additionally, our results suggest that the implementation of state guarantees for caring for a family member is hampered by bureaucratic obstacles, such as the organizational peculiarities of the process aimed at identifying care needs for cared-for persons.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of the research suggest that caregiving for an elderly person has an impact on informal family caregiver's time, physical health, and financial resources, and affects their emotional and psychological wellbeing. The results also reveal a close relationship between the objective and subjective burdens of caregivers. Therefore, the results create important insights into social policy; namely, that the development of formal support measures for family carers that is intended to minimize objective burdens can be also expected to reduce the subjective burdens on carers, and vice versa.

By looking at carers' need for formal support through the framework of social policy measures, we see that carers in Lithuania formally have the possibility to apply for a majority of these measures according to the legislation. However, study results reveal the restricted accessibility of such support for informal family carers. In other words, it can be observed that both the objective and subjective burden faced by informal family caregivers and assessments of the need for formal support presuppose that the availability of the discussed social policy measures (i.e. information services, adaptation of home environments to special needs, etc.) is insufficient, and that these measures are not enough to alleviate the burden of informal caregivers. On the other hand, the research data do not explain properly the reasons for the unavailability of certain specific support measures, even though they formally exist. One of the reasons for this may be a lack of financial resources, as the informants emphasized that measures such as, for example, respite care and hygiene products, are quite expensive. Another reason mentioned by the informants is the bureaucratic obstacles associated with the process of assessment that make it difficult to access support measures. However, additional studies are needed to more comprehensively explore the factors that are associated with use of formally available support measures, or the lack thereof.

Limitations of the study

The fact that the interviews only included two male family carers did not allow the authors to distinguish between gender-based formal care needs. In Lithuania, the informal care sector is completely dominated by women, making it difficult to attract more men to the study. This can be seen as a limitation of the research.

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CARING FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE: THE CASE OF RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT: *In this article, we analyze the care of older persons ('eldercare') in the post-Soviet space using the example of Russia. Our research questions are: How are the care arrangements of older adults in the post-Soviet state transforming, and how are these transforming care arrangements affecting the agency of older persons? The materials for the analysis are qualitative interviews with older people, social workers, and experts from Russia (N=31), as well as statistics and legal acts. The care arrangements of older adults are undergoing significant transformation, which we can identify in two distinct trends. The first is the drift away from a state and family monopoly on caring for older people to a mixed model. New forms of care and providers are emerging: NGOs; business organizations; foster families for older people; specially equipped apartments; and private nursing homes The informal care sector is also developing thanks to the paid caring services of neighbors and migrants (both external and internal). The second trend is that, in practice, care can often be 'layered' in nature. Relatives, public services, non-profit organizations, and paid staff can take care of the same person at the same time. These trends expand the repertoire of care scenarios and make choice more flexible for older persons and increase their agency.*

KEYWORDS: *care arrangements in the post-Soviet space, post-Soviet eldercare, public services, foster families, older people's agency*

INTRODUCTION

Population aging is a trend in many developed and developing countries, and post-Soviet countries are no exception. Russia, the largest post-Soviet country, is today an aging society. The proportion of older people (60 years or older) in Russia today is 20%, and this is projected to increase to 30% by 2050 (Global Age Watch Index 2015). From 1994 to 2010 (the year of the last national census) the number of people aged 65+ living alone increased from 25.5 to 29.7% Only 25% of older people live with their children (Prokofieva–Mironova 2015). According to this indicator, the position of Russia is between that of northern and southern Europe (13% of older people live with children in Denmark, and 52% in Spain) (SHARE 2021). At the same time, the Active Ageing Index (AAI) for Russia shows that the country is at the bottom of the ranking in the domain of the elderly having an independent, healthy, and secure life. The AAI score for Russia is 30.9 points, which means about 69% of the potential of older people in relation to active aging is unused, and corresponds to the eighteenth place in the ranking of 29 European countries (Varlamova et al. 2017). Sooner or later in the lives of many older people there comes a period when, due to their limited physical ability, they are no longer able to fully serve themselves independently like they used to. In Russia, home-based services for older people emerged in the late 1980s based on state social services. According to the statistics, the latter are the most common and popular form of care for older people who have limited mobility and live alone. For comparison: social services and medical care at home are received by 1.1 million older people (about 3% of older people in Russia), while only 250 thousand people live in public nursing homes (Federal Russian Statistics 2018). In recent years, a long-term care (LTC) system has been introduced at the federal level. In 2019, LTC was implemented in six pilot regions (out of 86). In 2020, an order was issued by the Ministry of Labor[2] concerning the approval of the 'standard model' of LTC, and by 2021 it had already been introduced in 24 out of 86 regions. In fact, the LTC system is based on familiar home-based services but offers a wider range of support, including for relatives of older people.

In European countries, the practice of caring for an older person significantly varies, and includes the state, family, and the third sector (Spasova et al. 2018).

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2 Decree of the Ministry of Labor of Russia of 09/29/2020 N 667 "On the implementation in individual constituent entities of the Russian Federation in 2021 of the Standard Model of the Long-Term Care System for Elderly Citizens and People with Disabilities in Need of Outside Care" https://legalacts.ru/doc/prikaz-mintruda-rossii-ot-29092020-n-667-o-realizatsii/#100010

In Russia, after the adoption of the new 442 Federal Law[3] on social services, it became possible to actively involve NGOs and business organizations in caring for older people. As a result, having actively emerged and developed in the past few years, NGOs and business organizations are now alternative providers of public social services. Today's NGO / business organizations are included in the register of public service providers in many Russian regions. They offer affordable prices for services, but this is true mainly of large cities. In parallel with this, other forms of care organizations are developing: foster families for older people, private nursing homes, and specially equipped apartments. Taken together, this changes the field of care. In this article, we analyze eldercare in the post-Soviet space using the example of Russia. We answer the questions how are the care arrangements of older adults transforming in the post-Soviet state, and how do these transforming care arrangements affect the agency of the elderly?

POST-SOVIET CARE ARRANGEMENTS AND THE AGENCY OF OLDER PEOPLE

The repertoire of caring scenarios (including caring for older people living alone) is determined by the care arrangements that exist in each society. By care arrangement, we mean *"an interrelation between the cultural values about care, the relevant sense-constructions in a given society surrounding informal and formal care, and the way institutions like the welfare state, the family, the labour market and the non-profit sector as well as social structures frame informal and formal care"* (Pfau-Effinger 2005). In this context, family values about care which are transmitted by the family and influence the choice of care format are of particular relevance. In different countries, patterns of care can transform and change under the influence of external circumstances. In the countries of northern Europe, where the formats of institutional care or "cold-modern ideals of care" (Hochschild 2003) are traditionally more developed, the main providers of care are institutions (nursing homes etc.), indicating a trend towards the marketization of care. This trend is expressed in the fact that public service provision in the form of paid and private contracts is actively being developed, from among which wealthy older people may choose. Moreover, re-familiarization is becoming more widespread. According to researchers, this jeopardizes the potential of increasing class and gender equality in Scandinavian 'welfare states' (Moberg 2017; Szebehely–Meagher 2018). The Russian welfare model is the successor to

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3 Federal Law "On the Basics of Social Services for Citizens in the Russian Federation" dated 28.12.2013 N 442-FZ

the Soviet one, which is most similar to the social democratic model in that the leading role of the state in social care is assumed (Esping-Andersen 1990). If we look at care through the prism of the ideals of care, then the Soviet one comes closest to the "postmodern" approach (Hochschild 2003), in which women bear a double burden due to their having to fulfil the gender role of working mothers that has persisted into the post-Soviet period (Zdravomyslova–Temkina 2005). However, in the post-Soviet period there have been significant changes that have entailed a reconfiguration of the usual model of care. These changes include an increase in the proportion of the older population, the active nuclearization of families, changes in intergenerational contracts, and the influx of migrants as a labor force, etc. These changes are accompanied by changes in the social policy of the state. Since the late 1980s, social services have been actively developing and a home-based service system has been introduced. Since the early 2000s, the commercialization of child care has been actively developing, and the nanny profession has become firmly established in the labor market (Zdravomyslova 2010). A little later, similar commercialization occurred in terms of caring for the elderly (mainly involving the work of migrants). Since the 2010s, the state has been expanding the list of home-based care providers, actively trying to attract Russian NGOs and businesses. Along with this, there has been a shift from only family or/and state older care to the third sector, including foreign NGOs and religious organizations in Russia (Caldwell 2007). However, after the adoption of Law 121 on 'foreign agents'[4] in Russia, which limits the activities of many (including charity) organizations, it can be assumed that this trend has changed.

In addition to the values of care, the objective parameters of the lives of older people also play an important role – the level of well-being, health, etc. Researchers note that a good financial situation increases the level of independence of an older person, and the cohesion of the family, characteristic of the southern regions of Europe, contributes to informal assistance and family care (Bettio–Plantenga 2004). Surveys of older people in Spain show that their lifestyle choices are directly related to their expected health status. In the case of good health, the preferred option is to live in one's own home and in the case of physical or cognitive impairment with relatives (Fernandez-Carro 2016). The poor health indicators of Russian older people force them early on to resort to outside help to solve everyday problems.

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4 The Foreign Agents Act allows government authorities to include NGOs on the list of foreign agents if they receive funding from abroad. Being added to this list entails several restrictions and very often NGOs cannot continue their work as before. Some NGOs have been forced to cease their activity.

Against the background of the development of new alternatives to care, questions arise about the role of the elderly in this process. In practice, the preferences of older people about the conditions of care do not always coincide with reality. For example, mass surveys of older people 80+ show that most of them would prefer to grow old where they live (with family care or paid assistance), followed by the option of assisted living, or continuing in a care retirement community. But only one in every three older people are in their preferred environment (Kasper et al. 2019). Unfortunately, such surveys are not conducted in Russia.

We consider the transition of an older person to that phase of life when they begin to need care from outside, focusing on the dilemma that arises: How can one maintain independence when one needs help from outside? Independence might mean the ability to do things as before, to have control over one's affairs, or be linked to good health and an active lifestyle (Fenton 2014). Such a situation creates several tensions: one of them is between the need for care and support and the wish to keep control and be independent, while another is related to the roles and responsibilities of the state, family, and the older person (Fenton 2014). Agency involves a continuous flow of conduct and involves "intervention" in the objective world (Giddens 1979:55–56). As modern research shows, the category of agency is very problematic when it comes to old age. Discussing the concept of the 'fourth age,' researchers conclude that it is in this period when choice ends or becomes irrelevant. Compared to this, the 'third age' – thanks to increased affluence, individualization, and the de-institutionalization of the life course – allows for maintaining autonomy and agency. The key difference between the fourth and the third age is the loss of control over the body (often as a result of dementia). This leads to the loss of social agency, as such persons are determined by others to be no longer able to manage everyday life (Gilleard–Higgs 2010; 2014). Old (the fourth) age can be treated as a state of "unbecoming" (Higgs–Gilleard 2014) – and this view is largely shared by older people themselves. Older people associate agency with autonomy in decision-making and the ability to do things without external assistants; thus, they equate old age with the end of their agency (Jolanki 2009). In the context of our research, it is important to understand how agency is changing for the post-Soviet older person who is accustomed to relying on the state for everything. This generation of older people see themselves for the first time as a 'lost generation.' Members of the latter think of themselves as the victims of overly rapid socioeconomic changes in the country (Grigoryeva et al. 2021). The concept of agency seems important to us, because it raises the issue of the need to listen to the voices of older people.

As a result, the post-Soviet systems of social care, as part of the entire social, economic, and political context, are undergoing transformation, mainly involving

a shift from regulation and control towards individual responsibility. As there is a lack of qualitative research about old-age care arrangements, especially from Eastern Europe, we seek to address this knowledge gap by analyzing empirical data from a post-communist county – Russia. Older people from Russia spent most of their lives under an authoritarian Soviet regime; they were used to broad regulation and the responsibility of the state. Do they still expect that authorities will take care of them in case of need? As researchers rightly point out, the same names for service organizations or care practices do not always mean the same thing in different societies, and their proportions may also differ. Besides, they may also differ in belonging to different government departments and funding arrangements. All this makes it difficult to compare social care systems in different countries (Anttonen et al. 2003). Thus, the main goal of our study is to analyze the transformation of care arrangements for older adults in the post-Soviet space using only the example of Russia. We will show how the care system is transforming, what new elements and actors are emerging, and how this affects the agency of the elderly. As part of our study, we deal with older people with limited mobility but who can make decisions independently (many of them can take care of themselves, although they need external support). In this context, our research questions can be formulated as follows: How are the care arrangements of older adults transforming in the post-Soviet state, and how do these transforming care arrangements affect the agency of older people?

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this study, we used two sets of data. The first included empirical data from the social service sector in Russia that were collected during two studies (2011–2014, and 2017–2018) in St. Petersburg and other regions (Nizhnii Novgorod, Velikii Novgorod, and Republic Karelia). They involved interviews with older people – clients of public services, nurses, and heads of public service institutions (N=31), as well as observation-based diaries of the interactions between nurses and older persons, and heads of state social services/departments. All the interviewees were older people aged 60–86 years, living alone, with limited mobility. Most of them were women. This data allowed us to analyze public services from three perspectives at once: older clients, social workers, and heads of organizations. In part, these data helped us understand how difficult it is to develop other providers of care for older people – namely, NGOs. Interviews and observation-based diaries were analyzed, applying thematic analysis (Braun et al. 2014).

The second dataset includes statistical and demographic data, legal acts, and NGOs' and business organizations' websites and publications. This data helped us to analyze other elements of care arrangements – NGOs and business organizations, families and foster families, and specially equipped apartments.

A limitation of our research is that the empirical material mainly concerns public services. The material does not include information about the older clients of NGOs or business organizations or older people living in foster families or specially equipped apartments. Also, we do not consider in detail the informal care sector, the main providers of which are often women migrants.

FINDINGS

The support received by older people living alone can be seen as multi-layered. The persons who primarily and most frequently provide any assistance are the children of the former or other close relatives. When children live further away, the elderly or their relatives are forced to look for alternatives. Our data show that, on the one hand, government services (which provide home care) are widespread; and on the other, that we can often identify mixed care arrangements (including relatives, formal services, neighbors, etc.). Another pronounced trend is the development of already familiar providers of care and the emergence of new ones. Non-profit organizations, private homes for the elderly, foster families for the elderly, specially equipped apartments, etc. – all these have become elements of care arrangements. Below we will take a closer look at each of them.

Families and foster families

In Russia today, despite the lack of data about the number of families caring for a close older relative, it can be assumed that this is the most widespread form of care. Unfortunately, there are no statistics in Russia that would allow us to estimate the prevalence of informal care for older people. Current research notes that the family form of care is still a cultural norm in Russian society, and despite the modernization of care practices families do not receive sufficient institutional support. This is especially true of families supporting older people with dementia (Zdravomyslova–Savchenko 2020). However, family care is becoming less popular due to the nuclearization and migration of the younger generation to large cities. The unevenness in the number of individuals of

different generations, with the predominance of older people in Russia today, signals that it is difficult to care for older relatives with the help of only family members – i.e. without the help of the state and business (Eliseeva 2017). In the case of family care, we face the phenomenon of the "sandwich generation" – referring to the difficulties individuals have combining professional activities and childcare with caring for old parents, as well as emotional and physical burnout (Tkach 2018). Taken together, these factors are pushing the elderly and their relatives to look for alternative caring arrangements. As a result, family caregivers can share the care burden with public services or through informal contracts. Often, migrant women from Central Asia are providers of informally contracted care.

A new form of care for single seniors is foster families. The new trend is being encouraged by the development by the state of the institution of foster families for older people who are alone. Supporting this initiative on the one hand helps the state reduce its obligation to keep older people in homes, and on the other hand develops a 'warm' form of care. To date, there is no law about foster families; this practice is regulated at the regional level. According to the Ministry of Labor, about half of the regions (43 out of 86) have relevant legislation and practice about this practice. In some regions, foster families have existed since 2008 or 2010. However, the practice cannot be called a mass phenomenon – the number of 'adopted' older people fluctuates between 100-150 people in each of the regions.[5] The foster family acts as a provider of care, and the older person the recipient. 'Social services' in foster families are aimed at maximizing the prolongation of a person's stay in a social environment familiar to them to maintain their social status (Dolgova 2013). Researchers emphasize the widest distribution of this approach in rural and sparsely populated areas. Foster care improves the emotional background of an older person (Dolgova 2013; Golubeva et al. 2017). However, there are some structural difficulties – for example, the lack of psychological assistance for such families. In addition, it is easier to implement such a practice in rural areas when an older person is familiar with a potential foster family (Dolgova 2013).

NGOs and business organizations

NGOs and business organizations, despite their relatively limited prevalence and status as novices in the field of social care, embody the important tendency

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5 *Third age – second family. Lonely elderly people are taken to foster families* (Sept. 21, 2019). RG.Ru. https://rg.ru/2019/09/18/v-rossii-zapushchen-gosproekt-po-usynovleniiu-odinokih-starikov.html

to the privatization of eldercare. NGOs and business organizations have been able to participate in providing social services for the elderly since the adoption of the new law on social services in 2015. They can act as government providers of social services and receive government subsidies for these activities. To do this, they need to be entered on the register of social service providers. We analyzed this tendency using the example of St. Petersburg. Today in St. Petersburg, according to the Register of Social Service Providers, out of 139 social service providers, 38 are non-state (29 socially-oriented NGOs and 9 business organizations). In the Leningrad Region, with a smaller population, the situation is better – out of 78 suppliers included in the register, 38 are non-state. This is because there is no barrier to entry – for organizations, there is no requirement for a minimum of five years' experience in the social services market. Some of these NGOs/business organizations are involved in, among other things, serving older people in a mobile or non-mobile (home-based) format. The wider distribution of this format is hindered on the one hand by the limited number of players in this field, and on the other by the low level of awareness of older people and their relatives about such alternatives.

   Behind the problem of low awareness lies a conflict of interest. It is generated by the fact that formal social services are obliged to inform customers about alternative services from competitors. The study also highlighted the problem of the distrust of older people in the alternatives to state forms of services. This excerpt from an interview with the head of a formal service provider illustrates this problem well:

I took a list of NGOs from the registry that are engaged in servicing older people. Well, [I was.] telling her about this system. [I said] the payment is the same, as you want – so choose. More means more, [if] less is needed – less. You know, our one [our own service] shocks me ... [or] maybe it [doesn't], I'm probably convinced for the hundredth time that this is a generation of old people, yes, they trust our state so much ... It seems to me, even to the detriment of themselves sometimes. [...]. When the words „commercial" or "NGO" are spoken, for them it is something alien, foreign, they are afraid of being cheated. And the client [...] says: "No, I believe only in the state, I will be with you only." [...] These are paternalistic expectations that the state will protect them, will not deceive them, they are so great that this generation is still [...]. That is, the degree of trust in the state is so high that so far they [older clients] are still with us. (Head of the department of social and medical services at home, St. Petersburg, 2017).

This passage clearly illustrates the paternalistic expectations of older people for whom the state is a key provider of care. Also, this distrust is reinforced by media publications about fraud involving apartments being taken away from the elderly. At the same time, representatives of state services themselves perceive NGOs / business organizations as potentially very strong competitors who have more flexible working conditions and government subsidies. However, so far, the trust of older people in public services is so great that NGOs and businesses are losing the competition.

However, the development of public services and the inclusion of NGOs and businesses in the field of care, and the emergence and development of new alternatives can stimulate changes in the field of care for older people. The withdrawal of the state from social services through the active involvement of NGOs and social enterprises opens up opportunities for the former to effectively compensate for the imperfection of the state (Grigoryeva–Parfenova 2021). At the present stage, old people and their relatives have the opportunity to choose the format of care, including a mix of different providers and practices. Also, there are new opportunities for choosing a care provider to increase the agency of the elderly, who can now choose and thus influence the organization's care provision.

Other alternatives: private nursing homes and specially equipped apartments

Private nursing homes have been actively developing over the past 10–15 years. While at first this format was widespread primarily in large cities, in the last decade it has penetrated the countryside where it turns out to be in great demand. The cost and living conditions in such institutions can be very different and range from 25,000 rubles (appr. 310 EUR) in a small village to 200,000 rubles (appr. 2500 EUR) in the Moscow region. It is profitable for small nursing homes to take the pensions of older clients as part-exchange for the service payment, while the rest is paid by relatives. According to the head of one of these houses in a village in Perm Territory, their popularity has been growing since 2013, and several similar establishments have already opened in the district. This is a clear illustration of changes in the gender order and the nuclearization of families – even in rural areas, traditional forms of family care and cohabitation are giving way to new forms of institutional care. Relatives who were not ready to send their elderly parents to a 'scary and dirty state nursing home' are more willing to see them in a small private nursing home. According to the aforementioned leader, older people become more sociable and their 'taste for life' returns. Before arriving at the nursing home, many had very

limited contact with the outside world. Relatives who visit the elderly are also seeing these improvements.

Specially equipped apartments have started to appear in the last decades only in large cities. For example, in Saint Petersburg such a program was started 25 years ago, and now the city has twenty such special residential buildings located in fifteen districts. The total stock of these houses is 1,290 apartments, designed to accommodate more than 1,500 single inhabitants of St. Petersburg, including veterans of the Second World War.[6] This is a very insignificant number given that the total population of Saint Petersburg is approximately 5.5 million. According to one of the managers of such apartments, they are not very popular with older people because when they move into such apartments they must give up their existing housing, handing it over to the state, and they cannot leave the specially equipped apartment in their will to their relatives. Perhaps this is a generational fear – the fear of losing one's only home and an unwillingness to exchange it for a more convenient living option.

Home-based care in Russia: a window to the world for older people

Home-based care as a part of public services is the most widespread form of state care for older people. Home-based care for older people in Russia is provided by the Complex Centers of Social Services (CCSS). As our study reveals, external actors often advise older people to seek help from a formal service. Three types of the latter actors can be identified – a medical professional (usually a therapist), close relatives (who regularly visit the older person), or neighbors or friends. Thus, they act as intermediaries between the older person and the CCSS.

> *Q: Tell me how you got into [started using] the social service? Did you turn up yourself or did someone advise you to take up the service?*
> *A: I got sick. It was here ... a year and a half ago, my leg [was damaged], arthrosis or arthritis or both together. But for a year and a half, I couldn't cope ... that was when I was scared. Then I was scared. And the neighbor said that Lena [a social worker] comes to [visit] her. We are near – on the same stairs. Well, I decided that this is what ... [pause] my 'insurance' should be. Because this [illness] still has not gone anywhere and will still return. (Interview excerpt: woman, 80 years old, a widow who lives alone; a client of the center for 1.5 years).*

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6 https://rg.ru/2020/06/17/reg-szfo/kak-v-peterburge-rabotaiut-socialnye-doma.html

Older people living alone who are clients of CCSS often face social isolation. Often they are disconnected from many areas of life and experience disability. The key exclusion parameter for most older clients is poor health, which does not allow them to lead an active lifestyle, and weak infrastructure (a lack of elevators, special transport, etc.) that does not let them take advantage of the integration measures that formal services offer (attending group classes, lectures, excursions, etc.). Moreover, poor health is the reason for the transition of many citizens into the category of 'passive' clients of CCSS (that is, receiving care at home). Very often, the social exclusion of an older person is irreversible. Having become a passive client of CCSS, one is unlikely to ever move back into an active group and attend leisure activities.

The home-based service is considered an opportunity for an older person to preserve their independence in terms of taking care of themselves without resorting to the help of separate relatives or having to move into a nursing home. Cases in which an older person lives with a close relative in the same apartment at the same time but also seeks help from social services are also found, although rare. These options can also be considered the desire of an older person to maintain agency in matters of caring for themselves without 'loading' additional close relatives.

In practice, the desire to maintain agency is also manifested in the fact that an older client may see a social worker as an assistant/friend, and seek to control and influence the content of basic services – where and what exactly, and at what price. If an older client does not visit a store personally, their recommendations in terms of product/price/store/pharmacy brands are very meticulous. Social workers may consider such requests and demands as 'whims.' Many clients seek to control the payment of bills, not allowing social workers to pay for them through electronic terminals but rather demand 'real receipts' accompanied by a bank stamp, etc. In other words, without leaving their apartment, the older person may try with all their might to maintain agency by controlling the issues they can.

But do the social services see the agency of the older persons, or do they rather construct the client as passive objects of care?

> *Satisfying needs is, first of all [the primary responsibility] ... Because this is an extension of life in the environment that they are used to. Well, we go to help them to do some basic things: sweep, throw away the garbage, wash, change diapers, bring food, cook, feed ... Again – they said this is the most basic thing. Documents [managing administration] – all this is necessary, it is important. But the documents – they are soulless, and our customers still want to talk to them [their carers], again this is care... (Head of CCSS, Nizhny Novgorod, 2018).*

...when sometimes you come to check, you see, [something] can be tattered, it can be in such a terrible state, dirty, incomprehensible, that it's even scary to pick it up. But we cannot change this, because it is their life, we are not entitled to infiltrate it, change things, break things (Head of CCSS, Nizhny Novgorod, 2018).

Nurses and their leaders rejoice when something changes for the better without intervention, but their typical position – as transmitted in an interview with the heads of care – is to leave everything as it is, and just to support the basic needs of older people.

According to the older people that were interviewed, social workers are often almost the only window to the outside world.

And many just go to bed, not because of the fact that they are tired, sick, or whatever. They are tired of living, and they go to bed. Simply. That is, they lay, lay. [...] The heart is healthy, all the other functions of the body are healthy, well, just: I do not want to do [anything]. And, behold, the only joy in life is that a social worker will come. Because with him you can laugh – relatives are not interested, who will listen? [...] Young relatives do not understand: he [the elderly relative] is not hurting, or he may be hurting because he needs to attract some attention to himself, or at least something. And they come [relatives], just look, well, the grandmother is alive there, [then] turn around and go. And that is the end of the visit. And here the social worker, in general, is the "light in the window." In general, everything is wonderful. Oh, come, joy, happiness! (Head of CCSS, Nizhny Novgorod, 2018).

This passage most sharply emphasizes the social isolation and depression that the elderly may suffer. Regarding the agency of older people, in this case there is practically no space or desire. A social worker in this situation is perceived as quasi-family. Studies of rural social services in Siberia show that older people often seek quasi-family relationships with social workers by building close relationships and communicating using language such as "my daughter." However, such relationships are not reciprocated by the social workers. According to researchers, such a desire for 'family' relations emphasizes the dominant ideal of „family care" (Kay 2013).

When there is an opportunity, older people prefer that some types of help are provided by relatives rather than social workers. This applies, for example, to hygiene-related procedures and some kinds of complex or 'dirty' work. Our observations of the interactions between social workers and older clients – men

and women – showed that men are often perceived by social workers as "less capricious," "more grateful" clients. In turn, male clients evaluate their social workers more positively than female clients do, and are less demanding of them. Sometimes this takes curious forms. A social worker comes to one of her male clients and they drink tea and communicate, and relatives provide assistance. At the same time, the old man says: "I do not want to burden my Irina (my social worker)." In this case, the social worker is addressing other needs of the older person than instrumental support by helping them keep in touch with the outside world and remaining a respectful partner in communication, because the old man does not leave his apartment (man, 76 years old, 2010, St. Petersburg; Observation diary 12). The new law on social services (442 Russian Federal Law) tightly regulates the services offered by the Individual Social Service Program (ISSP). In practice, social services have become more bureaucratic and less responsive to the needs of older people – just as the number of services and the time permitted to provide them is strictly regulated. At the same time, the burden on social workers has increased (i.e. the number of people and rate and volume of services that are provided – for example, which may mean getting medicines instead of a nurse). As a result, in practice, older people often need more or less services than are written in their contracts. Some services cannot be provided within the specified time frame (for example, washing an older person in 20 minutes, or going to a remote pharmacy to collect prescription drugs in less than an hour, etc.). In practice, such a mode of social care sometimes provokes informal contact between an older person and a social worker. For example, a social worker may help to wash or clean an apartment for an additional fee.

To summarize, we can say that the ambition of the elderly to remain agents of their own self-care bumps up against a rigid and bureaucratic system of social services. Within the framework of this system, older clients are depersonalized – a carer is supposed, for example, to bring them medicine an exact number of times every half a year, and to wipe the floor and take out the garbage according to a strict schedule. In such cases, the individual needs/peculiarities of the client are not taken into account, and, in practice, this creates inconvenience and conflict on both sides. Similarly, as a study from Canada showed, formal care recipients especially value meaningful social interaction, having a reciprocal relationship with the carer, autonomy, and reducing demands on family (Lee et al. 2020). The contradiction between the expectations of older people (an emphasis on emotional aspects such as taking time to listen, and personal relationships) and care provision policy (dealing with the physical aspects of care) has also been noted earlier (Byrne et al. 2012). Working conditions mean a lack of time for the client, and the absence of continuity leads to limited possibilities for person-centered care (Martin-Matthews et al. 2013; Lee et al. 2020).

CONCLUSION

Today, in the post-Soviet space, using the example of Russia, we can state that the care arrangements of older adults are undergoing significant transformation. The migration and nuclearization of families and the transition from state socialism to neoliberal capitalism have contributed to a change in attitudes and the development of alternatives to family and state elderly care. We can identify the consequences that have already been observed in two distinct trends. The first is the drift away from a state and family monopoly on caring for older people to more emphasis on a mixed model. New forms of care and actors are emerging. In addition to traditional family and state care, the third sector of non-profit organizations and private business organizations is actively developing. The arrangement of foster families for the elderly is developing in rural and urban areas. Apartments with special living conditions for older people with limited mobility are appearing in large cities. The informal care sector is developing thanks to paid caregivers who are often neighbors or migrants (both external and internal). The second tendency is that, in practice, care can often be 'layered' in nature. Providers of care may well complement each other – relatives, public services, non-profit organizations, and paid staff may take care of the same person at the same time. This expands the repertoire of care scenarios and makes choice more flexible for the older person.

When we compare the current state of elderly care in Russia with that in north-European countries, we can see that all these new alternatives are consistent with the trends of the 'de-institutionalization' of care that is occurring in such Scandinavian countries – involving replacing nursing homes with home-care services and creating specially equipped apartments (Anttonen–Karsio 2016). The tendency to deinstitutionalize social support in European countries is organically emerging in line with the proclaimed principle of the right to "age at home" (OECD 2013). Moreover, the coronavirus pandemic has shown how vulnerable the elderly can be in nursing and social homes, which became hotbeds of infection in many countries (Davidson–Szanton 2020). This is one of the arguments in favor of abandoning such forms of residence and care in discussions.

As the findings of our study revealed, older people seek to maintain their agency under all circumstances related to care – whether this involves a rejection of formal services or the choice of home-based services and a desire for emotional relationships with formal carers. At the same time, formal services are arranged in such a way that although they may include home-based services and thereby support the independence of customers, they generally only weakly take into account the individual needs of older people and practically do not offer enough choice.

At the same time, different forms of and new alternatives for care are unevenly represented in large cities and rural areas. Formal services are more widely represented in cities. Family care is also more accessible in such areas. Private nursing homes are mainly developing in cities, but in recent years they have become popular in rural areas as well. However, due to difficulties with infrastructure and financing, fewer open in such areas. In rural areas we can observe a more pronounced trend towards the development of alternative new forms of caring such as quasi-family arrangements (foster families), or 'caring neighbor' programs. Obviously, this is due to the underdevelopment of formal services and home-based services. Nevertheless, the changes we have observed in the care arrangements in the post-Soviet space using the example of Russia suggest that the opportunities for the participation of older people in the choice of care format have at least become much greater than they were 5–10 years ago.

We consider it important always and at all stages to ask how the organization of care takes into account the preferences of older people themselves. Care arrangements should be developed taking into account the needs of older people, including their opinions and wishes in different contexts – family, governmental and institutional, etc. Whether we are dealing with formal care in a public nursing home or informal care by a niece, we must be aware that this involves the voluntary choice of the elderly, and if they do not like it, they should be free to influence and change it. To what extent are older people able to maintain free will in their choice of living conditions and care patterns?

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FORUM

CONDITIONS OF CHANGE: THE REGIONAL ROLE OF A ROMANIAN AGRICULTURAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT: *The focus of our study is a high school with an agricultural education programme operating in a rural micro-region within Harghita County (Romania), in which context the relationship between the school and the regional society comes under analysis. Since the 1970s, it has been the school's mission to provide the micro-region's professionals with a secondary education, and today it still intends to maintain this micro-regional function. It has been struggling with significant operational and maintenance problems for several years now, while the evolution of its micro-regional role is uncertain. The present study puts under scrutiny the attitude of parents and the region's élites towards the school and its regional role as well as analyses the school's service-marketing practices towards the region. The aim of the study is to analyse the school-community relationship and the school's marketing communication. The main research question is: what is the regional role of the school and how can it be strengthened? Analytical results indicate that repositioning the regional role of the school seems to offer a way out and a development opportunity for the institution.*

KEYWORDS: *agricultural secondary school, rural development, parents, rural élites, marketing communication*

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INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has brought about a substantially transformed role and operational model for schools. The specificities of these changes can be highly diverse depending on the social context and educational levels, but the need and necessity of operating according to a business model has definitely taken on priority status in the operation of schools (see Fulton 2003; Pollit 2003; Santiago et al. 2005). The literature on the subject suggests the application of specific methods; first of all an emphasis on strategic thinking as well as the possibilities and tools of school marketing (e.g. Sousa 2013; White–Reid 2008; Hutflesz 2004; Muhi 2012). According to Sousa (2013: 177–178), communication, including the communication between schools and parents, is an essential tool for the strategic management of educational institutions. The strengthening of communication is very important in reconstructing the collective identity of an educational institution, in parents' perceptions about schools, and in cooperation between teachers, students, and families (Sousa 2013: 178).

The issues around the rural development role of schools that operate in rural areas have found a place on the agenda of professional discourses in Romania too (Biriescu–Babaita 2014). The authors of the present work, however, claim that developing such a role requires complementary efforts that include, inter alia, increasing the capacity of rural institutions, infrastructure development, establishing supportive policy frameworks, etc. (Biriescu–Babaita 2014: 77–78). In the author's view, operating in accordance with a business model is a difficult mission for schools as there are no historical traditions in this regard, and the latter also have inadequate professional knowledge. Experience has shown that the management bodies of institutions operating in rural areas have reservations concerning marketing processes, while also having little knowledge of them (Sárosi-Blága 2018a, 2018b).

The above-listed challenges become even more formidable for technical schools operating in rural areas because these are lagging behind in multiple development-related aspects compared to the average, while at the same time they need to take certain factors into consideration – such as changes in the popularity of the professions taught in these schools or the emergence of new training needs connected with agricultural innovation processes. All this clearly points to the fact that the future of high schools operating in rural areas is not merely an educational issue but an essential regional development matter as well. In order for – for example – a technical college operating in a rural area to be able to take advantage of the potential inherent in a possible regional status, the school should consider changing its position towards the region and try to reposition itself in relation to the current regional realities.

There are several agricultural technical colleges operating in the Szeklerland area but with a moderate role at the regional level. In recent years, agriculture has undergone several changes in this region: the number of innovative agricultural initiatives has dramatically increased, and new actors and business models have emerged in the area (Biró–Magyar 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). Based on our previous observations and field experience, agricultural technical colleges in the region have played a minor role so far and have not got involved in the transition processes. A network of relations and cooperation has not been established between the school and the regional society. The high school analysed in our study was founded in a rural environment in the year 1961, and starting with the 1970s its mission has been to train agricultural professionals for the micro-region. Ever since, it has endeavoured to adhere to this commitment; however, it has been struggling with operational problems for a number of years now. Based on a complex piece of school-related research carried out in 2017 (we addressed questionnaires to parents and key actors of the region, and we analysed the school's communication activity), we examined three factors that play a decisive role in the life of a typical rural technical college in terms of the changing relationships between the school and the regional society, and that are essential should the educational institution attempt to reposition its regional role. The three analysed areas are as follows: (a) parents' attitudes, (b) the regional élites' attitude, and (c) the operation of the school according to service-marketing criteria.

The analysis of the school's marketing communication is a general one, and there is reason to ask how adequate the business model approach is for schools. We believe that if there is an intention to establish a cooperation model that serves the relationship between the schools and the surrounding social environment, then the former should reposition themselves, and an analysis based on marketing tools can be of assistance in ferreting out the procedures appropriate for this purpose.

ASPECTS OF LITERATURE

The twenty-first century changes in the role of schools require the consideration of new factors regarding both the operation of these institutions and the related professional thinking. In connection with the economic principles and needs that are becoming increasingly emphasized in the operation of schools, adaptation is a crucial issue of competitiveness, meaning the adoption of solutions and operational models that result in the long-term sustainability of schools.

Regarding the adaptation of schools to the new realities, the literature discusses several aspects. The primary focus of our study is on literature approaches that deal with economic aspects of the adaptation to twenty-first-century changes (e.g. Fulton 2003; Pollitt 2003; Santiago et al. 2005) as well as with the dangers of liberal thinking (Gewirtz et al. 1995; Woods et al. 1998; Burch 2009), while also raising awareness of the importance of transforming organizational culture as a practical solution (Gewirtz et al. 1995). The latter is closely linked to the issues associated with the social embeddedness of schools, which, in relation to school managements, implies consideration of certain factors such as the possibility of developing a marketing concept (e.g. Sousa 2013), the harmonization of market requirements with the pedagogical discourse, the organizations' bureaucratic mode of operation (Sousa 2013), the importance of collective identity, and reinforcing the social image of school within the family environment (Lipman 2011).

Sousa (2013) draws attention to the fact that a considerable proportion of authors and references that discuss economic aspects in the changing role of schools (e.g. Fulton 2003, Pollitt 2003, Santiago et al. 2005) understand the field of education in accordance with the characteristics of the economic market, whereby educational actors are considered nothing more than consumers, clients/customers, and managers. These studies treat issues such as the measurable success and competitiveness or the management characteristics of schools as a public service organization in the general sense (e.g. Pollitt 2003). Some authors suggest that this paradigm shift might endanger natural selection and thus contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities. Although the authors and works cited herein touch upon the risks of new ideologies associated with the operation of schools in a context different from our research field, we consider it important to mention a few of them. As postulated by Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe (1995), understanding education based on market considerations sees parents' choice as a key factor. Taking a closer look at parents' choices and options, the referred-to authors call attention to the considerable discrepancies between the patterns of access and participation (involvement) depending on, for instance, gender, ethnic affiliation, and social class. Woods, Bagley, and Glatter's (1998) study calls attention to the same point, analysing the criteria parents find relevant when opting for a specific school. Burch (2009) claims that by transferring education management from the public to the private sector in the United States new social inequalities have become institutionalized and old ones reinforced – however, discussing the dangers posed by economic aspects extends beyond the ambitions of the present study.

In what follows, we would like to highlight certain approaches found in the literature that consider social-embeddedness issues as essential elements when

addressing the twenty-first-century challenges that schools are presently facing. In our case, the concept of social embeddedness covers certain factors related to organizational culture and school management, such as communication or the social image of schools. In Sousa's (2013) view, establishing the collective identity of schools is a vital element in strategic planning, not just in terms of organizational communication but also regarding the positioning of schools. The author formerly cited weighs in with reference to the Portuguese context, wherein he argues for the importance of communication as a school management tool, which he defines first of all through the relationship between schools and parents. In his opinion, strengthening communication with parents and other groups of stakeholders may increase the social prestige of schools as well as social participation. Competitive constraints that can be experienced in relation to the education market are not the sole reason why the social positioning and embeddedness of schools that is taking place via strengthening communication deserves attention (Hutflesz 2004; Muhi 2012; White–Reid 2008), but community development considerations should be borne in mind as well (Miller 1995). This newly defined role of the school makes it necessary to establish partnerships between rural schools and local communities, and it is tightly connected with the development opportunities of rural areas (e.g. Wallin–Newton 2014; Lingam et al. 2014; Bauch 2001; Olsen 2017).

Miller's model (1995) for reimagining the role of schools suggests approaches that can tighten the relationship between schools and their communities. We believe these suggestions can not only be utilized on the local scale, but with respect to rural micro-regions consisting of several settlements, with centres giving a home to high schools that serve all pertaining settlements, which could also benefit from them. The suggested approaches aim at diminishing or eliminating the boundaries that traditionally separate schools from communities. With the proposed solutions, they wish to achieve that schools and communities work together for mutual benefit. The first approach sees the school as a community centre that provides both wide-ranging services and resources for lifelong learning. This way, school resources (building, technology, and staff) can be used to offer training and retraining opportunities to community members (Miller 1995: 166). The second approach emphasizes the necessity of conducting sociological surveys in order to increase students' appreciation for their immediate environment and the community they are part of. It is essential that students study their community by assessing needs, observing environmental and land-use particularities, and documenting local history with the help of interviews and photos. The third approach argues for the importance of a school-based enterprise with the main focus on acquiring entrepreneurial skills that meet community requirements and on creating new enterprises.

The above-mentioned approaches are of immense significance in the region under study, also because there is traditionally a significant gap between schools and communities in these settlements. Being familiar with the socio-historical processes in the region, it can be stated that schools have not formed part of the community's social capital – and not even after the 1989 regime change in Romania did they become part of the local development process. They never adopted an approach according to which schools should also be considered as embedded into the three pivotal and inter-conditional components of social capital (symbolic diversity, resource mobilization, and quality of linkage; see: Flora–Flora (1993)), this way enabling such institutions to become major players in local development (Miller 1995: 164).

THE ANALYSED SCHOOL AND THE MICRO-REGION

The post-1989 education system in Romania is characterized by frequent and contradictory changes affecting the legal and administrative framework. First of all, academic high schools operating in cities were the ones to benefit from infrastructure-related as well as didactic and pedagogical development opportunities, followed by technical colleges that managed to establish cooperative relations with major industrial enterprises. High schools operating in rural areas were left out of these development processes. This is also explained by the fact that "Romanian rural area[s] and [their] problems [are not] prime […] legislative, administrative, political and economic [planning concerns] in Romania, even more, some failures are largely ignored or are approached inadequate[ly]" (Biriescu–Babaita 2014: 80).

A further essential feature is that secondary vocational training has been negatively affected on several levels: due to the large-scale restructuring of the economic and labour market system in Romania and the boom in university education that enhanced the value of academic high schools, apprenticeship training was suspended for several years. Situated on the periphery of secondary vocational training, rural high schools became the biggest losers of the network of secondary education institutions. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that only a small number of graduates from these schools are able to meet the requirements of the final examination (Matura). It is a new development that central authorities are planning on reducing enrolment quotas for high schools that produce unsatisfactory baccalaureate examination results. Considering the above-described situation, it is expected that high schools operating in rural settlements will have to choose between a deeper embeddedness in regional

society or closure. The school studied in our paper is a typical example of an institution in such a difficult situation, facing tough choices. Professional analyses in Romania (Tomoletiu–Moraru 2010) also call attention to the necessity of increased social embeddedness, highlighting the importance of schools' integration into the community as well as enhancing the links between schools and their local community.

The school under analysis was established in the year 1961 and it operated as an institution for theoretical knowledge instruction until the mid-1970s. The number of graduates was around 30 each year, with a fairly good rate of progress to further education (technical schools, university education). This period marked the golden age in the school's history, when the institution operated as a regional-scale intellectual and educational centre. Starting from the year 1977, subsequent upon the centrally imposed reorientation of the education programme on repeated occasions, the institution operated as an agro-industrial high school that witnessed an increasing number of students. Upon completion of compulsory schooling (grade 10), students would receive vocational qualification as stock breeders or mechanics. From this time on, its task set out in accordance with central planning was to provide the socialist agriculture of a given rural micro-region with a workforce with a secondary education and to prioritize vocational training over theoretical knowledge instruction.

Subsequent to the 1989 regime change in Romania, the school management made an attempt to restore the operational model of the initial period marked as the golden age of the school. In 1991, the institution adopted the name 'academic high school', and major attention was paid to strengthening institutional identity (the institution was named after the most prominent poet in Hungarian literature). Nevertheless, the transformation of the regional secondary education network, the economic restructuring on the regional level, the improved attractiveness of the county centre, changes in social attitudes towards education, and other factors imposed certain restrictions on the institutional rehabilitation process, making this high school operating in a rural environment gradually lose its appeal, which process is ongoing even today. Engagement in the training of professionals on the regional level is what the school considers its specific role once again; it has relaunched its agricultural education programme, recruits its students from the micro-region; and specifically links training content to agriculture and regional development.

Nowadays, kindergarten children, elementary schoolers, grade schoolers, high school and technical school students study at the institution (350 on average), 140–150 students participate in secondary education (three- and four-year training programmes), the number of graduates from the four-year education programme ranges between 20 and 30, and the proportion of

successful graduates is extremely small – similarly to other schools operating in rural environments. The range of the four-year training programmes offering a baccalaureate diploma includes agrotourism, general tourism, and economics, whereas the three-year vocational education programme provides qualifications in agrotourism and mountain farming. The entire school staff is 50 strong, of which the educational staff consists of 40 persons. Nearly half of the students in the four-year education programme are members of the local community, while the rest of them come from nearby settlements. All regional settlements are almost equally represented in the school's apprenticeship programme. The school is an entirely state-funded institution. The institution lacks teaching apparatus as well as the agricultural machinery that would be required by the nature of the vocational training, and an experimental farm has not been established to date. Students studying in the institution undertake apprenticeship training at enterprises operating in the region.

The school's attraction zone includes 15 larger rural settlements and a few small settlements – this micro-region forms part of the central area of Harghita County (Romania) in the so-called Ciuc Basin. The number of inhabitants slightly exceeds 40,000 and the population of all but two of the settlements is made up of ethnic Hungarians. The area under analysis experienced a slight drop in population subsequent to the regime change in Romania, but since the population decline has been below 10% the school system in the region has not changed in any substantial way. The principal sectors of economic activity in the region are as follows: agriculture, forest and timber harvesting, food industry, and tourism. The traditional family-farming model is typical of more than half of the households in the region. The local employment rate is not significant: part of the active population works in a nearby county centre, others are employed abroad, and self-employment connected with family farming is significant. Utilized agricultural areas (meadows, pastures, and arable lands) constitute 65% of the total, with pastures and meadows playing a more pronounced role (livestock farming). The percentage of landowning households that undertake some sort of farming activity in addition is close to 80%. The overwhelming majority of households are engaged in family-scale farming, this way creating a payment instrument (Laki–Biró 2001). The past decade has seen the emergence of small-scale innovative agricultural innovation in this region too, whose primary concern is making the most of the endogenous conditions (local products), and these target the regional market. With reference to the micro-regional context, we must also point out the fact that the examined micro-region forms part of an area in Szeklerland that is inhabited by a compact Hungarian population, while the school is part of the Hungarian-language educational network in Romania.

RESEARCH METHODS

The analyses presented in our study are part of a complex piece of school-related research carried out in 2017, in the course of which we examined the situation and operation of a high school with an agricultural education programme. The research programme was encouraged and supported by *Kistérségi Társulás* (*Micro-Regional Association*) that was operating in the area. In connection with the above-described research programme, our study introduces three modules of the situation analysis. In the first module, we examined our target population by means of a questionnaire (N=188), contacting the group of parents whose children were students at the school during the research period. At the time of the survey, parents of all students at the school received our questionnaire. The self-administered questionnaire contained questions covering six topics related to the operation and regional role of the institution: (1) the regional role of the institution; (2) public perceptions about agricultural instruction; (3) the content of agricultural training; (4) the strengths of the institution; (5) disadvantages and barriers to the operation of the school; and (6) the development of the school. Answers could be given on a five-point Likert scale.

Similar topics and methods were used when asking the intellectual élite: key actors (heads of institutions, teachers, doctors, priests) of the local institutions (N=120) in the settlements of the micro-region. In the second analytical module of our study, two sets of questions included in the questionnaire filled in by the élites received special attention: the general perception of agricultural instruction and the present as well as future regional role of the school.

In the third analytical module we examined the marketing activities of the school, with a particular focus on the fourth component of the marketing mix, promotion (Kotler–Fox 1995). According to the approach adopted by several authors (Fazekas–Harsányi 2011; Horváth–Bauer 2013), marketing communication tools may be divided into ATL (Above The Line) and BTL (Below The Line) groups. Communication tools 'above the line' are identified as using traditional advertising tools (newspaper, TV, radio, cinema advertising), while those 'below the line' are characterized by a broader set of tools (SP-sales promotion, POP-POS – point of sell, point of purchase communication tools, event marketing, trade fairs, exhibitions, sponsorship, direct marketing, etc.).

The combination of marketing services offers a comprehensive view of how the institution defines and positions itself and its scope of activities with respect to the regional community that represents its attraction zone, and provides us with information about the school's marketing communication aspects.

The results of the three analytical modules make it possible to explore the relationship between the parents and the regional élite with the school, and its

regional role on the one hand and the extent to which the institution's marketing communication activity is directed towards the institution's social environment on the other.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Parents' attitude

The social perception of the approach to the agricultural sector in the studied region has partly changed during the past three decades. The family land tenure system as well as family-scale farming practices have remained stable elements. After the introduction of land-based subsidies, this position was consolidated even further. The favouring of agricultural innovation initiatives and local products and the emergence of community organizations have brought about positive changes. All of this may also have contributed to the fact that partly in terms of livelihood and partly in terms of employment the agricultural sector has remained important among the regional population to the present day. This attitude manifests itself in parents' answers as well: 57% of the respondents totally agree and 20% agree with the statement that the agricultural sector will continue to be important for a long time, while those who disagree represent only 10%.

We found similarly strong positive attitudes in relation to three further topics associated with various subdivisions of the agricultural sector. Respondents were of the opinion that the regional development of agriculture is also important because it can be linked with environment protection and the appreciation of nature. This is considered extremely important by 62% and important by 20% of the respondents. A few percentage points lower but still similar opinions were reported in response to the question whether the dissemination and application of new knowledge and new technologies are seen as necessary in the agricultural sector. The positive perception of innovation and modernization was not previously characteristic of this region.

At the same time, commitment to the agricultural sector is also illustrated by the fact that respondents particularly advocate the perpetuation of certain elements pertaining to the earlier farming model typical of the region that were eliminated by centralized socialist agriculture and which farming families in the region have been trying to rehabilitate following the 1989 regime change in Romania. These farming traditions in the region under investigation constitute the fundamental components of the operational

model of backyard farms – some typical examples being attachment to land ownership, working towards subsistence and holistic farming, and part-time or full-time self-employment. According to our research data, three-quarters of those in the group of parents consider it either important or extremely important that the traditional farming model be continued but in a more modern way.

Positive attitudes connected with how the role and future of regional agriculture is seen may provide a supportive context for assessing the present and future situation of the agricultural high school as well. If in most of the cases parents take a positive view of the situation regarding agriculture in the region, then this positive perception can indirectly justify the existence of the school and its professional role in the region. The interconnection of regional agriculture and the perception of the school is also indicated by the fact that slightly more than half of the respondents totally agreed that the school provides opportunities for its students to become farmers or agricultural entrepreneurs after completion of their training, and an additional nearly one-quarter of respondents agreed with this proposition.

Certainly, we cannot claim that parents are of the same opinion as those of regional society. However, it should be pointed out that the major role played by community knowledge is still typical of the rural settlements in the region; this way, local public perception is integrated into how the agricultural sector is perceived and how schools are chosen. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the above-described pattern of parental attitudes shows significant overlap with the pattern of local community attitudes.

During the process of data collection, we also asked directly how parents see the school's role in the region and to what extent they agree that the school could function as the base of agricultural training in the region. Almost all of the respondents (94%) are of the opinion that the school has played an important role in the region so far, and it should fulfil this role in the future too. The share of those opposing this view is as small as 1.5%. This high support rate is important because a significant part of the parents do not live in the same settlement as the school is located in, and symbolic rivalry – sometimes even conflict – between the different settlements is traditionally fierce. It seems that the regional perception of the school extends beyond this traditional regional pattern of behaviour. The importance of the particular regional role of the school is also indicated by the fact that according to 83% of the respondents, the agricultural profile of the education institution is the most pivotal element, and it should be further enhanced. The direct question as to whether this school should serve as the basis for agricultural training in the region yielded 78.3% straightforward 'yes' answers.

Public awareness directed towards the situation and operation of the school is illustrated by the fact that respondents hold strong opinions as to what could be further important modalities of institution-building. With a view to furthering development, 87% of the respondents emphasized collaboration between the settlements; three-quarters of them consider it essential to cooperate with the university that operates in the nearby county town, while 80% find it important that the institution integrates adult education programmes and specific training courses, too, into its activities. Integrating new services and activities into the institution's operation as well as harnessing the potential that lies in the institutional ties within the region can be seen as acceptance and social support for the regional role played by the school.

To sum up the parents' opinions, it can be stated that they have confidence in the key role of the agricultural sector, and a vast majority of them take the view that students who enrol in this school will be able to succeed as farmers or entrepreneurs in the sector in question. The agricultural sector is looked upon as something that is connected with the traditional models in the region but one that also favours innovation.

An overwhelming proportion of the respondents recognize and appreciate the past and future role of the school in vocational training, and there is a high level of consensus that this school – with the help of further improvements – can function as the basis for agricultural training in the region. Parents' opinions indicate significant potential social support for the institution.

The attitude of regional élites

Within the framework of data collection, we asked those persons with post-secondary qualifications that live in the attraction zone of the school and work as heads of institutions or have jobs that require tertiary qualification (pedagogues, officials, agricultural professionals, and others). It can be assumed in the case of this group that its members are also concerned about the situation of the region as a whole, follow the regional processes with attention, and have their own opinions about the latter.

Nearly 90% of the respondents consider the presence of agriculture in this region as important or extremely important and have ideas regarding the future of this sector. This is a much higher percentage than we recorded in the case of parents. We obtained even higher values when asking about the importance of innovation associated with the agricultural sector. Opening up access to innovative professional knowledge and technologies is considered as important by 23.3% of the respondents and as extremely important by 71.7% of them.

This high support rate is in line with the finding that 93% of the regional élites attach to the key role played by agriculture in the region the importance of environment protection and appreciation of nature as well. The high level of commitment to the agricultural sector in the region is a relevant indicator also because it points to a regional-level change in perceptions. In the region under study, members of the élite have traditionally been attached to local-scale realities; in particular to the local identity structure, whereas the deepening of regional-scale engagement is a new development, which can be theoretically utilized by the technical college engaged in agricultural training.

Although in a somewhat lesser proportions, additional supporting views were expressed according to which the agricultural development of the region should take into consideration the farming models developed in the course of the social history of the region – the modernization of this sector should pay attention to these traditional patterns as well. Two-thirds of the respondents found this an extremely important issue, 15% of them answered that it is important, with the rest of them being uncertain in this regard, and there was a very small proportion of negative responses. The regional élites share the view of the parents that agricultural education in the region can provide an opportunity for students to become farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in this region. The majority of the respondents (81%) share this view.

Eight-five percent of the respondents are of the view that the school has been playing a key role in the region so far, and this role should be carried on and reinforced in the future. This regional role is specifically linked to operating the agricultural education programme, including the following specializations: agrotourism, general tourism, and mountain farming. The operation and development of the agricultural education programme is of evident importance in the eyes of 96.7% of the regional élite. A slightly smaller percentage (90%) of respondents are in favour of this institution serving as the basis for agricultural training in the region. In their opinion, this requires expanding the existing functions and areas of activity as well as involving both intra- and extra-regional resources. In the context of diversifying the areas of activity, the integration of adult education programmes could be a useful step forward. Regional and local resources alike are considered important elements in the development process. Less than half of the respondents expressed the view that moving forward would only be possible with central (government) support. Instead, the emphasis is placed (by 90% of the respondents) on the orchestrated efforts of the municipalities found in the catchment area of the school.

Summarizing the results of the analysis creates the picture that the vast majority of regional élites see agriculture as a key sector and are in favour of innovation based on knowledge development and local traditions. They

recognize the importance of the school's regional role so far and agree that this regional role should be carried on so that the school under analysis can become the basis for agricultural training in the region. Moving forward also implies diversification of the school's fields of activity. Therefore, it needs to rely to a great extent on the regional cooperation and relations system (pooling of efforts between municipalities) as well as on its connection with the university operating in the area. We can conclude that the overwhelming majority of the regional élites takes a positive approach to the technical college under investigation and its regional role, and the strength of this positive attitude is far greater than experienced among the parents, while it is closely linked to the élites' opinion that the agricultural sector plays a very important part within the region, which is expected to be maintained in the future too.

The school's marketing communication

School's communication activities were examined with a particular focus on the fourth component of the marketing mix – promotion (see Kotler–Fox 1995).

In the context of promotion, traditional ATL (Above The Line) and non-traditional, more customized BTL (Below The Line) marketing tools are equally involved. A member of the teaching staff is nominated as responsible for the school's marketing activities, without a larger strategic framework. At the time of the analysis, a teacher who teaches economics was carrying out these activities, with the help of a team of students organised by him.

The school has recourse to advertising in the media only once a year, when it publishes the enrolment quotas of the following academic year and the names of the specializations to be launched next year for the future ninth-graders. Apart from that, presence in the media occurs on an ad hoc basis: if a major or unusual school event draws the attention of the regional journalists, only then is a press release published about the institution. Appearances on regional radio or television are highly infrequent and random. The school does not create audiovisual materials, public-space advertisements, or infographics/leaflets about its own activities. A single publication was issued: in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the institution, containing information on the school's history. This publication was distributed during the anniversary celebration. On the whole, it can be concluded that the institution does not seek to use ATL tools on a regular basis.

Among the digital solutions bordering on ATL and BTL tools, the school's Facebook profile takes the leading role. The page was created in 2012, but it was not used regularly until 2017. It focuses on the presentation of major school

events (celebrations, various programmes, travel abroad, or the participation of student teams that represent the school in professional competitions); therefore, posts are created on such occasions exclusively. As a rule, dozens of photos are attached to each one of these short posts. The photos raise interest among the students and their parents ('likes'). Only one of the classes has a website, whose structure is simple, and there are no built-in interactive functions. There is no link between the website and the Facebook page. The website of the settlement does not feature any informational material about the school. The institution does not send out any newsletters, and it has no activity on either Twitter or YouTube channels.

Activity is more diversified, however, when it comes to the use of BTL tools. The institution places great emphasis on organizing celebrations and events that take place on an annual basis at which it also involves the population of the settlement as an audience. Such an event of major importance is the celebration of March 15, a national holiday, in which context the person giving his name to the school is also celebrated. Likewise, the senior prom and one or two school sports events are of key importance as well. These festive occasions are not connected with the institution's education activities, their purpose being to strengthen the institution's identity. The institution does not organize recruitment programmes in the settlements of the region. Although there were attempts at organizing open days to promote the activities of the institution, these were ultimately not realized as regular events. Once every year, the school presents its educational offering at a county-level career fair organized for grade schoolers. The student teams of the school take part in professional competitions organized in the region. Information sent by means of e-mail is not an institution-wide procedure – it works only at the level of each class, serving for the occasional dissemination of information between the teacher responsible for a specific class and the parents of the students in that class. School activities aimed at improving its public relations as well as its image-building efforts are reflected in the use of the school's name, the (restrained) use of the national colours in relation to the person giving his name to the school, and frequent verbal reference to the history of the school. The mission, ideology, and organizational philosophy of the school are laid out in strategy papers compiled as official documents, which cannot be traced, however, in the communication channels used by the school. Knowledge related to the school's identity and role is strongly formulated as some sort of internal content in the interviews conducted with the head of the school and the pedagogues, but it does not appear as explicit communication content.

Overall, it can be said that – judging by its operational model – the school has an inward-looking focus, and it is only on an ad-hoc basis, in the context of

certain representative events, that it makes attempts to demonstrate its identity to regional society. There is virtually no communication on the part of the school targeted at the two most important social groups: parents, and the regional élite. The communication practices of the institution cover a small number of products, are temporary and unidirectional in nature, and do not involve putting forward any messages regularly about either the educational activities or the internal life of the institution. The school is not open to its social environment, stakeholders' opinions do not reach the institution, and there are many other factors in the operation of the school that contribute to its structural isolation from the local and regional society.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study made use of a technical college operating in a rural micro-region within Harghita County (Romania) to present the results of three analytical procedures that may be associated with the issues concerning the relationship between the institution and micro-regional society. Analytical work was undertaken on the grounds that the school had been having problems fulfilling its role within the region for the past few decades. What constituted clear incentives for our work were those professional analyses carried out in the last couple of decades that advocated the importance of cooperation between the school and the local community (Miller 1995; Flora–Flora 1993). Results obtained from the parents and the regional élites suggest that these groups attach high importance to the present and future role of agriculture in the studied micro-region, and we understand this attitude as a clear signal of strong commitment to supporting secondary agricultural education in the micro-region. In addition, the élites and the parents alike explicitly emphasize the professional role of the school in the region and the importance of developing the institution and the education by also relying on the traditional practices of the area. Results of the school's marketing communication show that the institution positions its mission and activities towards regional actors with limited effectiveness and on an occasional basis; its external communication is accidental and poor; and it takes no account of stakeholders' opinions within the micro-region. Its approach to regional society could be described as structural isolation rather than approximation or cooperation. Consequently, support on the part of the regional élites and the parents remains under-exploited.

The fact that the attitudes of parents and regional élites are not consistent with the school's marketing communication practices may represent a

barrier to the future of the school in terms of it functioning as a key player in the development of the regional agricultural sector. The positive attitude on the part of the parents and the regional élites suggests essential but not yet exploited potential for the school. Being aware of the above-outlined positive attitudes, it is suggested that redesigning the school's marketing communication practices may be a way of launching the school's regional-scale repositioning process.

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(AB)USE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL: AN INDELIBLE NEGATIVE IMPRESSION ON NIGERIAN SOCIO-POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL OUTFITS

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ABSTRACT: *Social capital in sociology, economics, psychology, political science and allied disciplines has been explored mostly in terms of its positive utility value in society. However, the phenomenon has more negative impacts on the public institutions of developing nations, especially with regard to the roles of these institutions in the sustainable development agenda. Although bureaucracy, especially with regard to the principle of impersonality, has helped developed nations to control the vulnerability of public institutions to social capital, the inability of developing nations to objectively follow bureaucratic principles has made their public institutions vulnerable to the abuse of social capital driven by ethnic/religious affiliation. Hence, this adverse social capital scenario has generated a public service environment in which people are employed or appointed based on their proximity to powerful ethnic and religious groups. By extension, this has had far-reaching negative consequences on development and sustainability in these nations, as mediocre manpower continues to undermine efficiency and promote a culture of perpetual underdevelopment. In this paper, we expand on the above notion using secondary data in Nigeria and link the dominant notions of social capital to bridge the gap in the literature about social capital and public institutions in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: *bureaucratic institutions, downside of social capital, social capital; sustainable development; public institutions; ethnicity and religion*

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, social capital as concept, theoretical paradigm, and social phenomenon, has attracted contextual and contestant analysis and advanced interpretations by different academics depending on their scholarly conviction about emerging issues in society. This is not unconnected to the ever-growing knowledge and human diversity in relation to cultural, political and religious orientation, and more, which have emerged to shape human interactions at various societal levels such as family, tribe, ethnicity, and race.

From the period of armchair theorizing to the current era of inductive and deductive theorization that has come to characterize scholarship in sociology and allied disciplines, social capital as a topic of debate has created consciousness among scholars and laymen in society of the need to understand the invisible web that sustains group life. This intellectual endeavor marks the academic shift from micro to macro theory and practice within the social sciences and human society at large. At different levels and in different societies, social capital plays certain roles that reinforce the survival of life in society, such that its lack can create invisible crises that affect the wellbeing of individuals, as well as the collective conscience of the system (Putnam 2000; Durkheim 1938).

Although the term 'social capital' in its current usage and coverage did not actually run through the works of many founding fathers of sociology, such as Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and others, the concept in its interpretations and utility value can be keenly observed to have been implied in the works of these founding fathers in their various theoretical framings. For instance, Durkheim's use of social solidarity and collective conscience is a referential example of how the crisis that is inherent in industrial society would be managed by professional associations, which in their utilitarian values are networks of people based on their social capital (Haralambos–Holborn 2008). Similarly, in Marx's analysis of the classes and the material basis of society, the essence of social capital is seen in the relationships that exist between classes and within classes. As a result, capitalists appeared in the analysis as that group with more social capital (networks) to establish domination over the proletariats via political power and influence in society, which factors determine the policies that control the common destinies of men. The proletariat is defined as the group with less social capital in the system, both in terms of their individual chances of survival and the group's chances of survival (Marx–Engels (1950) in Haralambos–Holborn 2008).

Weber's analysis of social stratification suggests that market and status-related situation, as well as acquiring skills and social prestige, have become a means of attaining upper-class status, which in itself is invisible social capital that assists

with accessing certain opportunities in the social system. In the latter's view, the ownership of means of production and workers' status are not closed and restricted, but liberalized for those who aspire to climb the social ladder, unlike the "blood-induced social group" defined by factors such as race, ethnicity, and caste, in relation to which membership is automatically restricted to people due to birth and marriage (Weber 1965 [1947]). However, all the classes and statuses, and even the parties in Weber's classifications, have some social capital given their utilitarian values for the members of society who belong to them.

In his analysis of the existence and survival of society, with emphasis on social structure, Georg Simmel drew the attention of scholars to the layers of communication that brought the concept of society into existence and continue to sustain it. In contrast to the view of realists, Simmel was of the view that society does not represent such an alien power over individuals, but rather influences the creation of individuals at various levels starting from the family (Simmel 1964). According to Simmel, individuals create and maintain the concept of society and autonomy via their constant interactions, which are determined by the level of exchange in society. In essence, the interactions of members of society are embedded in the benefits they expect from each other at different levels of direction of interaction. In referring to the power of family networks, tribes, ethnicity, race, and class in producing or rather transforming into social capital, the work of Simmel aptly exhibited the inalienable position of social capital in the social structure and interactions among members of society. Many other founding fathers of sociology in one way or the other touched on the phenomenon of social capital in their work while explaining the existence and survival of society and even-ongoing interactions in society without necessarily applying the concept in its current usage in the literature, thus showing the imperativeness of the concept and its utilitarian value in the history of human social existence (Portes 1998; Ivana 2017).

Despite the stealth appearance of the concept of social capital in the work of the early sociologists and other social science scholars, the concept of social capital only systematically appeared in the sociological literature via the work of Pierre Bourdieu on *class distinction* (1985). Bourdieu included social capital among the listed forms of capital in his work that are inherent in the class relationships in society, such as economic capital, cultural capital, social, and symbolic capital (Haralambos–Holborn 2008). Specifically, Bourdieu defined social capital as consisting of social connections – who you know, and who you are friendly with; who you can call on for help or a favor. Social capital, distinguished in Bourdieu's work from other forms of capital, has become a hot topic of interest among scholars in the area of social sciences such that every social scientific discipline has in one way or the other applied the concept

in explaining and predicting human behavior and interactions with regard to politics, consumer/producer behavior, ethnographic networks, social welfare, social structure, and more (Portes 1998; Ivana 2017; Schmid–Robison 1995; Ferragina–Arrigoni 2017; Coleman 1990; Zhou–Bankston 1996).

Across generations, social capital has functioned to harmonize social networks and the distribution of available resources in society; hence many scholars have paid more emphasis to the beneficial aspect of social capital. However, few (Putnam 2000; Sik 2010) or no scholars have considered the downside/negative implications of social capital (i.e. the abuse of social capital), especially with regard to the existence, survival, and sustainability of developing nations such as Nigeria, where bureaucratic institutions have not assumed firm positions in determining who gets what and how due to a strong prevalence of corrupt practices mediated by family, ethnic, and religious cleavages. In Nigeria, the consistent traditional pattern of redistribution of wealth and other resources (the substance of traditional small-scale societies) has coagulated into a pseudo-modern bureaucratic pattern (the public institution) as a result of the amalgamation of ethnic groups into a modern nation state. This has made management and access to available resources vulnerable to corrupt practices powered by social capital networks via the family, ethnic, and religious networks. As a result of the above gap in the literature, the present paper is specifically interested in analyzing the abuse of the utilitarian value of social capital and its implications for the advancement and sustainability of developing nations, focusing on Nigeria, to expand the reach of the concept and phenomenon of social capital with regard to explaining individual and group behavioral dispositions towards the access and redistribution of wealth and resources in this context.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS

Social capital in its own right has emerged as the byproduct of classical arguments and explanations about the existence of social class in society (Bourdieu 1979; Haralambos–Holborn 2008; Putnam 2000; Portes 1998). Social capital is, in Bourdieu's own words, "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources, which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less, and institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu 1985: 248). Social capital as a concept involves the transformation of the perceived invisible structures of networks of relationships, from family networks to hitherto unknown individuals and groups in society, into a more understandable form of expression (i.e. perception of consistent strings of

characters, sounds, and common understanding), hence the stealth appearance of the phenomenon in the works of the early sociologists. Conceptually, the work of Bourdieu helped scholars within the social sciences to capture the hitherto inexpressible but observed relationship between members of society and access to wealth, resources, and opportunities within their society.

In capturing these relationships between members of society and access to resources, the concept gained popularity among scholars in the area of social sciences, causing ripples in the current literature of sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, and more (Ivana 2017; Schmid–Robison 1995; Ferragina–Arrigoni 2017; Portes 1998; Putnam 2000; Ferragina 2013; Zhou–Bankston 1996; Tlili–Obsiye 2014). Social capital as a concept has helped scholars over time to conceptualize ongoing interactions in society among individuals and groups as a measure of the qualitative and quantitative progress in society. These quantitative and qualitative analyses include, among other subjects, the relationship between the masses and the elites in the corridors of political power (Ferragina–Arrigoni 2017). This is perhaps why Ferragina and Arrigoni further adduced that social capital in Britain was once the hope of the poor, which in any case the government was expected to reinforce through the agencies and organizations interested in helping the former.

The economic relationship between producers and consumers is also seen as a subject of social capital connected to the arrangements maintained between producers and distributors in order to maintain the deficit of cash on the side of the distributors who cannot afford to pay for the amount of goods they are capable of delivering at particular point in time (Schmid–Robison 1995; Baker 1990; Granovetter 1995). Social capital as a strand of the concept of capital is identifiable in the web of material goods and services obtainable in a given society (Arrow 1999). Economic resources in society can be redistributed from the rich to the poor through a social capital ladder, which helps the poor to link up with the rich who have access to the resources available in society (Schmid–Robison 1995; Samuels 1990; Boyer 2000; Burt 2000; Grisolia–Ferragina 2015); the ethnographic structure of ancient and modern societies substantially reflects the social capital available in society, making it more or less a substance of honor among people such that whoever wants prestige and recognition is expected to work hard to increase their social capital within the system (Matute-Bianchi 1986; Smart 1993; Waldinger 1995; Zhou–Bankston 1996).

The concept of social inequality and the presumed antidote to absolute inequality in society are a byproduct of class and social capital, which will only be resolved with the understanding of and potential access to social capital by the poor and the excluded (Ivana 2017; Portes 1998; Putnam 2000; Schmid–Robison 1995; Ferragina–Arrigoni 2017).

The concept of social capital, as captured in the work of Bourdieu and subsequent scholars in the field of social sciences, is a thought-provoking contribution to the literature and, by implication, has extended scholarly curiosity in obtaining more understanding and utilization of the concept to generate a reliable and sustainable solution to the ever-growing inequality, abuse, and corruption in modern society – especially in developing nations, where democratic and bureaucratic institutions are weak and inconsistent (Okafor 2017).

Within the context of sociology, social capital is a strand of theory that seeks to technically explain the invisible web of relationships that sustains society in terms of the distribution and accessibility of resources. As a result, social capital cuts across a number of theories and empirical endeavors in sociology and other social sciences to unveil the inalienability of social networks in the relationships between individuals, individuals and groups, and individuals and society.

From the time of antiquity, the web of relationships that exists in society has been observed as indirectly connected to the availability of resources, which can only be accessed via the hierarchy of stratification in society (Hanifan 1916; Jacobs 1961). Durkheim, in his theoretical exploration of society, unveiled the importance of social capital (although not in specific terms) in the cohesion of human society, the absence of which he claimed resulted in some incidence of suicide, according to his classification of suicides (Durkheim 1996). Indisputably, Durkheim saw society without social cohesion as pathological, and by implication a threat to the survival of the individual members of society (Portes 1998).

In the social institutions of society, social structures that have developed overtime harbor individuals who become assets as well as liabilities to one another in terms of interrelationships in society. These structures that manifest as positions – especially political ones or networks of leadership structures among social institutions, from the micro (family), to the macro (the inter-institutional networks) level – involve certain obligations related to the redistribution of resources (such as material and non-material resources) in society, and to members of society, having at the center the occupants of hierarchies of authorities and various powers (Tönnies 1955; Simmel 1969; Malinowski 1954). These structures and the powers attached to them operate as social capital to the occupants of these positions and to everyday individuals in society who access these networks of power relationships in pursuit of the wealth and resources of society. In view of the fact that every social phenomenon in human society maintains some degree of interconnectivity, social capital does not operate as an end in itself, but rather it is a means to other ends – perhaps accessing other forms of capital. This is expressed in the work of Loury (1977), in which social capital is seen as a means of creating human capital. Of course, in the work

of Bourdieu, social capital is one of the four specific forms of capital which he mentioned as having other sub-attributes and as being mutually interwoven (Haralambos–Holborn 2008).

Social capital from the perspective of Loury (1977) is a foundation for other forms of capital required for human survival, such as economic capital, among others. Accordingly, social capital is seen from the economists' perspective as the raw material for pursuing other forms of capital and resources in the social system, hence members of society are more or less concerned about the amount and extent of networks they have to secure their wellbeing and survival within that social system (Samuels 1990; Gwilliam 1993; Schmid–Robison 1995). In a more structural functionalist sense (although with a focus on the power structure), Coleman (1988) observed social capital to be functionally important for society thereby bringing together actors in society both at individual and corporate levels.

According to Coleman, social capital operates as a variety of entities with two elements in common, such as some aspects of social structures and their facilitation of certain activities of actors, which may be persons or corporate actors within the structure. However, Portes (1998), Ivana (2017), Putnam (1993), Ferragina and Arrigoni (2017), and Tlili and Obsiye (2014) reject the position of Coleman (1988), pointing out the vague and unspecified nature of his theoretical position and its implications for empirical verification. Coleman indeed brought to the fore the functional capacity of social capital as a two-way street, as well as its vulnerability to academic exploration, depending on the interest of the scholar. In line with this functionalist perspective of social capital, Baker (1990) defined and explained social capital in view of societal structures and occupants in pursuit of their interests. According to Baker, social capital is a resource that actors derive from specific social structures and then use to pursue their interests. From the position of Baker, social capital is created by changes in relationships among actors. This of course is observable in movement on the social ladder and the web of relationships in an open society where there is less segregation and an absence of group isolation.

From a more structural-functionalist perspective, Radcliff-Brown (1952) maintained that society is made up of structures which are occupied by individuals with certain responsibilities and inherent powers and opportunities. These powers and opportunities are assets in themselves as regards the occupants of positions as well as other members of society.

The theoretical exploration of social capital as initiated by Bourdieu and earlier scholars has attracted quite a number of developments aimed at expanding its analytical horizons to increase understanding among scholars, policy makers and laymen. In any case, Bourdieu set out to discuss and grapple with social inequality in society, especially focusing on the factors behind inequality itself

and the affected groups. This is displayed in Bourdieu's approach to social capital and other forms of capital in society. For instance, Bourdieu discussed in his major work what he classified as the four forms of capital in society – being economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Economic capital is said to consist of material goods which members of society possess as ends in themselves, as well as means to an end in relation to other forms of capital. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital consists of qualifications, lifestyles, and time, their hierarchies in terms of quality, and their appreciation by members of a particular society; this classification also comprises legitimate culture, middlebrow culture, and popular taste. The third type of capital, which is the interest of the present paper, is social capital, which Bourdieu maintained consisted of who you know and who you are friendly with; who you can call on for help or for favors. Finally, Bourdieu mentioned symbolic capital, which he referred to as competence and an image of respectability and honorability (Haralambos–Holborn 2008). Furthermore, Bourdieu maintained that the four forms of capital in society, according to his classification, are interwoven such that each is connected to another in no specific direction.

While social capital in itself can be a means of generating economic capital, economic capital can be a means of creating social capital and other forms of capital within the social system (Bourdieu 1985; Portes 1998; Ivana 2017). Social capital, much like other forms of capital, is embedded in the social system such that from family networks to those of economic and political structures there exist webs of benefit-induced interactions both on the side of authorities and beneficiaries from the common masses (Smith–Kulynych 2002). This situation is found in virtually all of the different strands of human socioeconomic relationships in the developed and developing nations (Sik 2010). According to a classification by Sik (of network-sensitive society and network-insensitive society), social capital abuse among developed nations follows the demand and supply chain of traditional human material and nonmaterial needs embedded in the delivery of modern services via public institutions. While these are obvious in network-sensitive societies, they are more discrete among the network-insensitive societies of developed nations. However, the abuse of social capital seems to occur more in the developing world, where the social capital phenomenon is embedded in existing social structures. This embodiment of social capital in preexisting social structure is crucial, such that social capital takes on a new dimension or may be somewhat be disrupted and relegated to the background (Coleman 1991; Ivana 2017; Ferragina–Arrigoni 2017; Putnam 2000).

For developing nations, accessing resources through social capital via the channels of ethnicity and religion is more or less the typical approach, such that it now has more weight than competence within public institutions (Okafor 2017).

In contrast to this, in developed nations the effect of social capital is gradually being diminished, or has mostly disappeared, leaving a gap between ordinary members of society and the available resources (Putnam 2000; Ferragina–Arrigoni 2017). This of course is the effect of the strong bureaucratization of public institutions that leaves more or less space for social capital, such that belonging to an ethnic group or professional class cannot grant one access to resources, but can assure one access to information, while symbolic and cultural capital in Bourdieu's classification (such as competence and qualifications) become useful instruments for accessing resources.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONAL OPERATION AND OUTFITS IN NIGERIA

Bureaucracy, more than other concepts and theoretical frameworks, has taken over modern society both in developed and developing nations. This has made all the traditional institutions in these societies across the globe operate in a relatively uniform manner, such that rationality in social institutions is no longer culturally induced but understood and interpreted within the logic of global rationality (Giddens 1984). Max Weber, in one of the most enduring theoretical orientations in sociology and social sciences as a whole, expounded on the most effective strategies for managing the interactions of members of society via public institutions. For Weber, objective and legal rationality is embedded in the objective separation of social/public institutions from individual affections (Weber 1965[1947]). His theory calls on the concept of ideal-type bureaucracy, and, by extension, ideal-type bureaucrats, which, according to Weber, are the symbols of objectivity in public institutions. While the ideal-typical bureaucracy is an independent structure of social institutions, the ideal-type bureaucrat is a position in the system which people occupy (Weber 1965[1947]; Ritzer 2011).

Among the principles/characteristics of ideal-typical bureaucracy are rules/continuation, specificity, hierarchical structure, technicality, neutrality, and documentation (Ritzer 2011). The ideal-type bureaucrat, according to Weber, is expected to adhere to these principles to support the effective performance of the institution. As the industrial revolution ushered in the social scientific approach to understanding human interactions in society, especially in the interest of the leaders and the captains of industry, Weber's theoretical orientation became applicable to Europe where it originated, and to America, and subsequently spread to other parts of the globe via empire-building and colonization by European nations. Although Weber's bureaucratic theory has been put to test by some critics who have challenged the unquestionable rationality of bureaucratic

systems and the domineering influence of bureaucracy in postmodern society (Clegg 1992; Ray–Read 1994), Weber's bureaucratic principle has become overwhelmingly influential around the globe and is perhaps the most enduring curriculum for running public and private institutions throughout the world (Ritzer 2011; Haralambos–Holborn 2008). By implication, developing nations that are dependent on developed nations either as a result of colonialism or other bilateral relationships are anchored to the concept of ideal-type bureaucratic setups. An objective approach to development counts on the efficiency of public institutions, while the latter are efficient only through the appropriate adoption of the principles of bureaucracy.

In Nigeria, one of the developing nations that was colonized, traditional institutions (such as family-, educational-, economic- and political institutions such as exist among small-scale societies) were transformed to conform to the regimes of the colonizer (Britain), which invariably operated on the principles of bureaucracy.[2] However, Nigeria, although appearing as a unified system, still operates as a conglomeration of ethnic groups with incoherent cultural orientations (Nwanunobi 2001). In the face of this diversity of cultural orientations among these ethnic groups living together as one nation (Nigeria), understanding and interpretations of interpersonal and group interactions are yet unclear, such that in relation to the ethnic groups making up the nation the understanding of public institutions in view of their cultural orientation towards wealth and resources is totally out of place in the context as concerns bureaucratic principles.

Due to the differences in the cultural orientations, first between those who were colonized and the colonial agents, and the unified ethnic groups in the aftermath of colonization, indigenous people from these ethnic groups, who have used ethnic cleavages to pursue certain interests and built social networks in their own indigenous ways, later transferred their own concept of social networks (here, social capital), and when approaching the colonialists established public institutions such that the principles on which the latter were set up became corrupted and compromised (Okafor 2017).

The complexity involved in the concept of social capital, colonized societies, and the blueprint of developed nations via colonialism is captured in the work of Talcott Parsons, who distinguished between two pattern variables 'A' and 'B.' According to Parsons (1951), 'simple societies' (developing nations)

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2 This is observable in the structural setup of the symbolic institutions, such as the ministry of education, health, finance, aviation, environment, petroleum resources, culture, etc., which are managing on a larger scale what could be termed domestic affairs among the small-scale societies in Africa.

operate, according to his evolutionary analysis of society, in line with pattern variable 'A,' which is associated with descriptors such as ascription, diffuseness, particularism, affectivity, and collective orientation. In contrast, industrialized societies (developed nations) operate within the framework of pattern variable 'B,' which suggests achievement, specificity, universalism, effective neutrality, and self-orientation. In essence, Parsons highlighted in a short way the objective nature of developed nations in terms of the social relationships between individuals and social systems that place more emphasis on social institutions. In the opposite case, developing nations are found to be premised on a platform of subjectivity, wherein rationality and objectivity in the approach to social institutions are lacking.

The availability and the use of social capital in developing nations such as Nigeria is invariably affected by the pattern variables as classified by Parsons, especially with regard to the principles of bureaucracy on which public institutions were established. For instance, instead of the selection of people based on competence (achievement) to fill positions in public institutions in Nigeria, such positions in most cases end up going to people associated with powerful families, who have no special form of competence.[3] Relationships in public institutions in Nigeria have become an avenue for all manner of activities, including unofficial and anti-institutional activities (diffuseness) among the operators of public institutions in most cases, instead of respect for the rules of office engagement (specificity) (Okafor 2017).[4] Individuals in public institutions in Nigeria are more interested in their irrational interests in public institutions (particularism), even at the expense of the sanctity and efficiency of the institutions, than the general objective and rules of public institutions (universalism).[5] In Nigeria, members and users of public institutions can easily

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3 For instance, employment in different ministries in Nigeria may be classified as 'quota sharing' among the political class and top bureaucrats, who subsequently collect money or praise from the candidates they propose, who are usually incompetent fellows from family, ethnic, or religious networks.

4 For instance, Nigerian universities battle with quota sharing between 'campus politics' and academic competence in terms of the production of those with PhDs. For some universities, the proportion can be as unbalanced as 70% 'campus politics' PhDs, and 30% academics. In others, the proportion may be campus politics 30%, financial capability to influence would-be panel members 40%, and academic competence 30%. While campus politics is about 'who you know,' and how powerful and popular your supervisor is, financial capability refers to one's ability to pay some amount of money to grease the palms of those involved in PhD presentations and defenses.

5 Among the public servants in Nigeria, petty business indirectly linked to official capacities, or rather time of service, has become the order of the day. The majority of public servants regularly to attend their offices because of the extra wealth they can acquire through the proxy use of their official resources, which in most cases amounts to exploitation of the unsuspecting poor masses.

pursue their interest in these institutions with no reference to due procedure (affectivity), provided they have access to the people in charge of these institutions, instead of following the due process of the institution in question (effective neutrality).[6]

Finally, in Parsons' framework, the extent of enlightenment among the citizens of developing nations, especially among the operators and users of public institutions, does not inform their sense of judgment (self-orientation) when they pursue their interests in public institutions, but rather their perception of public institutions either as religious or ethnic groups (collective orientation), contrasted with other ethnic groups using the same public institutions within the nation.[7]

Social capital as a phenomenon of the social system becomes a dangerous instrument for undermining public institutions set up on bureaucratic principles in developing nations, thereby scuttling development, in particular. In developed nations, social capital is subject to the principles guiding public institutions such that obtaining help and assistance are within the ambit of the rule of engagement of the particular institution, irrespective of the relationship between the one seeking help and the person offering help through the public institution. This perhaps underscores what Weber clearly referred to as bureaucratic impersonality – when institutions and their occupants are dissociated from personal, emotional, or primordial sentiments when making judgments that affect the system. However, in Nigeria the case is different; public institutions are subject to the negative impact of social capital such that principles guiding public institutions can be altered or even ignored by individuals to satisfy their desires, insofar as they have access to power and the people in charge of these public institutions.

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6 Among Nigerian public institutions, personal interests such as promotion and the utilization of institutional resources are pursued by individuals based on their personal networks rather than due procedures within and outside the institutions in question.

7 As obtainable in Nigerian public institutions, promotions and appointments for high-ranking positions are attached to family, ethnic, and religious networks among the employees of these institutions and the ruling political class, such that changes of ethnic-cum-religious personalities in political power affect the promotions and appointments to such positions.

THE DOWNSIDE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AMONG DEVELOPING NATIONS: THE CASE OF NIGERIA

According to Portes (1998), from a sociological perspective, one may appear biased and unscientific if one perceives that good things always emerge from sociability; bad things are more commonly associated with the behavior of *homo economicus*. Social capital arising from family networks, kinship, communal sources, and from ethnic to organizational levels is associated with varying levels of challenge and opportunity for individuals in society. Specifically, due to the hedonistic nature of individuals, it is nearly impossible for them to operate within any web of relationships and opportunities that lacks control without abusing them – hence, the abuse of social capital. Social capital as a web of free access to opportunities in society, without specific rules of engagement and patterns of desiring and demanding help and assistance in the social system, is a hydra-headed phenomenon that undermines the principles of socioeconomic development, leading to weak public institutions that are susceptible to political, group, and individual manipulation.

Although Portes (1998) summarized the negative impact of social capital in four specific areas– namely, the exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and the downward leveling of norms – there are endless ways in which the latter phenomenon appears in different contexts and times. For instance, in developed nations it may occur in a more sophisticated way due to the efficiency of public institutions and the level of enlightenment that makes it difficult for individuals to be used to satisfy others' interests. In a case involving the usefulness of social capital for facilitating harm to members of society, Putnam (2000) explained how social capital became instrumental in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Putnam claims that for the ring-wing American terrorists (McVeigh) to succeed in this mission, his social network with co-conspirators was handy, even in relation to convincing some insiders to provide reliable information. Ultimately, through social networks the mission was successful, leaving 168 people dead and 800 injured.

According to Waldinger (1996), among the Italian, Irish and Polish immigrants in New York, social capital became an instrument for enhancing social interaction and exchange, while at the same time it acted as a form of inhibition to 'outsiders' in the construction trade and fire and police unions of New York, owing to the fact that the system was controlled by white ethicists. Writing earlier in the sixteenth century, Adam Smith (1776[1979]) cited in Portes (1998) indicated that the organizational structure and networks of the time granted capitalists (merchants) the social capital to undermine the common good of the

general public in their own interest. By implication, as early as in the sixteenth century the negative impact of social capital had already surfaced in the way the merchants used their organizational structures and networks in society to the disadvantage of excluded groups, which in this case were average members of society. Observing the community members of the Bali kinsmen and their use of social capital for accessing whatever opportunities were available in the social system, Geertz (1963) noted that the use of social capital among the group affected successful entrepreneurs who were over-burdened by job seekers and highly connected individuals in the system.

Individual freedom and autonomy have been observed to be endangered by social capital, especially among homogeneous groups, such that some individuals in positions of authority (especially in developing nations) are pressured to engage in anti-institutional activities to benefit the family members and social groups to which they belong (Bourgois 1995; Portes 1998).

Nigeria, one of the developing nations in the West African region, has been a victim of the downside of social capital since her independence, and the nation has continued on the same trajectory until now. The stealth appearance of the phenomenon of social capital stalled a number of attempts by power-brokers to rescue Nigeria from a downward spiral – as indicated by quality of life and qualitative developmental indices. For instance, in the early years of Nigeria's independence, courageous patriots in the Nigerian army conducted a coup specifically to flush out the corrupt elements in the corridors of power. However, due to the domineering influence of social capital (in this case, negative ethnicity) in the system, the main objective of the coup failed, while the nation bounced back into a more deadly ethnically based war, which, until the present, has left Nigeria more polarized in all areas compared to the pre-independence era (Akresh et al. 2017; Alade 1975). While the northern elites in the army worked in tandem with their colleagues from the south to arrest and eliminate the political demagogues in power during the 1966 coup, their colleagues in the south compromised the mission due to the social network that existed between the military and the former, permitting these political elements to get off the hook. As a result, a majority of the casualties of the coup were from northern Nigeria (see Table 1), leaving the corrupt political leaders from the south to escape the efforts at political sanitization that the army had earlier embarked on (Ademoyega 1991). In the counter coup, which was aimed at punishing the southerners 'who had betrayed the northerners,' the tide even turned against the country as an entity, such that the 'Fulani oligarchy' in the pre-colonial societies of northern Nigeria took over the government and made it the permanent property of an ethnic-cum-religious heritage (Anthony 2014).

Table 1. *Civilian leaders who died during the first coup in Nigeria in 1966*

Name	State of origin	Region	Status	Reason for murder
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa	Bauchi	Northern Nigeria	Civilian	Political leader (Prime Minister)
Ahmadu Ibrahim Bello	Sokoto	Northern Nigeria	Civilian	Political leader (Premier of Northern Region)
Samuel Ladoke Akintola	Kwara	Western Nigeria	Civilian	Political leader (Premier of Western Region)
Festus Okotie-Ebor	Delta	Western Nigeria	Civilian	Political leader (Finance Minister)
Ahmed Ben Musa	Sokoto	Northern Nigeria	Civilian	Political leader (Senior Assistant Secretary for Security)
Hafsatu Bello	Sokoto	Northern Nigeria	Civilian	Wife of the Premier, Northern Nigeria
Mrs. Ademulegun	*******	Western Nigeria	Civilian	Wife of Brigadier Ademulegun
Ahmed Ben Musa	Sokoto	Northern Nigeria	Civilian	Senior Assistant Secretary to the Premier, Northern Nigeria
Ahmed Pategi	Sokoto	Northern Nigeria	Civilian	Government driver

Source: Compilations by the authors from government publications, newspaper publications and other academic publications.

Although the colonialists laid the foundation for the permanent recycling of power within the dominant group (the northern Hausa-Fulani system), the 1966 coup perhaps established the foundation for the permanent recycling of power within military, religious, and ethnic enclaves (Badmus 2009), facilitated by the invisible phenomenon of social capital. From the 1966 coup to the election of 2015 that ushered in the present government, the military has dominated leadership positions. Out of the 14 successive regimes from 1966–2015, 10 (71.4%) have been led by the military. Although Obasanjo's return in 1999 and that of Buhari in 2015 are considered to be camouflaged civilian regimes, the way they managed the administration still points to the impact of military domination in politics via a network of social capital. This military domination tends to be a covert manifestation of the phenomenon of social capital in the national army that offered the best connected individuals the opportunity for counter coups to take over the government, yet still maintained the structure within the rank and file in the army.

In the separate cases of Obasanjo and Buhari, the latter were able to return in civilian attire due to pre-established networks (social capital) within and outside the military. For instance, in the case of Obasanjo the opportunity availed itself in a wave of fear of military intervention among the neutral members of society

before 1999, and Obasanjo took the opportunity to crush the military structure, and turned the latter into a willing tool he could use to rule the nation through a mixture of military and quasi-civilian strategies (Mbakwe 2018). For Buhari, the network of the northern Nigerian generals granted him the power to push the pure civilian regime out of the frame, and the threat of war and bloodshed made his major opponent (Jonathan) clandestinely surrender. Among the 14 regimes installed since the 1966 coup, nine (64.3%) leaders have come from the northern region – this group has dominated power in the wake of the counter coup triggered by the abuse of social capital among southern army officers who compromised the objective of the 1966 coup.

Table 2. *Nigerian presidents/leaders from 1966 until the present*

Names	State of origin	Region	Religion	Background	Year
General Yakubu Gowon	Plateau	Northern Nigeria	Christianity	Military	1966–1975
Murtala Mohammed	Kano	Northern Nigeria	Muslim	Military	1975–1976
Olushegun Obasanjo	Ogun	Western Nigeria	Christian	Military	1976–1979
Shehu Shagari	Sokoto	Northern Nigeria	Muslim	Civilian	1979–1983
Muhammadu Buhari	Katsina	Northern Nigeria	Muslim	Military	1983–1985
Ibrahim Babangida	Niger	Northern Nigeria	Muslim	Military	1985–1993
Sani Abacha	Borno	Northern Nigeria	Muslim	Military	1993–1998
Abdulsalami Abubakar	Niger	Northern Nigeria	Muslim	Military	1998–1999
Olusegun Obasanjo	Ogun	Western Nigeria	Christian	Military/civilian	1999–2007
Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	Katsina	Northern Nigeria	Muslim	Civilian	2007–2010
Goodluck Jonathan	Bayelsa	Southern Nigeria	Christian	Civilian	2010–2015
Muhammadu Buhari	Katsina	Northern Nigeria	Muslim	Military/civilian	2015–

Source: Compilations by the authors from government publications, newspaper publications and other academic publications

Due to the social network (social capital) among the northern political and military elites, there has been a continuous recycling of power within the region and perhaps within a single ethnic group, making it difficult for any credible leader to emerge from any part of the nation. Again, among the 14 regimes since the 1966 coup, eight (57.1%) of the leaders have emerged from the Islamic enclave (see Table 2), and this has affected the type of policies they implemented

throughout their administrations such that the nation outside the original framework of unity and oneness (as visible in the national anthem and the coat of arms) became more conscious of the religious attachment and identities of the said ethnic group.

The undertone of each regime, powered by social capital, has reflected the type of policies operated by the regime. The current regime, which was the outcome of the influence of social capital via religious, ethnic, and military factors, is a pro-Islamic, northern-oligarchy-based and military-style regime. Since the beginning of the regime in 2015, religious killing, ethnic cleansing, and extra-judicial action have marked the activities of the regime. According to documentation, so far more than 12,000 Christians have been murdered by pro-Islamic groups across the nation, but primarily in northern Nigeria, where Islam dominates. On average, five Christians are killed each day somewhere in the northern axis of Nigeria (Abbah 2020). Equally, killings involving Muslims have a sectarian undertone as the current government is championed by the Sunni Islam faction in Saudi Arabia. This can be seen as the secret behind the oppression of the Shiite Muslims in northern Nigeria and elsewhere (Amnesty International 2018). With the ethnic-based social capital undertone of the present government, Fulani herdsmen and their Boko Haram collaborators masquerading as bandits have become one of the deadliest terror groups in the world in Nigeria since 2015. This reflects on the manner and style with which they devastate communities and massacre human beings and even occupy their lands without any attempt by the federal government and even state governments to intervene, especially when the government is dominated by Fulani/Islamic groups. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2019 (IEP 2019), more than 20,000 Nigerians have lost their lives under the present regime, with many deaths resulting from the herdsmen's invasion of communities and other ethnic groups.

In relation to the impact of military might with a social capital underpinning on the emergence of the present regime, extrajudicial killings and the compromising of national security due to complicated and fluid networks of ethnic, religious, and military social capital has led to more devastating experiences due to the military in Nigeria. While the regime has favored the Fulani ethnic group and the Sunni Islamic community via social capital based on religion and ethnicity, the Nigerian military could not be reformed as a security apparatus capable of rescuing the masses due to the exploitation of social capital in the army by the present regime.

The complication of the presence of social capital within the political circle has filtered down to public institutions such that the appointment of directors of public institutions in Nigeria, and even employment in these institutions, has

been grounded on social capital via ethnic, religious, and class membership. More than 80 agencies and parastatals were denied of substantive directors from 2016 to 2020 as a result of the lack of individuals acceptable to the social capital network of the then-usurper who was covertly controlling the government of Nigeria as the president's chief of staff.

Table 3. *Random selection of appointments by Mr. President in various ministries since 2015*

Ministries	Ministers[1]	Permanent[2] Secretaries	Region	State of origin	Religion
Agriculture/ State	Mustapha Baba Shehuri	Dr Mua'zu Abdulkadir	Northern Nigeria[1] Northern Nigeria[2]	Borno[1] Kaduna[2]	Islam Islam
	Alhaji Sabo Nanono		Northern Nigeria	Kano	Islam
Aviation	Senator Hadi Sirika	Engr Hassan Musa	Northern Nigeria[1] Northern Nigeria[2]	Katsina[1] Borno[2]	Islam Islam
Defence	Bashir Salihi Magashi	Sabi'u Zakari	Northern Nigeria[1] Northern Nigeria[2]	Kano[1] Jigawa[2]	Islam Islam
Education/ State	Adamu Adamu	Sonny S.T. Echono	Northern Nigeria[1] Northern Nigeria[2]	Bauchi[1] Benue[2]	Islam Christian
	Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba		Southern Nigeria	Imo	Christian
Environment/ State	Mohammad Mahmoud	Bakari Wadinga	Northern Nigeria[1] Northern Nigeria[2]	Kaduna[1]	Islam
	Chief Sharon O Ikeazor		Southern Nigeria	Anambra	Christian
Federal Capital Territory	Muhammad Musa Bello	Umar Gambo Jibrin	Northern Nigeria[1] Northern Nigeria[2]	Adamwa[1] Niger[2]	Islam Islam
Finance	Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed	Dr Mahmoud Isa-Dutse	Northern Nigeria[1] Northern Nigeria[2]	Kaduna[1]	Islam
Health/State	Osagie E. Ehanire	Alhaji Abdulaziz Mashi Abdullahi	Southern Nigeria[1] Northern Nigeria[2]	Edo[1] Katsina[2]	Christian Islam
	Adeleke Olorun-nimbe Mamora		Southern Nigeria	Ogun	Christian
Information and Culture	Lai Mohammed	Grace Isu Gekpe	Southern Nigeria[1] Southern Nigeria[2]	Kwara[1] Cross River[2]	Islam Christian

Source: Compilations by the authors from government publications, newspaper publications and other academic publications.

The Nigerian federal character commission, which was designed to accommodate all and sundry through the recognition of individually functioning capacities, gradually disengaged from public employment and appointment procedures after the 2015 election, being influenced by negative social capital. In terms of employment and appointments, the government of Nigeria from 2015 considered more important ethnic-cum-religious ties; it thus diminished the professionalism and national unity of national public institutions. This can be seen in the lopsided appointments of ministers and permanent secretaries of ministries (https://www.premiumtimesng.com 2020). As a form of systematic corruption, the process of appointing directors, permanent secretaries, and ministers, which is guided by the civil service commission and the federal character commission, has been subverted via delays in appointments and reckless transfers in the interest of specified candidates in the system. This strategy has been applied by the present regime and other regimes to subvert due process in the system in the interest of social capital networks (Adebanjo 2020; Aworinde 2020; *Daily Bells* 2020). After the 1966 counter coup that ushered in the northern Nigeria pre-colonial Fulani oligarchy, the process of appointments and promotions was reduced to the use of ethnic-cum-religious indicators among the domineering group (Fulani and Islamic enclave), paving the way for subsequent coups and leadership domination (*Premium Times* 2019); see also Table 3., above). Professionalism vanished from Nigerian institutions such as the Nigerian army, while respect and objectivity were obliterated from the covert relationship among the members and operators of public institutions (Ayitogo 2021). Of course, this was earlier reflected in the approach of the Nigerian military to the 1967 civil war, which was more of ethnic pogrom than a battle for the nation's unity (Achebe 2012; Alade 1975).

One of the challenges of the social capital phenomenon in the Nigerian military resurfaced as the Boko Haram terrorist group, which started in 2002 but took on devastating dimensions in 2009. While Boko Haram was purely founded on religious grounds and had nothing to do with meeting the common goals of citizens, the group still benefited from powerful networks of sympathetic Muslims in the army and the political class who scuttled every effort to end the activities of the group (*All Africa* 2014; Soni 2014; *Sun News Online* 2019; *Blueprint* 2019). According to Walker (2012), Boko Haram was able to survive the onslaught of the Nigerian army due to informants within the circle of the Nigerian army who enabled them to evade the action the federal government took to flush them out of the system. With the recent Chadian army operation against Boko Haram, some atoms of truth emerged that the high-ranking officers in the Nigerian army were not ignorant of a secret agenda of sustaining Boko Haram in Nigeria (Olafusi 2020). In the policy framework of

the present regime, the visible gestures simply indicate that the fluid network of religion and ethnicity mixed with social capital can energize the religiously motivated activities of Boko Haram. For instance, since 2015 the appointment and retirement of military chiefs was suspended, even after countless pieces of evidence of the failure of military chiefs who were overdue for retirement (Owolabi 2019). Even with the recent retirement and appointment of new military chiefs, processes and personalities still indicated the existence of the phenomenon of negative social capital. For instance, the chief of army staff who took over from Buratai was documented as being the individual who was withdrawn as a theater commander of a joint task force against Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria in 2017 due to his poor performance (BBC 2021). Equally, the same chief of army staff who has been listed by the international community as a human-rights-abuser awaiting prosecution was simply rewarded by the present government, via social capital, with an ambassadorial appointment (Erezi 2021). The problem of negative social capital may also be visible in the activities of the violent migratory group known as the Fulani Herdsmen, in relation to which the police and military kept sabotaging the security of the Benue state and other affected states to protect the interest of the Miyetti Allah sect that was founded on the network of Fulani oligarchy (https://www.vanguardngr.com2020). While the Fulani-sponsored Boko Haram elements in the disguise of herdsmen are busy killing the indigenous people of these states, the managers of the national security system are scuttling local security outfits in the affected states to aid the success of the Fulani takeover of the ancestral land of inhabitants (Danbaba 2018).

The process of employment in public institutions in Nigeria moved from competence to compromise after the British colonialists left the country, based on a logic of who knows who. Britain – for utilitarian purposes – trained ad hoc staff from the available human resources to carry out specific tasks that would support their administration; this made every individual who worked with the colonial agents more efficient in what they did compared to the average graduate of Nigerian universities in the late twentieth century. After independence, when the social capital phenomenon became grounded on ethnicity and religion, employment in public institutions became dictated by one's connection to social networks that were defined on the basis of ethnic and or religious affiliations, such that people were offered prestigious positions to which they had nothing to contribute – or rather, they contributed to the collapse of the system. This process has been sustained by the covert policy of non-open employment by federal institutions located in different regions of the country. In each of these institutions, employment is based on ethnic, religious, and political social capital among close allies.

Due to the phenomenon of social capital in employment and appointment in public institutions, incompetent and technically unsound employees found their way into the work force, especially in specific prestigious positions, and even started the culture of reproducing their like in the system such that, at some point – and even until now – expertise and excellence have become bitter words to the people who control public institutions, especially if the expert(ise) is not derived from the ethnic or religious group associated with whoever is in charge of the institution. Such a situation was recently reflected in the emerging corruption saga in the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) that reveals how public institutions have become the private properties of employees (Abdullateef 2020).Since payment and promotion are not based on performance in the public sector, but rather on evidence of employment and who one knows in the system, everyone in the nation has become interested in joining in the system with the aid of their religious and ethnic social capital such that a significant proportion of Nigerian civil (self!) servants do nothing in relation to their duty/ posts – except for during the week when salaries are paid, when they come in to fill out a payment slip (Ifeanyi–Adepegba 2018). While certificates can be easily bought from willing institutions due to corrupted internal protocols, promotion is assured through internally and externally built networks in public institutions in Nigeria (UNODC 2019).

The phenomenon of social capital has rendered Nigerian public institutions vulnerable to all manner of manipulation by individuals and groups such that there is currently popular discussion about this in relation to each public institution in Nigeria. For instance, the police force as an institution is notorious for its collaboration with dangerous elements in the country that perpetuate crime. Criminals in Nigeria have perfected strategies of operating within their network relationships with the employees of the Nigerian police force in any setting, such that criminals avoid provoking the wrath of the police, but can comfortably operate in a domain for years without detection – hence the popular expression: *'the police know who is who among the criminals in every setting.'* This situation, for example, was observable in a case of when the police and military personnel were found to be in the payroll of a dreaded kidnapper in Taraba State. While the kidnapper offered personnel a regular payment for each of the kidnapping missions he successfully carried out, officers cleared the road for him in each of the operations and shielded him from any further investigation (Ogundipe 2019). How police respond to crime incidents equally betrays their compromise in managing their duties, as this affects the poor and the rich and equally the officers of the institution. When a police officer or a prominent personality is killed or kidnapped by criminals, the police employ every available resource to get to the root of the matter, and will always get

to whoever was involved (Urowayino 2019); when ordinary citizens are killed, however, no matter the number thereof, police may continue with a fictitious investigation for years without any positive outcome. The Nigerian judiciary in theory is the conscience and has the trust of Nigerians, but has sunk into the abyss of shame such that the supreme court of Nigeria can boldly subvert the truth depending on who appointed the chief justice of the federation. Evidence of this is found in the management of the 2019 state and presidential election cases during which the election tribunals, courts of appeal, and the supreme court of Nigeria made a mockery of the social and conscience-related value of the institution.

Smugglers know who is who among immigration officers via their network of connections with these officers, thus they know when to bring in prohibited materials without detection. This was how the foreign fighters were brought in to work with Boko Haram, and how heavy military hardware for Boko Haram entered the country across the border of Nigeria with Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. The group could easily and regularly import heavy weapons and foreign fighters from all over the world that they used to challenge the Nigerian security system. The group simply evaded every checkpoint in collaboration with their staunch allies in the immigration system, who maintained a social network with them via religion and ethnic cleavages, although later Boko Haram overpowered the immigration services and established itself at the border, dislodging the men and women of Nigeria immigration (Onuoha 2013; Akinkuotu et al. 2019). The effect of adverse social capital has transformed Nigerian public institutions, causing the quality of the services rendered by these institutions to deteriorate after the country's independence in 1960 such that Nigerian public institutions now exist to collate and collect salaries but lack objective reality in terms of providing institutional-specific services to citizens. For instance, local government institutions that aim to facilitate grass-roots development anywhere in the world are now death traps for development in Nigeria. While local government revenue allocation has become *bush allowances* for governors, public servants at this level only see their posts as an opportunity to exploit the poor masses whenever they manage to be in office (Ojoje 2019).

The negative phenomenon of social capital associated with ethnicity and religion has dealt a serious blow to sustainable development in Nigeria. Although we can count on the existence of infrastructural provisions similar to those of Europe and America, qualitatively speaking, Nigeria is retrogressing in terms of human development due to the social disincentives created by the deployment of negative social capital as the basis for networking in various institutions (UNODC 2019; UNDP 2019). Having degraded public institutions in Nigeria by positioning mediocre and lazy employees as the heads of these institutions,

the former in Nigeria have become redundant and nonfunctional to the extent that the common man in Nigeria has lost confidence in them (Ezeamalu 2015).

Almost all the resources that are pumped into Nigeria from international bodies and private organizations simply sink into the already muddy public institutions in Nigeria due to the phenomenon of ethnic- and religion-driven social capital. While social capital enabled by ethnicity and religion has provided a mediocre platform for unqualified people to dominate prestigious institutions, these elements still summon the courage to squander the resources that enter the coffers of these institutions and escape the long arm of the law via the same social networks of those with audit and investigative capacity to monitor their activities while in power. For instance, the ecological bailout fund shared among states in Nigeria became a form of additional income to many governors, who turned the funds into private accounts with the help of public servants of different capacities (*Point Blank News* 2020).

Sustainable development that will genuinely affect the quality of lives of citizens is still in doubt because of the peculiar nature of adverse social capital, which readily chokes every meaningful attempt at increasing the efficiency of the system. The philosophies, principles, and objectivity of public institutions in Nigeria have been sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity and negative social capital such that the heads of these institutions in most cases know nothing about the objectives and obligations of their own institutions – and worse still, they are not ready to take advice from experts who are in most cases not from the same ethnic group or religion as them for fear of domination and personal ego clashes.

Almost all the strategies adopted since 1966 until now in terms of fighting corruption and institutional malfunction have surrendered to ethnic- and religion-driven social capital and individual interests that run counter to the interests of the general public. While the first coup in Nigeria that was aimed at correcting institutional failures after independence succumbed to ethnic social capital, the counter-coups that followed and subsequent strategies for fighting individual and institutional corruption equally surrendered to ethnic, religious, and class-based social capital. Even the governments most vocally against corruption, like the present administration, individually and selectively ended up identifying who should be punished and which cases should be treated objectively because of (political) class, religious, and ethnic social capital. This adverse application of social capital reflects the distinctive character of developing nations like Nigeria, and has gone a long way to undermining the ideals of efficiency that make institutions in developed nations thrive.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of social capital has been a topic of interest among sociologists, political scientists, and a host of other social scientists, with more interest in the direction (usually in the positive direction) of its economic importance, with little focus on the negative implications of the phenomenon for sustainable development in developing nations and the social systems they adopt. This situation can of course be credited to the context of the most vocal scholars. For instance, most scholars who have distinctly treated the phenomenon of social capital as a separate entity from other interwoven concepts are from Europe and America, making it more or less a *welfare state enterprise* for nations with advanced social systems. However, in the case of developing nations, especially in Africa, the concept is related to a myriad of problems that require critical examination and a theoretical x-ray that must lead to a paradigm shift in how public institutions are managed. According to Sik's (2010) thesis on social capital, the existence of two camps –network-sensitive and network-insensitive nations –has implications for the application of social capital within social systems. While Nigeria falls into the camp of network-sensitive societies, with all the implications of this for socioeconomic relationships among citizens, the latter phenomenon has intensified in the aftermath of the colonial structures that revolutionized the traditional concept of social institutions. The present work has focused on the less talked about impact of negative social capital for sustainable development among developing nations, especially in the case of Nigeria, where ethnic and religious affiliations have been proven to endanger the efficiency of public institutions. From a functionalist perspective, the paper has unveiled the implications of the phenomenon of social capital for the half-baked bureaucratic institutions in Nigeria, the entire system of which is vulnerable to the hedonistic attitude of individuals towards public resources. As a result, the paper concludes that the corruption and the failure of public institutions in Nigeria is an unfortunate outcome of the phenomenon of negative social capital founded on sectional and parochial indicators such as religious, ethnic, and class affiliation. Public institutions in Nigeria were built on quasi-bureaucratic principles following the legacy of the colonial administration. Having uncoupled these systems of sharing resources and responsibilities from indigenous small-scale interactions, the sanctity and principle of social relationships and sharing of public resources gradually faded, making way for individualistic action and group domination of public institutions. Being trapped by such individualistic and sub-group domination, the public institutions in Nigeria became dysfunctional, making them counterproductive with regard to their original purpose. The outcomes of this are public institutions that promote underdevelopment rather than increase the qualitative conditions and welfare of people in the country.

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INFORMAL STATUS AMONG ADOLESCENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: *The paper provides a systematic review of the literature related to informal (or peer) status among adolescents. First, the most important sociological, developmental, and evolutionary perspectives of informal status are presented, followed by a review of the behavioral and personality correlates most widely discussed in the empirical literature. These correlates are athleticism, aggression, prosocial behavior, risk behavior, academic performance, academic engagement, physical attractiveness, involvement in romantic relationships, leadership abilities, and the Big Five personality traits. Since the bulk of the empirical literature comes from the educational context, where adolescents spend the largest portion of their time, this literature and its most frequently used status dimensions (acceptance, coolness, popularity) are the focus of the paper. The review also pays attention to ethnic and gender differences in status dynamics while acknowledges the importance of different cultural contexts. Implications of our current knowledge and future directions for research are also discussed.*

KEYWORDS: *acceptance, coolness, informal status, peer status, popularity*

INTRODUCTION

Status among adolescents has attracted significant scholarly attention in the last few decades. An extensive body of research has demonstrated that adolescents who have high status among their peers, and popular adolescents

in particular, are profoundly influential in setting the norms of groups and have huge influence on the behavior of their groupmates (e.g. Brechwald–Prinstein 2011; Dijkstra–Gest 2015; Sandstrom 2011). Additionally, research suggests that certain forms of peer status, such as popularity or coolness, as well as the desire to attain them, predict later engagement in risk behavior and academic adjustment problems (e.g. Allen et al. 2014; Mayeux et al. 2008; Schwartz–Hopmeyer Gorman 2011). On the other hand, unpopular and rejected children and adolescents also face similar risks, in addition to an increase in the probability of mental health problems (Parker et al. 2006; Rubin et al. 2015). Moreover, research has unveiled that status differences in wider society, such as those related to gender, race, or physical appearance, are often rapidly reproduced and maintained in small group interactions (e.g. Berger et al. 1980; Ridgeway et al. 2009).

In the empirical literature, peer status has been associated with a variety of behavioral and personality correlates involving athleticism, aggression, prosociality, risk behavior, academic engagement, physical attractiveness, leadership abilities, agreeableness, and extraversion. In addition to these general trends, important gender, ethnic, and cross-cultural differences have been unveiled. Therefore, the review will pay particular attention to ethnic and gender differences while also complementing the predominantly 'Western' literature with findings from other cultural contexts (Hungary and China). Since the research on peer status, to our knowledge, has been carried out almost exclusively in the school context, this will be the focus of our review. Throughout the paper, we will often refer to status among peers as informal or peer status in order to distinguish it from other applications of the term *status* – for instance, from socioeconomic status.

THEORIES OF INFORMAL STATUS

Status is generally understood as the *prestige* or *esteem* individuals enjoy relative to the prestige or esteem individuals at a different level of the *status hierarchy* have (e.g. Anderson et al. 2015; Leary et al. 2014; Ridgeway 2014). Status and the status hierarchy can be related to small, face-to-face groups (e.g. school classes or workgroups), larger groups, and wider society as well. Importantly, individuals with a higher position in the status hierarchy are assumed to have larger influence or power than their peers in lower status positions. Due to the prevalence of status differences, scientists from various fields have been interested in the emergence and maintenance of these

differences. The following sections will present a brief overview of the related sociological, social psychological, developmental, and evolutionary accounts of status with a focus on small, face-to-face groups and the peer context.

Sociological and social psychological perspectives

Since the investigation of social stratification has been one of the most central concerns for sociological research, research related to social status has a long tradition in this field. As is well known, Max Weber distinguished social status from social class as a distinct form of social stratification, and defined status as '*an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive and negative privileges*' typically based on *lifestyle* and *prestige* (Weber 1978: 305–306). He defined 'status order' as the way in which 'social honor' is distributed in a community between different status groups (Weber 1978: 927). In the decades after Weber, many sociologists gave a predominantly functionalist account of the status/prestige difference, relating this to the (assumed) functional importance of a position and scarcity of the necessary skills (e.g. Davis–Moore 1945) as well as to individual achievement (e.g. Parsons 1940). Critical approaches have extensively challenged such assumptions, arguing that social inequalities along such dimensions as class, race, and sex are maintained and reproduced through different social practices that benefit the advantaged groups while also legitimizing these inequalities, (see for instance Bourdieu (1984), Collins (1971), Dahrendorf (1959) among many others). These social practices are, to a great extent, related to the development of status beliefs about differences between social groups with regard to their overall worth and capacities, which in turn creates and maintains status-based group differences, in particular in societies that otherwise value meritocracy and formally constrain explicit discrimination (Ridgeway 2014).

Theories related to status development in small, face-to-face groups reproduce many of these macro-level arguments. For instance, Peter Blau argues in his *theory of social integration* that social interactions may be considered exchange processes wherein individuals with qualities that enable them to provide valuable services to the group receive 'the respect and deference' of others, which grants them 'superordinate status' in exchange for these services (Blau 1960: 555–56). On the other hand, *expectations states theory* (Berger et al. 1972, 1980) and *status construction theory* (Ridgeway 1991; Ridgeway and Balkwell 1997) provide detailed theoretical accounts of how external status differences, unrelated to the task in question, are reproduced and maintained in task-oriented face-to-face groups. These theories predict that individuals

belonging to the higher status groups in society (e.g. men, Whites, physically attractive individuals) have a larger chance of obtaining high status in face-to-face groups *both* among peers with high and low status characteristics. For these assumptions to be true, however, a general acceptance of this status order is needed by *both* groups. If the subordinate group(s) challenge this order, based on theories of intergroup conflict, we could predict in-group favoritism in the attribution of status (see, for instance, social identity theory, Tajfel (1974) and Tajfel–Turner (1979).

In the sociological tradition of adolescent peer relations research, *popularity* is the most frequently used social construct that represents status within the peer group (e.g. Adler–Adler 1998; Coleman 1961b; Eder 1985). These sociological works emphasize that both the precise meaning of popularity and the factors that make someone popular depend on the given peer group and culture (see for instance Coleman 1961b: 43; Eder 1985: 155–56). Consequently, this line of research generally relies on the participants' own construction of popularity. However, in spite of the important empirical contributions, hardly any sociological theory addresses directly the acquisition and functioning of popularity (status) among adolescents. Nevertheless, most theories about the acquisition and maintenance of informal status, such as the small group theories presented above, intend to provide models applicable to a variety of contexts, and many of them explicitly list schools among their examples. In line with these theories, Pál and colleagues argue that in the school context high status peers are the ones who make decisions for the group, while low status students are expected to adjust their opinions to the group and decrease their participation in decision-making (Pál et al. 2016: 806).

Recently, William Bukowski has provided a contextual (sociological) approach to popularity (Bukowski 2011). He argues that in order to understand popularity and the way it functions in a group, we need to understand the context in which it is embedded. He identifies four layers of context that need to be considered:
– the level of individualism or collectivism;
– group norms;
– socioeconomic status (SES);
– the level of secularization and the existence of a pluralistic value system.

He argues that groups that are high in *individualism* ascribe popularity to members who are self-assertive and excel at achievement-related tasks, while groups high in *collectivism* ascribe it to members that are caring and trustworthy. Since he considers popularity as an achievement, he argues that it is more important in the individualistic context. Additionally, he assumes that popularity is of higher importance in the *middle-class context* than in the low-SES context,

and in the *pluralistic secular context* than in the non-secular one, where cohesion is already strengthened by a shared political or religious value system.

Furthermore, theoretical proposals that address differences in peer experience between specific social groups can also be drawn on. For instance, *the 'acting White' hypothesis* (Fordham–Ogbu 1986) proposes that members of 'involuntary' ethnic/racial minorities in a subordinate social position may consider their academically well-performing members as becoming acculturated into the White American 'cultural frame of reference' at the expense of their own minority culture (Fordham–Ogbu 1986: 182–183). Consequently, academic success can be 'resisted' both socially and psychologically, and students who are thought to be 'acting White' can receive a variety of sanctions (ranging from disapproval to physical violence) from the same-ethnicity peers. Although the theory was developed to account for Black students' school experience in the United States, it may be extended to other socially disadvantaged racial/ethnic groups in other contexts (see the review of the empirical literature below). Similarly, Paul Willis in his famous ethnographic study documented how the White working-class boys (the 'lads') he observed developed a *'counter-school culture'* wherein they could obtain high peer status by adhering to the often violent, counter-school values of this subculture (Willis 1977).

Developmental perspectives

Peer relations have been extensively studied by developmental scientists. Developmental approaches focus on the ways peer relations shape children's and adolescents' social, cognitive, and emotional development and adjustment, interpreting these changes and dynamics in the context of the relevant developmental stage, ranging from early childhood to late adolescence (Newcomb et al. 1993; Parker et al. 2006; Rubin et al. 2015). Similarly to the sociological perspectives, developmental approaches interpret peer status among adolescents most typically through the construct of *popularity*. However, psychological research traditionally conceptualized popularity as being liked by peers (see for instance Coie et al. 1982). This changed in the late 1990s when some studies demonstrated that youngsters who are perceived as popular by their peers are not necessarily the ones who are widely liked (e.g. LaFontana–Cillessen 1998; Parkhurst–Hopmeyer 1998), which led to the distinction between *popularity* (a status dimension related to power, prestige, and visibility) and *acceptance* (a status dimension related to social preference) (Cillessen–Marks 2011). Empirical findings extensively support the argument that the two status dimensions are, starting from early adolescence, only moderately correlated

distinct constructs (for a meta-analysis of 20 years of empirical research see Van den Berg et al. (2020)).

Although some forms of peer relations (e.g. friendship) are extensively covered by developmental theories, there are only a few theories that directly address popularity. One such theory is the *gender prototypicality theory* of popularity (Mayeux–Kleiser 2019) which argues that popularity as a status dimension distinct from social preference emerges in early adolescence as a 'byproduct' of intensifying cross-sex interactions and cross-sex attention. This explains, according to the proponents of the theory, why popularity gets disproportionately ascribed to those peers who are 'gender-typical' with regard to their appearance and behavior – it is they who are most likely to attract opposite-sex attention (Mayeux–Kleiser 2019).

Another developmental theory, *maturity gap theory,* associates adolescent popularity with the increasing gap between biological maturity and the limited social opportunities in adolescence (Dijkstra et al. 2010; Moffitt 1993). According to this theory, youngsters ascribe popularity to those peers who can 'close' this gap by demonstrating biological maturity (e.g. through sports, physical attractiveness, or sexual activity) and/or independence from adult rules (e.g. through smoking or alcohol and other substance use).

Finally, Antonius Cillessen proposes a tentative *theory of popularity* (Cillessen 2011) in the closing chapter of the book *Popularity in the Peer System*. This proposal intends to synthetize the multiple approaches and research findings presented in the book. Cillessen argues that the acquisition and maintenance of popularity are two distinct processes and thus should be distinguished. He identifies four factors that can play a role in the *acquisition* of popular status:
   – social attention-holding power;
   – motivation to be popular;
   – behavioral skills (a mixture of prosocial and antisocial skills, in particular relational aggression), and
   – psychobiological factors (e.g. stress resistance).

Cillessen argues that the ability to attract attention is essential as popularity implies visibility, which can be achieved through physical attractiveness (good looks or dressing well), achievement (academic, athletic, etc.), or behavior (leadership, bullying, etc.). Additionally, Cillessen argues that an agentic orientation (independence, autonomy, leadership) and agentic, power, and dominance goals are needed for becoming popular, while a communal orientation and communal, intimacy, and affiliation goals are needed for becoming widely accepted/liked.

He also identifies four factors that can play a role in the *maintenance* of popularity:
- resource-holding power (successfully challenging others and defending one's position against other challengers);
- self-awareness (the awareness of one's popularity);
- social-cognitive skills (high levels of social intelligence);
- flexible adjustment to the group.

The last point includes understanding when a change of group goals and norms can happen and taking the lead in these changes.

Evolutionary perspectives

Evolutionary psychological and biological approaches apply the Darwinian theory of evolution to human behavior (Barkow 2006). These approaches typically focus on sexual selection and reproduction as well as on the biological basis of group formation and competition (e.g. De Bruyn et al. 2012; Gilbert et al. 1995). According to these perspectives, the status hierarchy in groups emerges as a result of individuals challenging others for resources and defending their resources against other challengers (Gilbert et al. 1995). An important reward of high status is assumed to be more mating opportunities and consequently increased reproductive success (Barkow (1989) cited by De Bruyn et al. (2012)).

In the peer relations context, evolutionary theories consider status (popularity) among peers as a form of *social dominance*, which involves competition for such limited resources as friendships or cross-sex contacts (Hawley 1999, 2003; Pellegrini 2008). From this perspective, *aggression* is not considered as dysfunctional but, if used strategically, an important tool in the competition for these resources (Pellegrini 2008; Pellegrini–Long 2002). Once 'group-level dominance hierarchies' are constructed, the level of aggression is assumed to decrease, as the use of it would be costly both for dominant and subordinate individuals (Pellegrini et al. 2011). This hierarchy is assumed to be beneficial for group members as within-group aggression is minimized and the risk of greater, group-destabilizing aggression is also reduced (Pellegrini et al. 2011).

BEHAVIORAL AND PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF PEER STATUS

This section provides an overview of the empirical literature related to the most frequently discussed behavioral and personality correlates of peer status. As we have seen above, peer-relations research typically distinguishes an affective status dimension related to social preference and a reputational dimension related to social prestige and dominance. The former is most frequently measured by the construct of *acceptance* (preference, likeability), while the latter by (perceived) *popularity*. Additionally, some researchers have captured the reputational dimension through some alternative constructs, most prominently by *coolness* (e.g. Bellmore et al. 2011; Jamison et al. 2015; Kiefer–Wang 2016; Wilson–Jamison 2019). The review below will focus on these three constructs.

Athleticism

Virtually all quantitative (e.g. Chase–Machida 2011; Kennedy 1995; Shakib et al. 2011), qualitative (e.g. Adler et al. 1992; Adler–Adler 1998; Eder–Parker 1987; Francis et al. 2010), and mixed (Coleman 1961b; Eder–Kinney 1995) studies have found that athletic ability is one of the strongest predictors of reputational peer status (popularity, coolness) for boys. Some studies have also found a positive but weaker association between athleticism and popularity for girls (for an overview see Lindstrom–Lease (2005: 228–230) and Rose et al. (2011: 110)). This is in line with the theoretical assumption that relates popularity to dominance, prestige, and visibility within the peer group, as sports participation provides visibility, while competitive sports can be related to dominance, which is traditionally considered a masculine trait. Qualitative research also suggests that as girls enter adolescence, the tension between athletic participation and maintaining status increases (Shakib 2003). Similarly, quantitative research including more sports indicates that predominantly 'sex-appropriate' sports (e.g. football or wrestling for boys, gymnastics or volleyball for girls) contribute to higher status as well as more friendship and dating preference for both sexes (Eder–Kinney 1995; Holland–Andre 1994).

Kennedy (1995) and Shakib and colleagues (2011) investigated the association between (self-rated) popularity and athleticism on representative samples in the United States. Kennedy found among eighth graders that popularity had the strongest association with athletic status for all demographic groups (Black, White, Asian, Hispanic), expect for Black females, for whom it was second after

academic status (Kennedy 1995). Shakib and colleagues found in their sample, which included third to twelfth grade students, that regardless of race, gender, and SES, athletes reported higher popularity than non-athletes (Shakib et al. 2011). While Black athletes were *less* likely to report popularity than athletes from other racial/ethnic groups, there was no such gender difference. Although several studies suggest that Black and low-SES students may consider sport more important than their White or higher-SES peers as it can provide a channel for upward social mobility (for an overview see Shakib et al. 2011), the two representative surveys imply that these differences may not be reflected in peer popularity.

Social acceptance has also been positively associated with athletic ability for both genders (e.g. Daniels–Leaper 2006; Dijkstra et al. 2010; LaFontana–Cillessen 2002; Lubbers et al. 2006; Newcomb–Bukowski 1983; Vannatta et al. 2009). When taking into consideration the gender of the nominator, Dijkstra and colleagues found in a Dutch sample of adolescents that athleticism was more strongly associated with same-gender likeability for boys and cross-gender likeability for girls (Dijkstra et al. 2010).

It is important to note that these findings come predominantly from the United States, where sports occupy a particularly highly valued social position (Coleman 1961a; Shakib et al. 2011). Nevertheless, research from other parts of the world seems to have reached similar conclusions. Niu and colleagues found in a Chinese adolescent sample that athletic skills were positively associated with both popularity and social preference for both genders (Niu et al. 2016). On the other hand, Dong and colleagues found no statistically significant association between popularity and athleticism (Dong et al. 1996). Hungarian research among early adolescents has also found that athletic ability was positively associated with both coolness and acceptance (Bocskor–Havelda 2019; Pethes 2015). However, Bocskor and Havelda found that athleticism was only associated with coolness in the case of boys, while there were no ethnic differences between Roma and non-Roma students.

Aggression

Aggression has been extensively researched in relation to peer status. A large body of evidence suggests that it is positively associated with coolness/popularity and negatively with acceptance/preference (e.g. Bellmore et al. 2011; Cillessen–Mayeux 2004; Kiefer–Wang 2016; Prinstein–Cillessen 2003; Rodkin et al. 2006; Schwartz et al. 2006) (for a review of the literature see Mayeux et al. 2011). Newcomb and colleagues conducted a meta-analytic

review of earlier literature on the characteristics of the classical sociometric status groups and found that 'sociometrically' popular (i.e. widely liked) children showed a lower than average level of aggression, while rejected and 'controversial' children showed higher than average levels (Newcomb et al. 1993). Since the 'controversial' status group contains pupils who score high on the dimension of social impact (i.e. are both liked and disliked by many peers), this group may be closer to our current understanding of popularity. Indeed, more recent research has distinguished two subtypes of (perceived) popular students: one that is high both on popularity/coolness and acceptance and one that is high on popularity/coolness but average or lower on acceptance (De Bruyn–Cillessen 2006; Rodkin et al. 2000; Van den Berg et al. 2015). The two groups show distinct behavioral profiles: popular-accepted students are usually prosocial, academically engaged, and non-aggressive, while popular but not particularly liked pupils tend to be aggressive and academically disengaged.

In order to provide a more refined picture about the relationship between aggression and peer status, it is important to distinguish between different forms of aggression, such as *overt* (direct) and *relational* (indirect) aggression (Crick–Grotpeter 1995) as well as *proactive* and *reactive* aggression (Dodge–Coie 1987). Relational (or social or indirect) aggression refers to behavior that is intended to damage another person's social relationships or social position through manipulation – for instance by sabotaging the target person's friendships or romantic relationships, spreading gossip, or by exclusion from activities (Card et al. 2008; Crick–Grotpeter 1995). To our knowledge, one meta-analytic review has investigated the association between indirect aggression and popularity (Casper et al. 2020), two reviews between indirect aggression and acceptance (Card et al. 2008; Casper et al. 2020), and one review between direct aggression and acceptance (Card et al. 2008). The results show that popularity is positively associated with indirect aggression, acceptance is negatively associated with direct aggression, while the negative association between indirect aggression and acceptance becomes nonsignificant if we control for direct aggression. Empirical studies have also found a positive association between direct/overt aggression and popularity (see the literature review by Mayeux–Kleiser 2019). However, some studies suggest that the effect of indirect/relational aggression is stronger (Cillessen–Mayeux 2004; Prinstein–Cillessen 2003), while other studies have found that after controlling for relational aggression, the effect of overt aggression becomes nonsignificant (Rose et al. 2004; Waasdorp et al. 2013). With regard to reactive and proactive aggression, Stoltz and colleagues found that proactive (strategic) aggression was positively while reactive aggression negatively associated with popularity (Stoltz et al. 2016). Prinstein and Cillessen combined the two dimensions and found that the strategic use of

both direct and indirect aggression was positively associated with popularity, while reactive direct aggression was negatively associated with both popularity and acceptance (Prinstein–Cillessen 2003).

Bullying is a special form of aggression, which can be defined as "a subtype of aggressive behavior, in which an individual or a group of individuals repeatedly attacks, humiliates, and/or excludes a relatively powerless person" (Salmivalli 2010: 112). It can be viewed as a form of instrumental, proactive aggression with the goal of attaining status and dominance (Pellegrini et al. 2011). There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that skillful bullies tend to have high levels of popularity and low levels of acceptance, while victims have both low levels of popularity and acceptance (e.g. Duffy et al. 2017; Pouwels et al. 2016; Pronk et al. 2017; Rodkin–Berger 2008; Sijtsema et al. 2009; Veenstra et al. 2005). More refined analysis of the different roles has found that followers of bullies were also associated with higher levels of popularity and lower levels of acceptance, while defenders were associated with higher levels of acceptance and in some cases higher levels of popularity (Duffy et al. 2017; Pronk et al. 2017).

With regard to gender differences, although an earlier review (Rose et al. 2011) suggested that significant gender differences were typically found in the ethnographic but rarely the quantitative literature, a more recent review (Mayeux–Kleiser 2019) argues that overt and relational aggression contribute to boys' and girls' popularity differently. Indeed, some quantitative studies have found the association between overt aggression and popularity/coolness to be stronger (Waasdorp et al. 2013) or only significant (Kiefer–Wang 2016; Xie et al. 2003) in the case of boys. Similarly, some studies suggest that relational aggression is more strongly (e.g. Cillessen–Mayeux 2004) or only (Kiefer–Wang 2016) associated with girls' coolness/popularity. Additionally, popularity has been more strongly associated with bullying for boys (De Bruyn et al. 2010). When taking into consideration the gender of both the bully and the victim, Rodkin and Berger found that same-sex bullying contributed to popularity, boys bullying girls to unpopularity, while bullies were disliked regardless of whom they targeted (Rodkin–Berger 2008). Additionally, Veenstra and colleagues found that male same-gender bullying was positively associated with female acceptance (Veenstra et al. 2010). The ethnographic literature also underlines the importance of physical strength and 'toughness'– the ability to intimidate and dominate others- in boys' popularity, as well as the role of social manipulation and verbal intimidation in girls' popularity (e.g. Adler et al. 1992; Eder 1985; Merten 1997).

Some research also suggests ethnic/racial differences in the association between aggression and peer status. For instance, some studies have found a strong association between aggression and popularity in the case of African

American students in Black-majority schools, and a stronger association for African American than European American students in multi-ethnic settings (e.g. Farmer et al. 2003; Luthar–McMahon 1996; Meisinger et al. 2007; Rodkin et al. 2000; Waasdorp et al. 2013).

The empirical evidence that shows an association between some forms of aggression and popularity is in line with predictions of evolutionary theories, which propose that aggression is used strategically to gain and maintain status. In particular, 'bistrategic' youth (Hawley 2003) – i.e. pupils who use both aggression and prosocial behavior –, have been found to have the highest level of popularity (e.g. Closson–Hymel 2016; Dijkstra et al. 2009; Hartl et al. 2020; Kornbluh–Neal 2016) (for an overview of primarily the evolutionary research see Pellegrini et al. 2011). Research by sociologists Robert Faris and Diane Felmlee also underlines the role of aggression in status competition; the authors measured peer status by social network centrality in friendship networks and found that increased network centrality predicted increases in aggression up to the highest levels of network centrality, where aggression decreased (Faris–Felmlee 2011, 2014).

In 'non-Western' cultural contexts, the relationship between peer status and aggression may be more controversial. Some research among Chinese students found a positive association between popularity and aggression (Lu et al. 2018a; Niu et al. 2016; Schwartz et al. 2010) and a negative association between acceptance and aggression (Niu et al. 2016; Schwartz et al. 2010), while other studies found negative association between popularity and aggression (Owens et al. 2014; Tseng et al. 2013; Xi et al. 2016). In Hungary, Bocskor and Havelda found among early adolescents no association between physical aggression and coolness and a positive association between verbal aggression and coolness only in the case of non-Roma students (Bocskor–Havelda 2019). Similarly, they found that acceptance was negatively associated with verbal aggression. Interestingly, verbal aggression had a stronger positive association with girls' coolness and a stronger negative association with their acceptance. Kisfalusi investigated bullying among sixth graders in the same database and found an inverted U-shaped relationship between physical and verbal bullying and coolness nominations among sixth graders: students were more likely to be nominated as perpetrators up to a certain level of coolness (Kisfalusi 2018).

Prosocial behavior

Prosocial behavior is voluntary behavior intended to benefit others (Eisenberg et al. 1999; Wolters et al. 2014), which has been conceptualized by characteristics

such as empathy, concern for others, and interest in enhancing personal relationships (Aikins–Litwack 2011). It has been found to correlate strongly with both peer acceptance and popularity (e.g. De Bruyn–Cillessen 2006; Dijkstra et al. 2009; Kornbluh–Neal 2016; Peters et al. 2010; Wolters et al. 2014). As mentioned above, peers that use a mixture of prosocial and (strategic) aggressive behavior tend to be the most popular. Qualitative studies have found that, in addition to kindness and helpfulness, popular girls also used manipulative tactics and 'meanness' (indirect and verbal aggression) to maintain their status (e.g. Currie et al. 2007; Duncan 2004; Merten 1997; Wiseman 2002), while popular boys were also engaged in demonstrations of physical dominance, ranging from pushing to physical fights (e.g. Adler et al. 1992; Francis et al. 2010). Although an earlier review (Rose et al. 2011) suggested that the quantitative literature had not found gender differences in this domain, Kornbluh and Neal found that popularity had a stronger positive association with prosociality for girls (Kornbluh–Neal 2016).

Sociometric studies among Chinese adolescents also found that both popularity and acceptance were positively associated with prosociality (Lu et al. 2018b; Niu et al. 2016; Wang et al. 2019). Interestingly, those two studies that investigated both status dimensions showed that prosociality was more strongly associated with popularity than with acceptance (Lu et al. 2018b; Niu et al. 2016), which Niu and colleagues attribute to Confucian principles prescribing morally responsible behavior. Two studies that focused on students' perception of popularity determinants and used samples from multiple countries found that Chinese students more strongly associated popularity with prosociality than American (Li et al. 2012) or Australian (Owens et al. 2014) pupils. Owens and colleagues attribute this difference to the collectivist cultural context in China, which also puts stronger emphasis on social harmony.

Risk behavior

Several researchers have been interested in the relationship between peer status and different forms of risk-taking activities. Although this concept can cover a wide scope of behaviors, primarily aggression, substance use/abuse, and sexual behavior have been discussed in relation to adolescent peer status (Schwartz–Hopmeyer Gorman 2011). Since aggression has already been discussed above, we will not cover it in the current section. Overall, popularity has been positively associated with substance use (Franken et al. 2017; Hawke–Rieger 2013; Killeya-Jones et al. 2007; Mayeux et al. 2008; Prinstein et al. 2011) and sexual activity (Hawke–Rieger 2013; Mayeux et al. 2008; Prinstein et al.

2003, 2011) for most groups of adolescents. Hawke and Rieger investigated a wide range of risk behaviors among Australian grade 9 students and found, in addition to the results described already, antisocial activities (vandalism, shoplifting, skipping classes, breaking school rules) to be typical of the high-on-popularity-low-on-acceptance group of students, in particular boys (Hawke–Rieger 2013). Social acceptance has not been associated with risk behavior for most groups (Franken et al. 2017; Hawke–Rieger 2013; Mayeux et al. 2008; Prinstein et al. 2003), although Franken and colleagues found that risk behavior was negatively associated with acceptance for girls, while Hawke and Rieger found that boys with high levels of acceptance were those most likely to be engaged in sexual activity, whereas girls with high levels of acceptance were the least likely. The maturity gap hypothesis (Moffitt 1993) can provide a good explanation for the positive relationship between risk behavior and popularity. In particular in the case of those activities that are legal/accepted for adults but not so much for adolescents (tobacco and alcohol use, sexual activity), those peers who engage in such activities can be seen as demonstrating independence and autonomy and thus closing the gap between biological maturity and (the lack of) social maturity.

Academic performance and engagement

Traditional sociometric research has extensively found that 'sociometrically' popular (i.e. accepted) students perform well academically, while members of the 'controversial' group perform around average (Newcomb et al. 1993). As we have seen above, more recent research distinguished two subgroups of (perceived) popular pupils; one that is highly accepted, nonaggressive, and academically engaged, and another that is average or low on acceptance, aggressive, and usually academically disengaged (De Bruyn–Cillessen 2006; Rodkin et al. 2000; Van den Berg et al. 2015). It may be due to this ambiguity that quantitative studies have found controversial results with regard to the relationship between academic *performance* (GPA) and popularity: some studies showing negative association (e.g. Hopmeyer Gorman et al. 2002), while other studies showing no association at all (e.g. Boyatzis et al. 1998; Meijs et al. 2010). In one study, LaFontana and Cillessen measured academic ability with peer nominations of smartness among early adolescents and found it to be positively associated with both popularity and acceptance (LaFontana–Cillessen 2002). The ethnographic studies by Adler and colleagues found that in the case of boys, both high and low academic achievement had a negative relationship with popularity (being labelled 'nerdy' or 'dummy'), whereas

popular girls did not suffer any stigma for performing well academically (Adler et al. 1992; Adler–Adler 1998). Other qualitative studies also confirmed that academically successful popular boys had to 'balance' popularity and school achievement (e.g. Francis et al. 2010). Although the association between grades and acceptance has typically been found to be positive (Wentzel 2009), Meijs and colleagues found no main effect of academic achievement on acceptance (Meijs et al. 2010). However, they found that in vocational classrooms the combination of high social intelligence and low achievement were associated with popularity, while in college-preparatory classrooms it was the combination of high social intelligence and high achievement.

Academic engagement is generally understood as a multidimensional construct that can be divided into subcategories such as behavioral (e.g. following the rules), emotional (e.g. sense of belonging and appreciation), and cognitive engagement (investment in learning) (Fredricks et al. 2004). Most studies have investigated the relationship between some aspects of behavioral engagement and peer status, and typically found a negative association between popularity/coolness and behavioral engagement (e.g. De Laet et al. 2014, 2015; Hopmeyer Gorman et al. 2002; Kiefer–Wang 2016; Schwartz et al. 2006; Troop-Gordon et al. 2011). Engels and colleagues conducted a very refined analysis of the relationship between academic engagement and peer status on a Belgian sample and found that behavioral engagement was negatively whereas behavioral disaffection positively associated with popularity, while the emotional dimensions were not associated with popularity (Engels et al. 2017). Additionally, acceptance was positively associated with both emotional and behavioral engagement (Engels et al. 2017). Finally, the developmental aspect also needs to be taken into consideration. For instance, Galván and colleagues found that increases in coolness were associated with increased academic engagement (raising hands, participating in class, following class rules) in grade 5, but with increased disengagement (copying homework, coming to class late, getting in trouble in class) in grades 7-8 (Galván et al. 2011).

With regard to racial and ethnic differences, the *'acting White' hypothesis* (Fordham–Ogbu 1986) proposes that for many African American students academic success can lead to sanctions from same-ethnicity peers (see the theoretical chapter above). Although some ethnographic studies at the time corroborated Fordham and Ogbu's findings (e.g. Miller 1989: 181), other, more recent ethnographic studies (e.g. Horvat–Lewis 2003; Tyson et al. 2005) and semi-structured interviews (Xie et al. 2006) did not. Similarly, some quantitative studies on large-scale American samples found support for the hypothesis (Fryer–Torelli 2010; Fuller-Rowell–Doan 2010), while others did not (Ainsworth-Darnell–Downey 1998; Cook–Ludwig 1997; Wildhagen 2011).

Importantly, these studies conceptualized social standing as self-reported popularity (Ainsworth-Darnell–Downey 1998; Cook–Ludwig 1997), self-reported social acceptance (Fuller-Rowell–Doan 2010), or friendship networks (Fryer–Torelli 2010), and none of them used peer-nominated acceptance, popularity, or coolness. Research on other sociodemographic groups, including Latin American students (Flores-Gonzalez 2005) and ethnic minority pupils in Germany (Stark et al. 2017), has also yielded controversial results for the 'acting White' hypothesis.

Finally, similarly to earlier sections, the importance of cross-cultural differences also needs to be emphasized. In the Chinese context, not only acceptance, but also popularity have been found to be positively associated with academic achievement (Li et al. 2012; Niu et al. 2016). In Hungary, Bocskor and Havelda found among early adolescents a minimal but statistically significant negative association between academic engagement and coolness, and a minimal but statistically significant positive association between engagement and acceptance, and GPA and acceptance among early adolescents (Bocskor–Havelda 2019). Additionally, three studies have tested the 'acting White' hypothesis on ethnic Roma students in Hungary (Habsz–Radó 2018; Hajdu et al. 2019; Kisfalusi 2018), but none of them found evidence of an ethnic oppositional culture. However, a vignette experiment found that Roma students in classes with *high ethnic diversity* rated *hypothetical* peers with good GPA as less cool (Keller 2020).

Physical attractiveness and involvement in romantic relationships

Qualitative studies have extensively demonstrated the strong relationship between *physical attractiveness*, being fashionable, and high status, especially in the case of girls (e.g. Adler et al. 1992; Eder 1985; Francis et al. 2010; Merten 1997). Quantitative studies have found attractiveness to be positively associated with both popularity and acceptance for both sexes (e.g. Boyatzis et al. 1998; Dijkstra et al. 2010; LaFontana–Cillessen 2002; Lease et al. 2002; Vaillancourt–Hymel 2006), while some studies found it to be more strongly associated with girls' popularity (e.g. Closson 2009). However, what counts as physically attractive may differ for the two sexes: Wang and colleagues found that lower levels of popularity were associated with a larger body shape for girls, while for boys both thin and heavier body shapes were associated with lower levels of popularity (Wang et al. 2006). Similarly, the importance of romantic relationships, and at a more general level being 'at ease' in cross-sex

interactions, have also been shown by several qualitative studies (e.g. Adler et al. 1992; Eder, 1985; Francis et al. 2010). Quantitative research has also found that involvement in dating/romantic relationships is positively associated with popularity and acceptance (Carlson–Rose 2007; Houser et al. 2015; Miller et al. 2009). One study among Chinese elementary school students (grade 5) found that cross-sex interaction was negatively associated with popularity (Li et al. 2012), while another piece of research among adolescents (grade 8) found that dating was positively associated with both popularity and acceptance (Niu et al. 2016). In Hungary, Bocskor and Havelda found that physical attractiveness was positively associated with both acceptance and coolness; however, it was more strongly associated with coolness for boys (Bocskor–Havelda 2019).

Leadership abilities and the Big Five personality traits

There are several dimensions to personality and several taxonomies of personality traits in psychology. Although many of them may be relevant to peer status, relatively few studies have investigated the relationship between personality and peer status, and these studies almost exclusively used the *Big Five factors* (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism) (e.g. Ilmarinen et al. 2019; Jensen-Campbell et al. 2002; Lubbers et al. 2006; Mervielde–Fruyt 2000; Van der Linden et al. 2010; Wolters et al. 2014). A recent review suggests that out of the five factors extraversion is positively associated with both popularity and acceptance, agreeableness is positively associated with acceptance, neuroticism is negatively associated (in some studies) with both forms of status, while openness and conscientiousness is typically not associated with status (Van Aken–Asendorpf (2018) cited by Ilmarinen et al. (2019)). Van der Linden and colleagues found that when all Big Five dimensions were tested simultaneously, most of the statistical significance was lost, which suggested that the dimensions had overlapping variance (Van der Linden et al. 2010). They created a higher-order factor, the General Factor of Personality (GFP), to grasp this shared variance, and this factor was positively associated with both popularity and acceptance. Wolters and colleagues simultaneously investigated behavioral, personality, and communicative predictors of the two status dimensions among adolescents (Wolters et al. 2014). Out of the two personality traits they investigated (extraversion and agreeableness), only extraversion was found to be a distinct predictor of popularity. Additionally, they found that prosocial behavior only predicted popularity if it was associated with high levels of extraversion, while antisocial behavior was also associated with higher levels of popularity in case of students high on extraversion.

In addition to the Big Five personality traits, some studies have investigated the role of leadership abilities, in particular the extent to which it can moderate the association between popularity and relational aggression. Waasdorp and colleagues found that both popularity and acceptance were positively associated with leadership, and popular pupils who used relational aggression were more likely to be seen as leaders (Waasdorp et al. 2013). Puckett and colleagues found that leadership moderated the positive association between relational aggression and popularity, but not the negative association between relational aggression and acceptance (Puckett et al. 2008), while Gangel and colleagues found that in the case of girls only those relationally aggressive pupils were popular who also scored highly for perceived leadership ability (Gangel et al. 2017).

THE EFFECTS OF PEER NORMS AND GROUP COMPOSITION

The paper was so far intended to provide a brief but comprehensive overview of the relevant theoretical approaches and the most widely discussed behavioral and personality correlates of peer status among adolescents. Due to space limitations, this section cannot aim to provide a similarly comprehensive review of the effects of local and social contexts. Therefore, only some key findings related to peer norms and group composition will be highlighted to complement the picture provided by the discussion of the individual correlates above.

Among adolescents, several studies have demonstrated that *peer/classroom norms* have a significant impact on behavior (e.g. Dijkstra et al. 2008; Dijkstra–Gest 2015; Laninga-Wijnen et al. 2018). Dijkstra and Gest outlines a distinction between descriptive norms (the extent to which a given behavior is prevalent in the classroom) and salient norms (or 'norm salience' – the extent to which a behavior is associated with popularity) (Dijkstra–Gest 2015). They found among Dutch adolescents that behavior associated with popularity in a given classroom (academic achievement, prosocial behavior, bullying) had a larger effect on the relationship between that behavior and acceptance than the classroom prevalence of that behavior (Dijkstra et al. 2008; Dijkstra–Gest 2015). Similarly, Rambaran and colleagues demonstrated the importance of norm salience in the spread of risk attitudes (e.g. smoking, skipping school, damaging things) among Dutch adolescents (Rambaran et al. 2013). However, it is not only the prevalence and salience of a given norm that matters, but also the *perception* of this norm (e.g. Allen et al. 2005; Galván et al. 2011; Romera et al. 2019). An earlier review of peer influence processes suggested that adolescents' behavior is more strongly associated with the perception of peer norms than peers' actual (self-reported) behavior (Brechwald–Prinstein 2011).

Another important factor is the *socio-demographic composition* of a class –
in particular, its racial/ethnic composition; students who are in the numerical
majority may receive more popularity/acceptance nominations as the result of
same ethnicity bias. For instance, Bellmore and colleagues found that European,
Asian, and Latin American students demonstrated *positive* same ethnicity bias
(more acceptance and fewer rejections of same-ethnicity peers), while African
American students demonstrated *global* same-ethnicity bias (nominating more
same-ethnicity peers for both acceptance and rejection) (Bellmore et al. 2007).
Since racial/ethnic segregation is prevalent even in desegregated classes (e.g.
Moody 2001), pluralistic status systems are often created along racial/ethnic
lines (Brown 2011). For instance, Rock and colleagues found that in the case
of African American students, high ethnic identity centrality was associated
with high levels of peer acceptance and popularity when rated by other African
American students, while their acceptance and popularity were unrelated to
ethnic identity centrality when rated by European American peers (Rock et al.
2011). Similarly, some studies found in Hungary that Roma students were more
likely to dislike (Boda–Néray 2015), bully (Kisfalusi et al. 2018) or consider less
clever (Kisfalusi et al. 2019) those peers whom they perceived as Roma but who
self-identified as non-Roma.

CONCLUSION

The paper has provided a review of the theoretical perspectives and most
frequent correlates of peer status among adolescents. Even though this topic
has been studied by a variety of disciplines (including sociology, psychology,
and biology), it seems to be somewhat undertheorized, as there are only a few
theories that directly address peer status (Mayeux–Kleiser 2019). Nevertheless,
theoretical perspectives that address other aspects of peer experience (e.g.
friendships) or provide a more general model of group processes can also be
drawn on. Sociological perspectives typically conceptualize peer status with
popularity and emphasize that its precise meaning and dynamics are defined
by the peer group itself. Research on specific socio-demographic groups and
cross-cultural comparisons, as well as more recent studies on the effects of
peer norms greatly support these views. Additionally, sociological and social
psychological theories of group formation predict that either members with
resources/services valuable to the group (e.g. Blau 1960) or members who
have attributes associated with higher status in wider society (e.g. Berger et
al. 1972; Ridgeway 1991) obtain higher peer status. Alternatively, theories of

intergroup conflict (e.g. Tajfel–Turner 1979) predict in-group favoritism in the case of different ethnic/racial groups. The empirical research reviewed in this paper mostly provides evidence for the latter, although the application of social network techniques (as contrasted with the now prevalent more traditional statistical methods) and in-depth ethnographic studies in multiethnic settings could add valuable insight and clarification about this issue (Grow et al. (2016) and Kisfalusi et al. (2019) have already investigated the gendered and ethnic aspects of ability attributions with the application of social network techniques).

While sociological and social psychological approaches emphasize the context- and group-specific aspects of peer status, developmental and evolutionary theories make more universal predictions. Findings about the association between peer status and prosociality sit well with general developmental theories, while the association between risk behavior and popularity is in line with the predictions of maturity gap theory (Moffitt 1993). Similarly, findings about the association between (strategic) aggression and popularity, and in particular between popularity and the mixture of prosocial and aggressive behavior, are in line with the predictions of evolutionary theories. Nevertheless, we have seen that even in the case of these more universal associations, the importance of sociodemographic and cross-cultural differences cannot be neglected.

Consequently, more research from 'non-Western' contexts, and in particular research involving multiple samples and cross-cultural comparison are highly needed to refine the picture. Similarly, more research that takes into consideration peer norms as well as different classroom popularity hierarchies (e.g. Laninga-Wijnen et al. 2019) would greatly contribute to our understanding of peer dynamics. Finally, research involving novel methodological approaches (e.g. social network analysis), as well as the application of mixed research methods (e.g. Bocskor 2021) would also provide valuable contributions to our understanding of peer status.

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REVIEW

MOBILITY AND INTEGRATION IN HUNGARIAN SOCIETY, EDITED BY IMRE KOVÁCH (CENTRE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES – ARGUMENTUM, 2020)

Gábor Szászvai-Papp[1]

In December 2020, two volumes were published by the Hungarian Centre for Social Sciences and Argumentum Publisher. One of them was *Mobility and Integration in Hungarian Society*[2], which is the subject of the present review, and the other was *Integration Mechanisms in Hungarian Society*. The concept of the double volume and the choice of topics may be similar to the biennial publication the Hungarian *Social Report*, as this also seeks to present the latest research results based on similarly significant literature.

The volume the book review is based on includes 11 studies in four blocks of subjects (chapters). As a kind of latent organizing principle, the first six studies present the results of large-sample (2700 people) research carried out in the autumn of 2018 by the Mobility Research Center under the Excellence Academic Cooperation Program of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (or, more precisely, its preliminary research from 2015), typically focusing on so-called integration groups. The method of the research was questionnaires, and the target group was the adult population (18 years and older) living in Hungary. The results are based on stratified two-stage sampling. The sample is representative of the adult Hungarian population by sex, age, place of residence, and education level. Integration groups are theoretical and empirical categories are developed by the researchers according to the interrelated dimensions of the three levels of integration (system integration, social integration, and interpersonal integration).

The five studies in the other half of the volume are based in part on official statistics and in part on the authors' own independent research.

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2 The original Hungarian title of the book is *Mobilitás és integráció a magyar társadalomban*.

The first chapter, entitled *Mobility and Integration*, begins with a study by Ákos Huszár and Andrea Szabó entitled *Party preference and the perception of social position*, and mainly focuses on the issue of how far individuals' political attitudes are influenced by their political affiliation. Their study question is based on two preliminary assumptions: on the one hand, that the assessment of changes in the social situation cannot be explained solely by the development of objective living conditions, and on the other hand, that political affiliation can play a significant role in the former.

The study approaches the assessment of individuals' social situation through subjective indicators of social mobility. This subjective social mobility was also examined by the authors at the intergenerational and intragenerational level: the former was essentially measured by assessing the social position of the respondents' parents at the age of 14, while the latter was measured by assessing the respondents' own situation 10 years ago (i.e. in 2008) compared to the current situation (using a scale from 1 to 10). The results of the research show that the proportion of those who feel that their social position is improving is large, but there is a difference between the intergenerational and intragenerational aspects of subjective mobility. With regard to intragenerational mobility, the majority feel that their situation is unchanged (immobile), while the proportion of those who report an experience of upward mobility is almost twice as large as those who report to downward mobility. At the same time, the situation is improving for the majority compared to that of their parents, and the proportion of those experiencing downward mobility is the smallest.

The main finding of the study is that perceptions of improving intergenerational mobility do not differ significantly according to party preference, although from an intragenerational point of view the difference is remarkable: supporters of the current ruling party perceive their situation much more favourably than supporters of the opposition. Reviewing the age of the respondents, the authors found that the older individuals are, the more they feel that their social situation has improved compared to the social position of their parents (i.e. that of their childhood).

Many questions arise regarding the measurement instrument used in the study. Although it is not necessarily appropriate to blame a subjective indicator for its subjective nature, it is inevitable that subjective evaluation in the present case is embedded in a historical context; besides, it is also scattered over time due to the age of individuals and due to the joint evaluation of different social situations. The use of this sort of measurement, especially regarding such abstract social positions, requires caution when evaluating results. The respondents are presumably not social researchers who are able to evaluate the positions they may have occupied in the social structure of decades ago, either

alone or especially in relation to each other. For this reason, the model presented by the researchers in fact remains at the level of theoretical construction, and this is especially true regarding intergenerational mobility – i.e. the notion that the perception of mobility can be determined primarily by the current situation and well-being. It is possible that the study did not in fact identify mobility, but rather an optimistic-pessimistic attitude that is associated with party preferences.

In the second study of the first chapter, *Inequality of social mobility between women and men. Convergence or divergence?*, the authors Ákos Huszár, Karolina Balogh, and Ágnes Győri seek answers to the basic sociological question of how far origin determines the social status of individuals in Hungary, and whether gender differences can be detected in this respect. The results of the research confirm the upward mobility trends of women that have been characteristic for decades, and the decrease in gender differences.

Broken down by cohort, a clear narrowing of intergenerational mobility pathways is detected, from elderly to youth, as well as downward mobility replacing the previous upward mobility associated with structural changes in society following the change of the political regime. An important finding of the study regarding upward mobility, which is more characteristic of women, is that it reflects movements taking place typically in the middle of the social structure. In the upper segment of society, the mobility rates of the two sexes are similar, while in the lower part women are in a disadvantaged position. With regard to relative mobility, which shows the chances of someone moving from one occupational class to another according to their origin compared to those from another occupational class, the data highlight a remarkable difference between the two sexes. In the case of men, the 'sticky ceiling' phenomenon prevails, while women face the 'sticky floor' phenomenon – i.e., according to the results men with a favourable social background are more likely to retain their positions, and in the case of women there is less chance of escaping from an already disadvantaged situation.

In the third paper in the first chapter, entitled *Integration of Hungarian society 2015, 2018*, Márton Gerő, Gábor Hajdu, Imre Kovách, Luca Kristóf, and Andrea Szabó present changes in social inequalities and integration by comparing data from 2015 and 2018. The study also presents the integration groups of Hungarian society and their changes.

The authors distinguish three types of integration of the Hungarian society: system integration (trust in institutions, different types of norm-following, political involvement), social integration (labour-market integration, involvement in NGOs), and interpersonal integration (confidential relations, relationship diversity, subjective social exclusion). Based on the eight dimensions indicated in brackets, seven latent, well-separated groups with tell-tale names

were formed: (1) rich-in-relations, politically active; (2) locally integrated; (3) integrated into the labour market; (4) system integrated; (5) poorly integrated; (6) norm-following disintegrated; and, (7) disintegrated excluded. The authors describe these integration groups in detail. (Their design, system of criteria and the measurement instruments applied – and a critique of these – would require a separate study.)

The study finds that there were few changes between 2015 and 2018 in relation to each cluster-forming variable. It should be noted that assuming a substantial change in such a short time (moreover, insofar as there is no reason for this to be rationally assumed) does not add any valuable content to the substantive analysis. At the same time, the authors' goal of creating a model of inequalities supplemented by integration elements, and verifying its validity, is fully met.

The article *Political integration in Hungary*, in which the authors Andrea Szabó and Márton Gerő, review the presented integration groups according to their attachment to various political parties, can be considered a logical continuation of the previous paper. According to the authors, as a form of system integration political integration has become an independent integration factor that also affects social integration.

The authors' results show that the largest proportion of those belonging to the 'rich-in-relations, politically active' and the 'locally integrated' groups support the ruling party. The other integration groups, on the other hand, are not associated with a political party. Conversely, in terms of proportions, the base of individual political parties is not built around an integration group or groups.

The study also analysed integration groups through certain political attitudes. The statements under review highlighted three factors: statism, authoritarianism, and rejection of government intervention. (It is worth considering here whether it is theoretically correct that statism and rejection of government intervention are treated as separate types of opinion. The same goes for statism and authoritarianism, as two of the three statements in the measurement instrument in fact highlight the state and its leadership role.) Statism mostly characterises the group of 'rich-in-relations, politically active,' while the latter is strongly rejected by members of the groups of 'non-standard integrated into the labour market, weakly integrated' and 'excluded under-integrated.' Authoritarian values, however, are most strongly rejected in the 'locally integrated' group. Rejection of government intervention is least typical of the groups 'rich-in-relations, politically active' and 'locally integrated;' in other words, it is these groups that are most supportive of government intervention.

Another aspect of the study is the concept of 'ideological cluster,' and regarding this the authors have identified groups of 'satisfied rightists,' 'dissatisfied rightists,' 'those optimistic about the future,' 'the frustrated

and hopeless,' and 'dissatisfied rightists.' Within each group, only the strong pro-government embeddedness of the 'satisfied right-wingers' could be demonstrated. Reviewing the participatory aspects of political integration, the study finds that 'those rich in relationships and politically active' and 'locally integrated ones' engage in political activity in the greatest proportions.

The second chapter of the volume addresses the issues of territorial mobility.

In the study entitled *Spatial mobility and the integration groups of Hungarian society*, Adrienne Csizmady, Ágnes Győri, Lea Kőszeghy, and Attila Rácz present the processes of spatial mobility that have taken place since the change of political regime in detail. Thus, they point out the stabilization of regional social disparities, which are analysed in the context of the two aspects of territorial mobility: the processes of housing mobility and job mobility.

They point out that housing mobility, despite its growth in recent decades, is still hampered by an ownership orientation, regionally different real estate market prices, and the lack of regulation of the private rental housing sector. In the context of labour market mobility, the authors emphasize that the movements between labour market demand and labour market reserve tend to preserve and facilitate socio-regional inequalities. They point out that the data still show the longer-term stabilization of the East-West and North-South gap, and a further strengthening of the prominent position of the capital and its agglomeration.

Regarding the integration groups already mentioned in previous studies, it is found that in the two highly integrated groups ('rich-in-relations, politically active,' and 'locally integrated') the proportion of people living in their own property is extremely large, while it is much smaller for the least integrated groups. The mobility of highly integrated groups for employment purposes shows some differences: the 'norm-following rich in contacts' are characterized by their high mobility, the 'locally integrated' typically commute, and 'rich-in-relations, politically active' are usually mobile within their settlement. In the two groups of those integrated into the 'norm-following' and 'non-norm-following' labour markets, the average level of willingness to engage in mobility is coupled with a high level of mobility intention. The data also showed that those with a low level of integration ('norm-following disintegrated' and 'disintegrated excluded') – i.e. those with typically low educational attainment who are characterised by financial deprivation and living in declining rural settlements – have extremely low mobility opportunities.

The paper entitled *Network capital and residential mobility* (by: Beáta Dávid, Fruzsina Albert, and Éva Huszti) studies 'strong' relationships; i.e., the innermost circle of personal networks of contacts itself, and in terms of geographical mobility.

Based on the research data, the authors report the decline in kinship relationships in confidential relationships and, not independent of this, the prominence of friendly relationships. According to the data, only relatives dominate among the elderly, while the proportion of the isolated (those who do not have a confidential relationship) is increasing. The authors establish that, as two extremes of settlement hierarchy, the proportion of people with only friendly relations has increased in the capital and in villages. The data show that, according to the specific type of relationship, the proportion of explicitly confidential friends has significant increased, and the share of other non-related relationships (co-workers, neighbours) has also increased. At the same time, the proportion of those specifying a partner, a child, or a parent as a confidential friend has decreased.

The study also examines the composition of confidential networks according to whether the respondents are geographically mobile (in the interpretation of the study, this distinction is based on whether someone lives in a different place to the place they lived in at the age of 14). The research identified approximately two-fifths of respondents as mobile. The data show that the extent of the network of confidential relationships does not correlate with the mobile-non-mobile categories. However, the study finds that the rate of kinship is higher among those who did not move to another settlement than the one they spent their childhood in. Mixed (relatives, friends) relationships are in fact more typical of the mobiles, and the proportion of only non-relatives is also slightly greater for them. Based on integration group formation the group of 'locally integrated' remarkably differs from the other groups, with a much higher proportion of mobiles among them than in the total sample.

The study by Tamás Bakó and Judit Kálmán *Has gender inequality changed in commuting? Factors affecting commuting time and their changes between 1990 and 2011 in Hungary* analyses the factors affecting commuting and their changes from an economic point of view, based on the data from the 1990 and 2011 censuses.

The study finds that both commuting time and commuting distance increased during the period under review. It also points out that geographical location / region of residence has the greatest impact on commuting. The study confirms with data that Budapest and its agglomeration are highly involved in commuting, and this did not change during the period concerned. With regard to commuting, the role of occupational status also proved to be decisive – additionally, as a selection mechanism the level of education and the increase in the age of people of working age also affect commuting time. The authors point out that this selection mechanism prevailed much more strongly two decades after the change of regime, as the unemployment rate was higher. The study gives

a positive answer to the question posed in the title. Based on census data, it shows that women are starting to catch up with men both in terms of commuting distance and time spent commuting.

The first study in the third chapter of the volume, *Back to Society*, addresses problems in the social field, and the second focuses on labour market disadvantages for prisoners.

In a study entitled *The impact of social work interventions on social mobility and immobility* Andrea Rácz seeks answers to the questions how and to what extent social work with families with children contributes to the support and well-being of families. In this context, the research reviews the social integration potential of the social system, or more specifically, the child welfare system, by comparing some settlements of a disadvantaged micro-region and the Budapest agglomeration by means of quantitative and qualitative data.

With regard to the data, the author points out a number of shortcomings in the child protection and welfare system. Based on the expert interviews, she points out that child-protection professionals are not able to tackle the problems that arise; they are characterized by burnout and inadequacy, and, in their own opinions, basic services cannot be provided to clients. Experts reported a shortage of resources, poor working and service conditions, low wages, high staff turnover, and a shortage of professionals. The study does not put the functioning of the social system in a good light either. For clients and families with children in the disadvantaged micro-region, the vast majority of health-, child-raising-, education- and family support services are virtually non-existent; even if the people concerned have heard of these services, they hardly ever use them. Clients do not trust specific services nor the care providers who are involved.

The study entitled *Demand constraints in the reintegration of ex-prisoners* (authors: István Boza, Anikó Csáki, Virág Ilyés, János Köllő, Zsófia Kőműves, Lili Márk, and Mercédesz Mészáros) reviews integration from an economic point of view. By means of empirical data, the study addresses the issues of the labour market disadvantages of those released from prison, the prevalence of risk-mitigation procedures used by employers, and their impact on employment conditions. To this end, the authors used data from a large database of public administration data that tracked the careers of more than four million people, including forty thousand prisoners, from month to month between 2003 and 2011. The results show that employer risk expectations significantly affect the fact and circumstances of employment of those released from prison. The authors describe the employment of those released from prison as associated with features of the secondary segment of the labour markets, characterized by simple tasks, occasional, short-term, unstable employment, seasonal and project-like activities. According to their data, the average time spent in the workplace

by (former) detainees who were released at least five years ago lags far behind that of the 'average' Hungarian citizen. The study finds that the labour market disadvantages of ex-inmates are not independent of the disadvantages caused by a low level of education and Romani origin. It also points out that, in addition to these disadvantages, other factors such as training and work undertaken in prison may also have an effect on post-release employment.

The two studies in the last chapter of the volume (*Within the Borders and Beyond*) address the issues of the Hungarian diaspora and the situation of Hungarian immigrants.

Besides offering an interpretation and typology of the concept of diaspora, the study entitled *Hungarian diaspora and the kin-state diasporarization and diaspora politics* (authors: Attila Z. Papp, Eszter Kovács, and András Kováts) presents the history of Hungarian diaspora policy and the period after 2010. The authors review the Hungary-related migration trends of the last two decades with statistical data, showing the increase in emigration from 2010 to 2020, mainly to Germany, Great Britain, Austria, and the United States. According to the statistics, emigrants are typically men, younger individuals, and those with a higher level education than those who stay at home; the vast majority of them stay in the destination country for reasons of employment, working mainly in one of three employment areas: trade-services, industry-construction industry, or in unskilled jobs.

The study also presents the results of an online survey conducted in the summer of 2019 involving 18,000 people living in the four target countries. According to the outcome of the survey, attendance at diaspora institutions and events – as an indicator of the maintenance of cultural attachment – is generally uncommon, while attending certain types of events (Hungarian gastro events, festivals) is more likely. Based on attendance at Hungarian events, the authors distinguish three clusters of individuals, including 'committed diaspora or diasporic communities' at one extreme, 'unreachable' at the other extreme, and 'politicizing migrants' as the third group. In terms of proportions, the 'unreachable' make up 80 per cent, and the other two account for similarly small shares. Each group displays remarkable differences in terms of level of education ('politicizing migrants' have a higher level of education), migration motivation (economic reasons play a role in the case of the 'unreachable,' and dissatisfaction with the political situation in Hungary in the case of 'politicizing migrants'), access to news (domestic and economic news; the 'politicizing' group is interested in news from both the target and the country of issue), as well as in the field of interpersonal relations ('diasporicizing' people are more acquainted with Hungarians, while 'politicizing people' are more open to immigrant and non-immigrant groups).

The study by Margit Feischmidt and Ildikó Zakariás entitled *Solidarity and social mobility: Hungarian migrants' philanthropy and paid work in the German immigration system* addresses the driving forces and experience of migration of Hungarians living in Germany, as well as their participation in voluntary – paid and unpaid – support for non-European refugees. The findings of the study are based on 639 online questionnaires and 16 interviews.

According to the results of the research, the migration of respondents to Germany was mainly motivated by the search for better job opportunities; most of them have a job in Germany and their subjective socioeconomic satisfaction is outstanding, with a large proportion following the media in at least two languages. In their quantitative analysis, the authors establish that paid and unpaid forms of activity aimed at helping immigrants are closely interrelated and show similar positive correlation with educational attainment, subjective material well-being, German-language media consumption, and the acceptance of refugees. In accordance with the data, part-time or casual workers are more likely to participate in paid activities aimed at helping refugees than non-working people or full-time employees. According to the authors, this suggests that one potential way of becoming embedded in the labour market is to work at a job that involves dealing with refugees – e.g. participation in activities associated with the refugee system can function as a kind of mobility channel, in which the shift from unpaid to paid work is a decisive step.

In reviewing the volume, the inclusion of some critical remarks is also inevitable. In the first half of the volume several studies treat the categories they present according to integration groups as if the latter were 'living' groups, but for those not familiar with them the category names alone do not really convey any meaning, while the results remain at a descriptive level; it is thus difficult to interpret them and to bring them to the level of analysis.

Going back to the beginning of the book review, it is important to emphasize that the two published volumes are closely and indisputably intertwined. It is difficult to deal with one without the other, and both of them contribute important, up-to-date knowledge to Hungarian social science. The separation of the two volumes therefore gives rise to criticism, as no guiding principle for classifying the studies in them into one or the other of the two volumes can be identified. The choice of titles also only partially and seemingly facilitates the perception of demarcation: both titles include the phrase 'integration in Hungarian society' (transformed into an 'integration mechanism' in one of them), and in one, the term mobility is added. The topic of mobility is undoubtedly more in focus in the volume that is the subject of this review, but the issue of integration is also a central element, while mobility inevitably emerges in the other volume as well.

The editorial preface does not offer an explanation for the guiding principles behind the division of the studies in the volumes into two groups, thus the reader must consider the volumes as what the editor himself considers them to be: a set of not necessarily directly related studies that address mobility and integration/disintegration processes in Hungarian society. These critical observations, however, have nothing to do with the quality or scientific value of the papers included in the volume. According to the editor of the volume(s), subsequent work will yield a summary analysis in relation to which these critical remarks will certainly no longer be valid. The reader will find noteworthy studies in this volume which will contribute significantly to the knowledge of contemporary Hungarian society with completely new approaches and methods.

FROM ANALYTICAL LENSES AND SOCIAL POLICIES: A LOOK FROM THE EMOTIONS

SOCIAL POLICIES AND EMOTIONS. A LOOK FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH, BY ANGÉLICA DE SENA AND ADRIAN SCRIBANO (PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2020)

Andrea Dettano[1]

This book was written by Angélica De Sena and Adrian Scribano, researchers at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) in Argentina. They have published several pieces of work related to social policies, research methodologies, and the sociology of bodies and emotions. Angélica De Sena has published different books and articles that develop understanding of the crucial place of emotions in the analysis of state interventions. She also is the head of the Study Group about Social Policies and Emotions. Adrian Scribano's work is a landmark in the study of bodies and emotions in Argentina. He has published several books about collective action, consumption and love, among other topics. He also heads the International Network of Sociology of Sensibilities.

Social policies, the central object of the book under review, have been defined from multiple standpoints and disciplinary fields. These efforts seem to converge in giving these interventions a tensional and contradictory character, since they express the tension between the freedom and formal equality of subjects and the living conditions imposed by the commercialization of the workforce, which permanently recreate dependency and subordination in various forms. In view of this tensional nature and the constant allusion to inequalities, vulnerabilities, and the lack of protection that seem to historically "border" this object, the book here reviewed offers an analysis that is auspicious in several ways. The analytical advancement of this work consists in how it enables articulation

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between social policies and emotions and observes how state interventions are constructed, experienced, and felt.

If we think about these policies from the perspective of their historical constitution, the consolidation of the different types of interventions have required the – slow and gradual – establishment of institutional commitments to provide their subjects with some "certainties" with respect to the management of their reproductive conditions. These conditions have assumed, and continue to assume, a changing character which is specified and established each time as the product of political and social disputes. In all their dimensions and aspects, and in each context, they have been articulated by different actors and institutions.

In general, as "ways of doing" of the State, social policies have collaborated with the reproduction of the agents under their coverage, and with the reproduction of the regime in the long term. Through the regulation and transfer of goods or services with different levels of impact on the lives of the subjects who perceive them, the former organize the distribution of burdens, benefits, and power between groups and categories of people.

Considering the aforementioned, this book recovers how the "places" of provision (the State, the market, the family, the organizations of civil society); the goods in question (money, food, housing, different kind of goods, services associated with salaries); the justifications (the achievement of inclusion, autonomy, empowerment, and sustainability); and the emotions and sociabilities at stake (fear, mistrust, responsibility and uncertainty) are the features that characterize state interventions and are modified in each case and particular time-space.

In view of their complexity, and because they are traversed by various elements, proposals and debates in each era, as well as by the forms of accumulation, distribution, and consumption, these interventions show centrality, mainly in scenarios such as the current one that is marked by the health emergency in the context of a global pandemic. This scenario reaffirms the centrality of rethinking the State's ways of intervening, the practices it enables and restricts, as well as the different ways of feeling which these interventions produce. This (in view of the fact that the State and its role is never innocuous), is always a space for the production of meanings and senses that establish the correct ways of being and being with others in the world; it establishes classifications and qualifications of subjects and their practices.

Social policies, as well as the ways of observing and defining them, require re-problematization and revision in the light of the structuring processes of this century. If their emergence has been related to the processes of industrialization and urbanization within the framework of the much-cited Social Question during the nineteenth century; if they were concretized and institutionalized

in the different forms of the Welfare State and then reorganized before the transformations of the world of labour that unfolded towards the end of the twentieth century, then the twenty-first century claims its own analytical lenses. In this sense, this book presents different images with which to reflect on current scenarios; it looks – from the standpoint of emotions and from the Global South – at increasingly massive and prevailing state practices.

In its eleven chapters, it addresses the relationship of social policies with education and consumption; the different ways in which the different programs "put the beneficiaries to work" at different forms of "employability;" the ways in which violence appears as a constitutive element of contexts marked by poverty; the normalization of immediate enjoyment through consumption; and the ways in which state interventions are increasingly shaped as incentives for promoting such consumption. The ways in which state interventions and programs shape and consolidate what the authors understand as the "politics of sensibilities" are also addressed. In addition, they give an account of the different forms that ways of intervening and serving the population in situations of poverty and/ or vulnerability are assuming: from the much-cited Conditional Cash Transfer Programs to food policies.

A look from the Global South implies considering, as this work develops, the proliferation and massiveness of the different interventions of the State aimed at ameliorating that which once assumed a residual character: unemployment and poverty. The object, population, scope and coverage of the former, as well as the different ways of "assisting," have been transformed. This enables the book to ask the question – as well as provide some answers about – how the feelings and sensibilities of millions of subjects who receive state assistance are shaped; what bodies are consolidated; and what *images of the world* operate in the designs of the interventions, thereby establishing the correct ways of being, doing, caring, looking for a job, and being beneficiaries, among other elements.

In addition to the different themes that are explored, the book constitutes a journey that exhibits extensive supporting empirical work from primary and secondary data sources that provides an observational lens that invites us to denature certain common sites of state assistance; their association with benevolent, altruistic and tied actions; and the achievements of social rights. It allows us not only to consider something present in multiple documents, articles, books, and/or impact evaluations (such as the problem of poverty, its possible causes, diagnoses and ways of "overcoming"); but it also enables us to begin considering – due to the analysis of several in-depth interviews with recipients – how large-scale state interventions are experienced and perceived by recipients as a way of comparing autonomies and possible dependencies. Both the study and the fieldwork were focused on the Greater Buenos Aires area – the

most populated location in Argentina. Nevertheless, the different programs and situations that are studied show constant dialogue between various countries of the Latin American region and other countries which make up the so-called Global South. The development presented in the book allows us to reflect on the possibility of establishing certain general features of social policies in current scenarios such as massiveness, access by the population to banking services, and monetization amid major transformation in the job market.

Starting from maintaining that state interventions materialized in social policies affect how actors behave in various ways, the different chapters organize ways of displaying these possible forms of involvement. Interventions that for decades have materialized as different ways of distributing food, but not the guarantee of nutrients, present an elementary edge for thinking about social policies in terms of the effects and corporeality that they constitute. This has meant that different generations have organized their eating practices around "what is received," or what can be obtained with income from programs, or from attending community kitchens. This not only organizes dinners, but also organizes a map of possible energies, as the former allow some access to foods that produce satiety, but whose nutritional composition appears insufficient.

In this sense, the programs and different forms of food transfer not only affect the production and material reproduction processes, directly impacting the possibilities of action through the distribution of socially available nutrients, but also the production and reproduction of the perception of the schemes that enables some social practices, but not others.

Therefore, each chapter raises issues that enable a more complex view of state interventions, adding elements such as consumption, the formation of "weak bodies" and thinking about the effects that they entail in the reproduction of populations. If social policies, in their definitions and contributions, are objects that seek to influence living conditions, the questions that this text address is what are those conditions, how are they experienced, what feelings do they produce, and what bodily and social energies do they enable? It also raises questions about the "transience" of ways of tackling poverty, whose scope and coverage is increasing.

Looking from the emotions implies, for this volume, considering the latter as bodily, cognitive and social elements, which in the experience of being in the world and with others are armed, consolidated and plotted, configuring the different ways of appreciating and perceiving everyday life. Emotions then appear as constitutive ingredients of social action, interaction, and ways of being. Furthermore, different types of devices and mechanisms developed by the authors are what allow us to understand how naturalizations are possible that allow us to experience, in an unnoticed way, the inequalities and expropriations

that capitalism establishes. They even add the operation of different forms of the trivialization of the good as ways of desensitizing the sensitivity to inequality, poverty, malnutrition, difficulties in accessing social services and permanence in the educational system, among other aspects.

That is, how the different state actions – which have been presented as various ways of achieving objectives related to issues such as social inclusion, well-being, and increasing so-called human capital – have become a plexus of compensatory actions that allow consumption – but not much; they allow people to eat – but not to be nourished; they allow subjects to comply with the different conditions and considerations that the programs require – but not to be employed. In this sense, politics of sensibilities are being consolidated as the authors maintain: that is, ways of feeling are being accepted and acceptable in a specific time-space that organize daily life, preferences and values and the parameters for managing that time-space.

Along these lines, this book incorporates the emotional aspect of the subjects' relationship with the State, considering ways of feeling as antecedents of the interventions which constitute and consolidate their designs and approaches, as well as their effects, when considering what they produce in the subjects and in the modes of social structuring. Having said this, in contexts such as the current ones, reading this book is a central contribution to reconsidering the dimension and scope that the policies of attention to poverty show in terms of its intergenerational nature and its relationship with different phenomena. All that has been said shows that they represent a complex and multidimensional analytical element whose approach requires intersections and articulations such as those proposed by the authors: a look from the emotions.

TRACING A VANISHING HERITAGE: THE HUNGARIAN RUSTBELT

A FACTORY TOWN THAT BELONGS TO THE PAST… SOCIAL CHANGES IN ÓZD AND ITS SURROUNDINGS FROM THE SYSTEM CHANGE UNTIL TODAY, BY PÉTER ALABÁN (KRONOSZ PUBLISHING HOUSE, 2020)[1]

Eszter Bartha[2]

Hungarian sociography has been a specific genre, a mixture of sociology and belles-lettres. It was very popular in the interwar era, when Hungarian writers and social scientists described a wide range of social problems (the misery of the landless peasantry, the surviving feudal relations in the countryside, the poverty of the villages, etc.), and was also targeted at the regime as a sharp form of social critique.

While Hungarian sociography flourished in the interwar era – after the tragic experience of World War I, the subsequent revolution, and the establishment of the Hungarian People's Republic followed by the White Terror and the restoration of a right-wing, autocratic regime, which preserved many feudal privileges –, the same cannot be said about the times which followed the system change of 1989 that witnessed a general downgrading of social sciences – or at least their diminishing popularity in the public sphere and social media.

Originally founded in 1937, the series entitled *The Discovery of Hungary* (*Magyarország felfedezése*) was re-founded in 1970 and attracted several excellent authors, while it continued to preserve its critical stance. It succeeded in surviving the lean years, but its impact, nevertheless, has not extended beyond a narrow intellectual circle in spite of the fact that it addresses much

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wider socioeconomic and political issues. This is all the more regretful since we are in great need of discovering *more* of provincial Hungary at a time when we can witness the coexistence of many "Hungarys," while the "centre" – with few exceptions – possesses hardly any relevant knowledge of peripheral areas that have been left behind. These few exceptions include the above-mentioned series, the book of János Ladányi entitled *Leselejtezettek* (*The Hungarian Precariat*), the rural research of Imre Kovách, the working-class studies of Tibor Valuch and the extensive oral history project of Gábor Scheiring in the Hungarian rustbelt. We should also mention here the academic organizational work of Péter Pál Tóth, who has made considerable effort to promote the survival of the series *Magyarország felfedezése*. The committed anti-capitalist, left-wing journal entitled *Eszmélet* (*Consciousness*) also offers a forum for system-critical authors and papers, among them an article by Péter Alabán, in which he gives a summary of his main findings from Ózd.

The town of Ózd exemplifies the major characteristics of a socialist industrial centre, where the leading branches (heavy industry, metallurgy, mining, the chemical industry, etc.) were closed down or suffered very heavy losses after the system change. To be sure, Ózd had a rich pre-socialist past: it was also an important centre of Hungarian mining and metallurgy in the interwar era, with a distinctive mining culture and work ethic. After World War II, when the Communist parties throughout Eastern Europe followed the Stalinist path of forced industrialization, Ózd and the region of Northern Hungary, where the factory town is located, became the main beneficiary of socialist investment. In 1981, the town counted more than 46,000 inhabitants, and its neighborhood boasted flourishing mining villages, as mining was one of the best-paid manual jobs.

The system change stripped Ózd of its formerly privileged industries. Given its distance from Western countries and poor transport infrastructure, the town failed to attract rich investors from the West. Hungary's industrial centre moved from Northern Hungary to the Western parts of the country, and many professionals followed this trajectory. In 2011 only about 35,000 people were living in the town, many retired or unemployed, who could not afford to move out. Many of the once flourishing mining villages have become social ghettoes for impoverished Roma people who could not find other employment after the closing of the mines and the factory.

Although *A factory town…* is the first monograph of Péter Alabán on the subject, he is very familiar with the past 30 years of the town as he was able to observe the social changes first as a teenager and later as a teacher and the headmaster of a vocational and secondary school. The book can be seen as the result of more than ten years of fieldwork and ethnographical observation,

including the mapping of selected villages in the neighborhood. While in Germany there has been intensive research of newly formed "rustbelts," Hungarian mono-industrial towns have received little critical attention for the aforementioned reasons. In this intellectual milieu, the book is a refreshingly *different* endeavor which offers a documentary-like precise description of the decline of the town that followed the disintegration of factories after the system change, the ills of privatization, and the negative social processes that accompanied the rearrangement of industrial centers in Hungary.

The precedents can be found in the documentary series of Tamás Almási about Ózd, which the author also analyzes in the book. The series is a moving account of the decline of the factory town from 1987 until the end of the 1990s. We can also follow this sad path towards social disintegration and its physical equivalent – the decay and disappearance of the industrial landscape – through the increasing disillusionment of the director with the system change and his growing bitterness: while in the first piece of the series (*Szorításban – Squeezed*) we encounter rather unpleasant party functionaries who administer the fate of the factory and the workers, in one of the last pieces, entitled *Meddő (Infertile)*, Roma people living in deep poverty collect iron scraps from an ash-heap…

One indisputable merit of Alabán's book is that it places and analyzes the processes of disintegration that have accompanied the collapse of socialist industry in a local context. The most important problem of Ózd and its surroundings are that the decline and subsequent closing down of metallurgy and mining operations occurred hand in hand with the decay of infrastructure. The situation was further worsened by the fact that, thanks to its unfavorable location (no railway or highway to the West), the town was unable to attract new investors, industrial branches, or significant multinational companies. The result: gradual social decline and disintegration, a lack of job opportunities, high unemployment, the escape of specialists and intellectuals from the town, while the remaining population lives on workfare and welfare and inevitably become even more impoverished and resourceless. There were also many who chose another way out: they escaped from this sad reality either through alcoholism or suicide. A foundryman in the first piece of the series about Ózd of Almási's was able to announce with pride that he would never leave the town, but when the director returned to Ózd in 1997 the same worker was no longer alive. His widow told the director with tears in her eyes that, before his suicide, he "often went to the shed in the garden, to cry" (Alabán 2020: 186).

As the books of Réka Várkonyi-Nickel (*Rimaiak a gyárak völgyében – The People of Rima in the Valleys of the Factories*) and Péter Nagy (*A Rima vonzásában – The Magnetic Field of Rima*) introduce, the factory and the mine also had a social-integrating role before nationalization after World War II, and

this tradition also continued under state socialism (Tibor Valuch: *Mindennapi történeteink – Our Everyday Life Stories*). The closing down of the factory and the mines accelerated the process of social disintegration and individual and local identity crises, and it triggered feelings of general and persistent insecurity in the town and the region.

In his book, Alabán also describes the crisis of the nearby villages that make up the hinterland of the factory in Ózd: the once flourishing, neat and tidy mining villages in the region of *Barkóság* today are a sad picture of impoverishment (we could even say misery) with collapsing houses, decaying or disappearing infrastructure, and the futureless situation of the inhabitants, where the only income is from workfare and welfare, which is true even if there are some rare exceptions (e.g. Kissikátor, which still continues to be a picture of an orderly village thanks to the efforts of the local population).

The crisis of socialist industry and the destruction of factories (also in the physical sense of the word) were accompanied by the disappearance of a formerly strong work ethic which had a century-long tradition. This in turn creates a further obstacle to the settlement of transnational companies. We now witness the growing up of a third and fourth generation (especially in Roma communities, since Roma people are already disadvantaged in the labor market), whose socialization lacks the experience of continuous, regular, contracted work, and whose members have only seen and experienced deep poverty, misery, and multiple deprivation in their surroundings.

There are only a few associations/NGOs or socially committed people – such as Péter Alabán himself, who also works as the headmaster of a school. He has been able to utilize this experience in his book, where he devotes a chapter to a discussion of the urgent problems of vocational schools, starting from the lack of resources through the lack of training opportunities to the problem of discrimination. Vocational schools mainly "attract" children who have no hope of getting a better place after elementary school. This is also reflected in the ethnic background of the students: non-Roma parents will do everything to send their children to good secondary schools, whereas Roma children mostly have to content themselves with places in vocational schools. Many of them drop out even from these schools, which leads to a vicious circle of unemployment, living on workfare or social benefits, deep poverty, alcoholism, game- or drug- addiction, criminality, and prostitution (see the unforgettable movie of Kusturica, the *Time of the Gypsies*).

While the government has invested a lot into (propagating) the solution to the crisis of vocational training, it is also true nationally that even larger transnational companies have problems recruiting a new, young workforce. Alabán offers a clear and detailed statistical analysis in order to prove that in Ózd

we can observe the simultaneous existence of unemployment *and* a shortage of skilled labor – since children who drop out of the educational system (early school leaving) inevitably "re-live" the fate of their parents.

The book also takes account of another sad process: alongside the workers and the traditionally strong work ethic, we witness the gradual deterioration of the physical environment and the decay or outright destruction of a large part of the industrial heritage. We can find a detailed analysis of the state of the national conservation of industrial heritage by Györgyi Németh in a book entitled *Munkás-kultúra-örökség* (*Working-class-culture-heritage*), published in 2020; and the work of Alabán complements this wider picture with a local report. Alabán gives several international examples of the successful conservation of industrial heritage (in which the state assumed a decisive financial role), leading to the former sites now functioning as tourist attractions – the most successful example being the Ruhr region. In contrast, in Hungary there has been neither the capital nor the serious intent to save this heritage (this is true of all governments after the system change).

While we can, of course, understand those people (mainly youth) who escape from there (even if they have strong feelings of homesickness), in this situation we should all the more appreciate those who, like Péter Alabán, decide to stay in Ózd, and in the face of all odds do something for the region and its children. After all, a will to change one's life has not been missing from the inhabitants of town: it is not accidental that many of the local youth now work in the catering industry in London, while some of the professionals have even reached the ranks of the international middle class. Their full social integration is, however, missing – but this is the topic of another book.

Borsod is the region where Ózd is located. *Sorsod-Borsod* (*Your fate is Borsod*) – as the folk saying holds (this is also the title of a movie). What Péter Alabán could do for this region he has done, and he will continue to do in the future. It would be good if this region regained its visibility so that the "center" could maintain connections with and relevant knowledge of provincial Hungary, at least before the next parliamentary elections. Authors such as Chris Hann and Gábor Scheiring have called attention in the international academic arena to the problems of the Hungarian province. Péter Alabán's book complements this with an illuminating view "from inside," which is recommended not only to experts but also to a wider audience that is socially minded or socially sensitive – and indeed, to anybody who wants to know more of the country in which they live.