

Cultural Capital in Research: Issues of Operationalization, Measurement and Methodological Pitfalls

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Abstract: In the 20th Century, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was dealt with the relationship between the cultural activities of the family and school success of children, based on the concept of cultural capital which formulated himself. Cultural capital is generally understood as a set of organized social representations, knowledge and preferences, which are acquired on the basis of cultural quality of the family environment. The family is the pivotal institution of socialization and also the place where the lifestyle, tastes, values, norms and ambitions are constituted and intergenerationally transmitted. Interpretation of cultural capital also involves the ways of how the children are able to meet the demands of the school culture. The paper starts with a discussion of the definition and delineation of the term the “cultural capital”. Article continues by briefly examining the previous studies and researches in this area and focusing on the difficulty associated with defining and measuring cultural capital. These studies have been for a long time primarily the domain of sociologists. Although the use of quantitative methods in sociological research often is not able to capture adequately full extent of the social dynamics that they draw attention to, also the use of qualitative methods brings some limitations and pitfalls. In this paper, author introduces her long-term research of families and elementary schools in Czech Republic. Specifically, it examines the application of the concept in anthropological research seeking to provide explanations for parental involvement into the educational processes relating to the secondary school choice making. The particular attention is focused on the methodological problems encountered during the research of cultural capital. Author will deal with the application of selected research methods like participative observation, in-depth interviews and questionnaires. This paper aims to contribute to the debate of how and if ever is possible to capture all relevant aspects entering into the process of accumulation cultural capital through selected research methods.

Key words: family, school, education, cultural capital, emotional capital, methodology

1. Introduction

Inequalities in societies are identified at different levels, whether material or cultural. All societies are unequal, the only difference is that some of them are more unequal than others (Hofstede, 1983). Although education is mostly perceived as a viable weapon against poverty and social inequality, the problem of inequality exists within the educational system itself. Several research works in this area indicate that the achievement gap

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between school children is associated with the socioeconomic status of the family. Many social researchers involved in the examining of educational inequalities, try to understand and highlight the circumstances that are closely related to this problem.

Chances for getting higher education are closely related to the family background of the individual. Social position of the family, its lifestyle are reflected in the distribution of life chances and opportunities, whether in the form of various educational ambitions or value orientations.

In modern societies, school became a part of intergenerational reproduction of social inequalities in the way that it appreciates talented students, who stay in educational system for a longer time and then usually end up in the prestigious and better paid occupations. On the other hand, less talented students, although they are encouraged to learn more, recognize that they lack the talent or skills, they spend less time in educational system, and end up in less prestigious occupations (Vojtíšková, 2007). The better social background from which student comes, the better his school performance. Better school results in general increase chances for higher education. We can often encounter with this premise.

2. The Concept of Educational Reproduction According to Pierre Bourdieu

Questions concerning the relationship between the educational achievement of children and the socio-economic background of the family which they grow up in, were already asked by Pierre Bourdieu in the 60's and 70's. Based on his research he formulated a concept of "classes on paper", which dealt with a group of actors possessing a similar position inside of the space of social positions. These actors have similar resources, interests, values, preferences and habits, whether on the material or cultural level (Bourdieu, 1998). His work emphasized how social classes, especially the ruling and intellectual classes, reproduce themselves even under the pretence that society fosters social mobility. Empirical results showed that people's artistic preferences strongly correlate with their position in the social space and also showed that: "... subtleties of language such as accent, grammar, spelling, and style — all part of cultural capital as means of cultural expression — are a major factor in social mobility (e.g., getting a higher paid, higher status job). Thus, those 'disposals of taste' or consumption of specific cultural's forms mark people as members of specific classes." (Gendron, 2004, p. 5). Cultural capital is special in that it develops individual empowerment and performance from an early age. It also influence academic performance, family-school relationships and children's psycho-social development.

A key issue in research of educational inequalities still remains why mostly children of university-educated parents study at the gymnasium (grammar school), while the children of parents with low education choose secondary vocational schools¹. It is now much more interesting and meaningful to try to explain differences in educational achievement and aspirations of students not so much in a way which is traditionally structuralistic (i.e., as a result of a combination of attributes such as gender, social class, ethnicity), but rather as a result of the parental approach to education, their expectations and their emotional relationship to children. These factors can affect not only the identity of the students, but also their school performance, as well as their choice of secondary school.

¹ The main role of the gymnasium is to prepare students for university education. Gymnasiums offer students a general overview that can be utilized at university entrance exams. Secondary vocational schools offer a wide range of specialization and intensity of study. Choice of secondary vocational school is a practical choice, focusing on the control of specific skills that may be, after graduation, a kind of passport to a job, the student being confident that he or she will be focused and able immediately after finishing school to "capitalize" on their acquired skills.

3. The Diversity of Definition and Perception: How to Examine Cultural Capital in Its Whole Complexity?

We should take into account several important questions. Is cultural capital, as it was defined by Pierre Bourdieu, still an useful concept for social researchers? How is social position of the family reflected in education?

Initial response was that children with different levels of cultural capital come from a different origin families with the different economic capital. But this response was inadequate, because the inequalities persisted also in the public and free education (Katrňák, 2004). It was necessary to answer the question, how are the different characteristics of families transformed into different educational results.

Researchers encounter a number of concept definitions. For Tomáš Katrňák, cultural capital means a craft that child acquires in the family environment and which is reflected in its action (Katrňák, 2004). Another sociologist, Dopita thinks that cultural capital consists of specific skills that have to be acquired by specific means and also by the specific means have to be transmitted (Dopita, 2005). According Ivo Možný, cultural capital means mainly the education and refinement of parents. The degree of this refinement lies in the intensity of practices and cultural activities through which parents try to guide their children (Možný, 1999).

According other authors, cultural capital consists primarily of immaterial level of family. It includes a focus on ethical and aesthetic standards, communication and lifestyle features (Průša & Průšová, 2007). I could present here a number of other definitions, but this is not the aim of this article. Until these days, we do not know the united, universal definition that would grasped cultural capital in its whole complexity. Lack of universal definition means the difficulty in case of concept operationalization.

Another problem resides in the main focus of various research units. Some researchers are focused on measuring the parental cultural capital, others measure only cultural capital of children, some other measure both — none of these studies neither denied the effect of cultural capital, nor clearly confirmed it.

4. Indicator of Cultural Capital: Classic vs. Alternative Interpretation

The examining of the cultural capital in the past run on the basis of mapping several indicators. Just over 30 years ago, British sociologist Albert Henry Halsey together with the scientific team (Halsey, Heath, Ridge, 1980) focused on the parental cultural capital, that was indicated by their highest level of educational attainment. Scientific team also verified the relation between its level and obtained education of their children. They also monitored the impact of other variables: employment, class position and economic capital of parents. Next team DiMaggio and Mohr (1985) focused on examining of children's cultural capital (took into account their level of intelligence and socio-economic status). As a key indicator they set participation of children in cultural activities, their attitudes and activities in relation with art, music and literature. Nan Dirk De Graaf (1986) on the other hand focused on the parental cultural capital. He indicated it as a habit of reading books (its frequency, visiting libraries during one month), and he also included a cultural participation (frequency of museums, galleries, theaters, concerts visiting during one month). We know about lot of involved research groups and collectives — other researchers like Teachman (1987), John Katsillis and Richard Rubinson (1990), Matthijs Kalmijn and Gerbert Kraaykamp (1996), etc.

An alternative interpretation of cultural capital promotes a broader concept which takes into account also

standards applied by teachers in evaluation of students and their parents, cultural resources that help to satisfy these requirements. Abilities of children are thus considered as a part of cultural capital, so it is necessary to also map the requirements of teachers and schools, in order to evaluate what should be helpful for some families to meet and satisfy the requirements of the schools (Lareau, 2001).

In the Czech Republic we know important research works of following authors: Josef Alan (70's), Petr Matěju (80's), Milada Rabušicová (90's), Milan Průša a Petra Průšová (90's), Tomáš Katrňák (2005), Kateřina Vojtíšková (2008), Bomba a Cabanová (2010), etc.

In most cases, the examining of cultural capital includes a participation in various cultural events or visiting libraries together with frequency of reading books (with parallel monitoring of socio-economic status of the families). All these studies and works highlight and point to the influence of cultural resources of families on the educational results of children. But at the same time, several researchers also point out that concept is often reduced on the parents' educational attainment, or educational content, or on knowledge of highbrow culture, and they wonder what exactly the highbrow culture means. Research shows that something like cultural capital exists, but nobody clearly demonstrated that it is the role of the cultural capital that should offer an explanation of social inequalities in the education (Katrňák, 2004).

We can see that there are a lot of ways how researchers have measured cultural capital and school outcomes. It is necessary to pay attention to well designed modes of measurement. But the one thing is definitely sure — for deeper uncovering of cultural capital the researcher needs a lot of time — because of intergenerational horizon that this concept includes. I hit this problem in my research.

5. The Emotions Should Not Be Forgotten

We should not forget the important role of emotions in research of cultural capital. All these skills and knowledge of the students that we were talking above might be seen as a part of the individual's human capital which has its roots in family and community partnerships. These individual social skills are decisive in behaviour and in grasping the opportunities to grow up in society (Gendron, 2004). All of them have one important thing in common: they are a sub-part of what we can called *emotional capital*.

Emotions are associated with higher needs, with human values, preferences and their relationship to life. Marketing specialists have long known that it isn't enough to only introduce a product to the public. They know that mainly through advertising they can effectively manipulate human emotions. The relationship between people's emotions and their behaviour and actions is in economics models undoubtedly narrow, because they have important consequences and an economic return if they are well managed and utilized. According to economist Bénédicte Gendron, emotional competencies are useful in that they constitute a crucial capital resource for actors through processes such as using and exploiting plainly their human and cultural capital. They play a role in making a final decision between equally good choices and in individual performance and efficiency as well. She understands them as a set of resources that inhere within the person and are useful for his or her cognitive, personal, social and economical development (Gendron, 2004). Even in the most "rational" decisions, emotions are present: "All of the experiences you've acquired in your life and work are not sterile facts, but emotionally laden memories stored in the brain. Your life wisdom presents itself as instantaneous hunches and gut feelings... and can dramatically increase accuracy and efficiency of the decision process" (Gendron, 2004; Cooper, 1997). And it's not just economics, where emotions play a key role. We have to take them into account also in the sphere

of education and parental involvement in academic performance. Because emotional competencies are the result of different educational contexts and situations, as they are acquired by learning. So we can also see different types of emotional capital as a socio-cultural variation of parental strategies.

6. Preparation and Field

6.1 Operationalization of Cultural Capital for the Needs of Qualitative Research

The following aspects were considering as key indicators for the assessment of the volume of cultural capital. I distinguish these indicators into primary and secondary competences:

Primary cultural competencies represented a cultural knowledge that is transformed or accumulate directly in the family environment:

- Through observing the categories of activities in concrete social interactions in families like.
- Social coordination of tasks and participation during acquiring of cultural knowledge — parental assistance in school tasks fulfillment, explanation of the curriculum, mediation, etc.
- Mentoring — learning by imitation, by observation — we are talking about certain strategic actions of parents whose goal is illustrative transfer of practical skills and knowledge.
- Discussions — the frequent occurrence respectively absence of discussions about what is happening at school, about education in general, etc...
- Statements relating to aspects of learning: for example: “*I will not let you go out with your friends until you do your math work! You have to fix your marks!*”, etc. These statements can reflect the importance that parents attach to the role of education and may have an incentive or disincentive nature.
- Monitoring — monitoring and controlling of fulfillment of educational tasks by parent/parents.

Secondary cultural competences included knowledge of children acquired outside the family environment, but still with help and support of parents:

- Participation in formal cultural events (frequency of visiting theaters, museums, galleries, concerts, lectures, etc.).
- Participation in leisure activities (the active leading of child to developing skills through extra-curricular activities as such as: sports activities, courses of foreign languages, dancing, art, etc)...
- Reading books (the frequency of this activity, what books they read, frequency of library visits, etc).
- I also focused on artworks and artifacts that can be seen in the household (paintings, sculptures, etc), number of books, magazines, newspapers in the household, also the objects representing the cultural meanings and content (like TV, computers/notebooks with internet access and also the frequency of their “usage”).
- And finally the indicators of institutionalized cultural capital that include mapping of highest attained level of education of parents, grandparents).

6.2 Location and Participants

The data were collected in the classes of 8th and 9th grade at two public city schools located in Southern Moravia, Czech Republic. One school was classic public school, one was an alternative school. I indistributed all mentioned questionnaires to students in four classes. The questionnaires were filled out by eighty-one respondents. In studied classrooms I did an participative observation periodically, as well as in-depth interviews with students. I also participated on several classroom trips, in various class competitions with the students, etc.

Except schools, I worked with fourteen families with whom I made a repeated semi-formal and non-formal in-depth interviews.

6.3 Key Research Methods

Study was realized through the following research methods:

- Participative observation
- In-depth interviews
- Questionnaires (OECD questionnaire, Questionnaire about parenting style Zero-Sum Game Belief Scale)

6.3.1 Participative Observation

By using a method of participative observation I wanted to find out the degree of parental participation at home, i.e., in case of home preparation of child's school works, support, discussions about school and education in general, communication and interactions between parents and children, all those statements about learning process, and also the degree of participation in formal cultural activities, the habit of parents and children to read books, etc.

6.3.2 In-depth Interviews

By in-depth interviews I was trying to find out much more about the family, about its functioning, the education of parents, about their socio-economic status, about their approach to education and school, about their experience with the school environment, about their educational ambitions and aspirations, about their expectations towards the educational system and also in case of their children's future, about their involvement to the children's education, the mutual cultural activities, etc.

6.3.3 Questionnaires

Mentioned questionnaires were chosen with respect to the information that was necessary to determine:

OECD questionnaire was selected for mapping the education literacy of children finishing primary education — reading activities of children and the visiting of libraries. Questionnaires also includes a question about home and family environment, about education of parents, as well as questions about atmosphere in classroom and in the school, their progress of education, about relations with teachers, relations to the information and communication Technologies, etc. It is good for extensive passportization of respondents.

Questionnaire about parenting style is relatively new means of detecting the parenting style in the family from the child's perspective. By using this questionnaire, we can obtain information about basic components of parental approach and upbringing style: the emotional climate (extremely positive relationship, positive, negative or negatively-positive relationship) and connection between dimensions "requirements" and "latitude" which gave us the data about parental actuating (on a scale strong – medium – weak – contradictory). It is possible to find out emotional relationship and actuating with each parent separately, but also for the family as a whole.²

Zero-Sum Game Belief Scale — this questionnaire includes a statements about yourself, about other people, as well as opinions about the society. Responses are scaled from 1 to 7. In the end of the questionnaire there is a last question about the subjective assessment of socio-economic status of respondent's family (from much below average to above average). This questionnaire can be used as a sort of psychological measuring of individual perception of social capital.

² The questionnaire was issued in 2000. Its authors are J. Čáp, V. Čechová and P. Boschek. After combining different types of emotional relationship and actuating in the family as a whole, the authors distinguish nine parental upbringing styles. They called it a "A Nine Fields Model of Parental Upbringing".

7. Emotional Climate in the Family as A Part of Cultural Capital

Examined data collected from studied classrooms and families suggest the following tendencies:

- Families of children who choose gymnasium are characterized by mostly negative emotional relationships (helicopter parenting), which are associated with greater restrictions in terms of demands placed on the child, exerting pressure and imposing extracurricular activities on children.
- Families of children who choose secondary vocational school are characterized by predominantly positive emotional relationships with the child (submarine parenting, or free-range parenting), which are associated with greater unity between child and parent (or both parents).

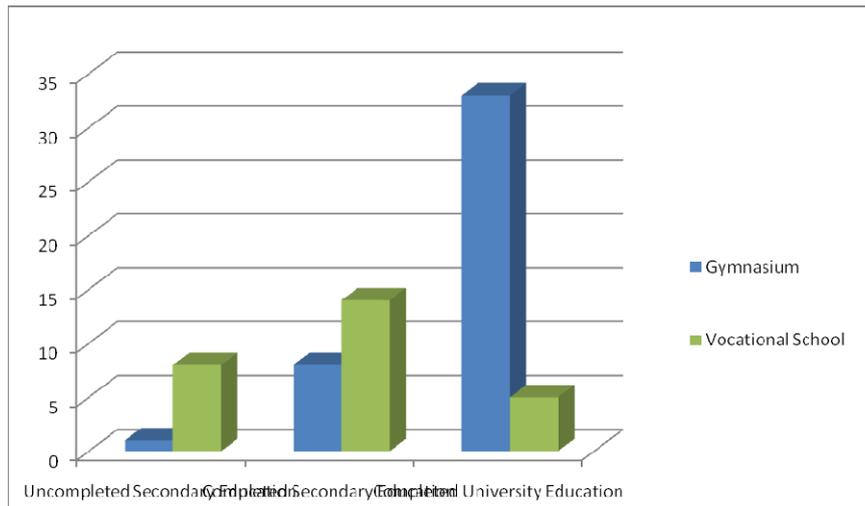


Figure 1 The Highest Attained Education of Parents vs. Secondary School Choice Making in the Family

7.1 Helicopter Parenting

Families of children who choose gymnasium are characterized by mostly negative emotional relationships (helicopter parenting³), which are associated with greater restrictions in terms of demands placed on the child, exerting pressure and imposing extracurricular activities on children. Helicopter parents are more or less obsessed with their children’s education, with their extracurricular activities (Cline & Fay, 1990). They perceive education as an essential part of their children’s lives and they also adjust, due to this matter, their day-to-day activities. In terms of their child’s future they have high expectations: “Well, when we said that she would then go to the university, I know that gymnasium is the best choice. I understand that gymnasium is preparation for university, that after graduation from gymnasium, it is really a problem to find a job. But I think that it is a general problem of any secondary school. But it’s a fact that gymnasiums prepare students for university. And since I know how Petra studies, so there should not be any problem” (Mrs Kapara).

In terms of the perceived approach to the child, helicopter parenting can be manifested in several ways. In this family model a negative emotional relationship, perceived by the child, may lead to highlighting the shortcomings and mistakes of the child, punishing, or putting pressure on the child as result of very high expectations of excellent academic performance, restrictions, or limiting of the actions and activities of the child,

³ The term “helicopter parenting” was first used by authors Foster Cline and Jim Fay (Cline & Fay, 1990) and has been used ever since (Levine, 2006; Alsop, 2008).

and insistence on discipline and obedience when teaching the child to become independent. This same negative component of a parent-child relationship is typified by frequent comparisons of the child with other children in the neighborhood or preference and singing the praises of another sibling (Čáp et al., 2000). The negative relationship may also apply to the reserved, cold behavior of both parents or just one of them, the denial of affection and a positive attitude towards the child.

Some of these so called “helicopter parenting” families are also specific with the conflict in parental actuating (control). Based on data from the studied classrooms I will focus my attention only on two following types of parenting in terms of contradictory and weak actuating. The reason for this is that I didn’t find any extreme forms of parental models in the field⁷ at all.

7.1.1 Contradictory and Weak Actuating of Helicopter Parenting

Several notes should be made on the difference between weak and contradictory actuating in the case of helicopter parenting. The principal difference is the combination of dimensions “requirements” and “latitude”. In relation to weak actuating, the parents are characterized by a greater level of latitude that provide in their relationship with the child. A greater degree of parental restraint can be seen because of their particular orientation towards a career, interests or problems (Čáp et al., 2000). Weak actuating is often linked to higher levels of inconsistency; this means that parents may make greater demands on the child, but at the same time systematically monitor their fulfillment of duties: “I think we have a friendly relationship with my son. Even if you know now when he is in that ninth grade, so it does not work much, I don’t know... Sometimes when he brought a bad mark home from school, I said to him that he must fix it. When it was on detention, so I was a little more angry (laugh). A man can be sometimes too angry and then he does not behave correctly. My husband scolds him for detention, takes his notebook from him (sanction), but otherwise he does not have much time for it during the year” (Mrs Voděradová).

The parental monitoring of (school and non-school) duties is not as strict as it would be in the case of a negative relationship with strong actuating, which is characterized by significant authoritarian elements⁴. Parents retreat to their children in most things, keep supervision of their daily activities, try to solve their problems, but mostly try to leave things to their discretion (Orlová, 2012). It is like balancing between neglecting periodic monitoring of child and parental severity, consistency in terms of requiring of rules compliance.

Processed data from the research suggest that children who perceive this type of relationship — the negative relationship with weak actuating — have a slightly higher score of latitude than requirements (but the difference is not great). This type of parent-child relationship is associated predominantly with a liberal style⁵ of education (Čáp et al., 2000).

On the other hand, there is a negative relationship with contradictory actuating. Here we can see elements of parental indifference and severity overlapping at the same time. In this case there are signs of both strong and weak actuating present (Cásková, 2010; Čáp et al., 2000). We can talk about this type of relationship in the case of families with a disunited parental style of upbringing. One parent is more directive and requires fulfilling of duties and obligations, but there is an absence of fulfillment monitoring: “I think that we as parents are strict, especially my husband. He is a little bit fighting with it. I think that he has a terrible fear about our girl. I am pushing her.

⁴ In comparison, with a strong actuating there arises a parental need to manage every aspect of child’s life.

⁵ Nowadays, parents according to their opinions and views, as well as according to processed questionnaires, use less authoritarian and more democratic and liberal parenting in comparison with their parents. Shift to parenting styles with weak parental actuating and more “friendly” relationship with children is also confirmed by several other domestic and foreign research studies (Gillernová, 2009; O’Brien, 2010).

And the fact is that he is pushing her too, because he always says that if he did not rush himself in anything, he would shepherd sheep at home.” (Mrs Zapletalová).

His or her behavior is characterized mostly by lack of interest and occasional negative interest focused on some particular misdemeanor and then punishment of the child. There then follows a rest period and irregular supervision without any kind of systematic checking (Cásková, 2010; Čáp et al., 2000). Another possible variant of contradictory actuating is disagreement in the upbringing style of the father and mother, when one of them is very strict and the other, in an attempt to mitigate this impact, is forgiving and benevolent.

Regardless of where their position is in the range of actuating, helicopter parents have something in common. They arrange for their children and support a minimum of two or three extracurricular activities in the specialized institutions, where they can improve their skills. They also frequently arrange sporting activities and leisure trips to various locations, go to the theatre or take their children out to concerts.

7.2 Submarine Parenting

Research data revealed another type of families, where children perceive their relation with parents as a positive or extremely positive, so called “submarine parents”⁶.

The positive component of this type of relationship is related with parental understanding for their children, positive emotional expressions and common activities of various types (games, entertainment, recreation, learning, home labor). As the name itself suggests, these parents are like a submarine which stays close to the child, in the case of real threat. When the situation requires, the submarine “comes to the surface” and solves the problem of the child, but most of the time, it is out of sight (Clark, 2010; Blouin & Boyd, 2012). Submarine parents are less involved in their child’s education. They are also less involved into the relationship with school. They do not place great demands on their children: “Well, when I get a bad mark, I’ll tell it to my mom. Mom does not really ask about it” (student Veronika). Lucia from another family says: “I think that it’s also a lot about a man, because everyone now... you have to finish secondary school, because if a person doesn’t have parents who buy him everything... and university is important because nowadays, everyone has finished secondary school and who has got a university... but on the other hand, there are people, who are only student types and when they graduate, they are useless, so... that they simply learned and now they do not know what to do with it. So... experience. It seems to me that work experience is most important. I think that a person who has got that vocational certificate, and he seriously wants to prove and goes for it, so I think he can get somewhere” (student Lucia).

Submarine parents allow their child to spend his time entirely according to his wishes. They don’t have high educational aspirations in relation to their children and they also do not see a practical sense of life in long-term systematic studies: “Today everybody wants to go to gymnasium. Gymnasiums are overcrowded with students and vocational schools, conversely, have a lack of students. I think it is good when a man has an apprenticeship in something, can handle some craft and will be able to care for himself. If Markéta wants, she still will be able to go to college after high school of pedagogy. But even if she did not go, she can work in the field from which she will graduate. I really don’t know what she would do with the graduation from gymnasium. She would end up just at the Labour Office, because she won’t be able to find a job. To all children can study at gymnasium. Who would then repair water and electricity, who would bake or teach, if everybody studied at the gymnasium and then became managers, economists and lawyers?” (Mrs Trávnicková).

⁶ Several authors work with the term “submarine parenting” (Clark, 2010; Blouin & Boyd, 2012), meanwhile others prefer to use the term “free-range parenting” (Levine, 2006; Skenazy, 2009).

7.2.1 Contradictory and Weak Actuating of Submarine Parenting

As in the case of “helicopter parenting”, individual types of submarine parenting can be characterized by their actuating specification. I will discuss weak and contradictory actuating in this respect.

Weak actuating is characterized by a favourable atmosphere in the family. Parents often describe their relationship with children as friendly (this is especially true of relationships between mothers and daughters) (Čáp et al., 2000). From the side of the parents there is a lack of requirements, as well as criticism of faults. They don’t pay heed to system compliance or small everyday duties. If a child lacks certain discipline, he may give a weaker performance or he may not fulfill obligations. Parents are trying to fix this problem by conversation and they are satisfied with the promise of problem improvement. But this improvement is not controlled. In some cases, parents blame others, teachers or friends, to avoid admitting the child’s mistakes (Cásková, 2010).

Authors indicate a positive emotional relationship with contradictory actuating as a very unfavourable for a child’s upbringing (Čáp et al., 2000). On the one hand, this relationship creates a positive, warm climate in the family, the relationship between parents and child is friendly and congenial. But on the other hand, parents do not provide a well-defined and uniform image of upbringing which may adversely be reflected in the sphere of the child’s education. In some families, parents through this bond emphasize “kindly rigidity”, others instead leave the child with too much latitude. According to Čáp (2000), it depends on which of the parents significantly affects the child during the specific developmental period.

Submarine parents in general do not expect that their child will be special at school: “They see in them their own image too much, their own educational path composed of elementary school and vocational training. They don’t try to push children into exceptional school performances or encourage them to higher educational aspirations (...) If the child is smart, does well in school and is interested in further study, parents do not prevent him from other studies, however, they expect from him that he will train in some special field and then he will go to work” (Katrňák, 2004, p. 97). It can be said that children of submarine parents underperform due to their own uncertainty:

“I think that gymnasium wouldn’t be a good choice in the sense that it has got too general studies. If she would graduated from gymnasium, she would not be focused on anything, no specific specialization in something, nothing you know... Even after economic high school she can go to university if she wanted to, so I think that the secondary vocational school is the best choice for her. If she did not get to university, then at least she could find a job in her field. But if she studied at the gymnasium, then what would she do?” (Mrs Mrožeková).

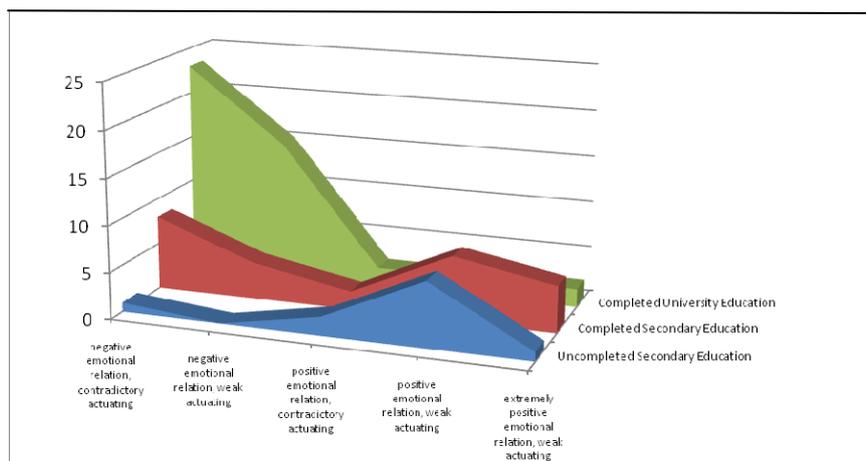


Figure 2 The Highest Attained Education of Parents vs. Emotional Capital

8. Discussion

If we should summarize it, the main difference between helicopter parenting and submarine parenting lies in their educational management, in the way of stimuli and the level of support they provide to their children.

As we can see helicopter parents select a specific kind of behaviour (which is perceived by the child as a negative emotional relationship) and actions (various extracurricular activities of the child in the official educational institutions such as playing musical instruments — piano, guitar; sports activities — football, hockey, beach volleyball, swordplay, tennis, and learning foreign languages, etc). They have almost all week full of these activities. These families are characterized by the common discussions on the education of the child, regular participation at parent-teacher conferences, active assistance of mothers with managing of school activities, personal visit of selected secondary school) to persuade their child to attain the desired education and accumulate further knowledge. In families with helicopter parenting, parents are more interested in the choice of „good, quality“ school, because there is a prevalent idea that with gymnasium children will get easier at the university.

Submarine parents are characterized by their passive attitude towards child's progress in education⁷, which is manifested by their specific actions (lower number of leisure activities of their children or a few activities on their own, irregular attendance at parent-teacher conferences, non-involvement in co-organizing of school events). According to Vojtíšková, if a family hasn't got more experience with the studies: "...it cannot naturally prepare the child for the study world and higher education is a bit of a journey into the unknown" (Vojtíšková, 2008, p. 13). She describes this relationship in a way that the habitus of families from a lower social class in contact with the school then reflects its own sense of low cultural capital which leads to self-exclusion, as people adjust their expectations to perceived chances. In case of submarine parents, they usually say that children need their own tempo, they believe that children cannot be forced into something. If child wants to study, they do not prevent them from it, but usually they don't support them specially; Children from these families in interviews expressed more doubts and they had a lower self-esteem.

The research also uncovered also differences between "helicopters" and "submarines" in the level of helping with co-organizing school events:

"From time to time I sewed something for some school events, when it was needed. For a longer time I was also the class treasurer" (Mrs Zapletalová). On the other hand, we can see the passive attitude relation of submarine parents in terms of their involvement and support of the school:

"No, I've never been involved this way. I don't have time for it as I work in shifts and sometimes I even miss the parent-teacher conference" (Mrs Mrožeková).

We can see that the impact of parental involvement is indisputable. But the surprise of research was revelation that current examined generation of children do not read books. They are not strategically managed by the school or by their children to read and they are not involved into reading and to interest for literacy.

⁷ Researcher Geoffrey Walford in his research describes two types of parents: the "chooser" and the "non-chooser" in their attitude to the choice or non-choice of the further education trajectory for their children. Choosers were those who were actively involved in the choice mechanisms and also in the education of their children. Non-choosers were passive parents, ignoring the choice mechanisms and less involved in their children's education progress (Walford, 2006).

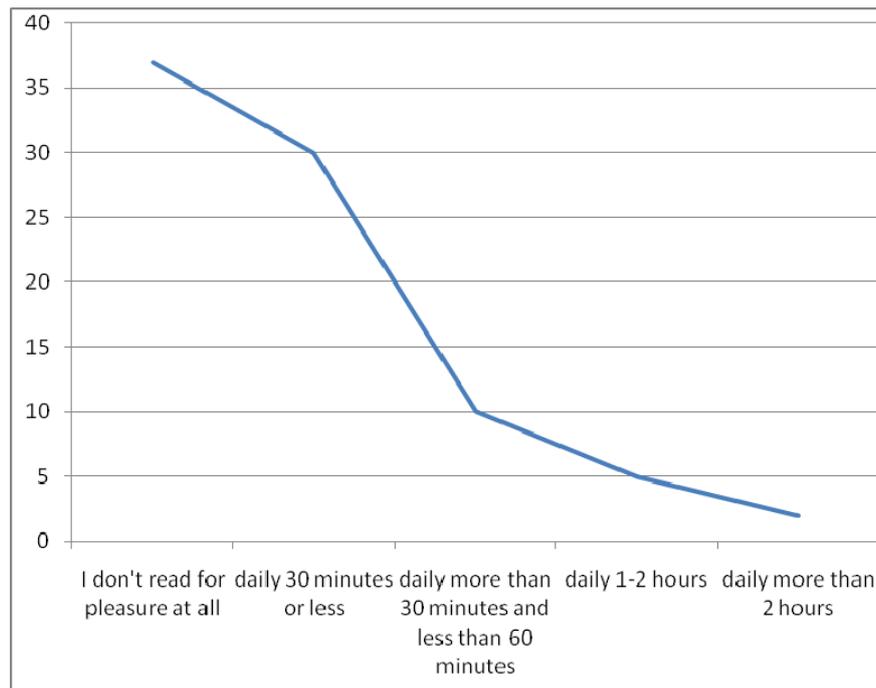


Figure 3 There is A Great Lack of Interest in Reading Books in Studied Classrooms

Data shows that the indicator of reading books and visiting libraries is not showing as a really strong indicator of cultural capital. Research is still ongoing, but the initial data shows these tendencies.

9. Problems and Pitfalls in the Field

There are several limits that have to be considered in this type of research. I was not able to collect all necessary data in each examined family through the participative observation, and observe the parental approach in the household. Therefore I choose a usage of psychological questionnaire that I mentioned before (Questionnaire about parenting styles) to collect data about complex climate in involved families, when I don't have a direct access or possibility of re-entry into them. This questionnaire functioned in more open families as a confirmatory test — as supportive, additional method of participative observation or in-depth interviews, and in several (less open) families, this method functioned as the only method for collecting data.

It is very important to say that this questionnaire captures only current, actual situation in the family, which means that revealed parental approach and upbringing style was not the same for always. We should keep in our minds that concept of cultural capital is not static, it is very dynamic concept, as well as development in families is very dynamic process and it's changing over the time⁸. Therefore it is not possible to provide a simple explanation of this phenomenon in short time. This questionnaire should not be the only research method (or central method) for mapping the complex concept of cultural capital.

Usage of participative observation was sometimes really problematic, not only in classrooms where a few teachers disagreed with my presence on the class. During my research I met several families where one parent agreed with the participation on the research and her spouse disagreed and refuse to participate, only with his requirement of financial payment for his participation. But also these ways of actions and behaviour of

⁸ New factors entering the development is the main reason why this dimension, a concept of cultural capital requires a lot of time.

respondents provide additional data and information about family, which I, as a researcher, have to take into account.

After using all research methods according to designed project I began to wonder if we are able to examine cultural capital in detail and its intergenerational transmission without daily contact with the studied families (and possibly long-term living with them under same roof)? Because it is a hard work to get a real confidence from family. I see it as a real obstacle, because from a purely pragmatic point of view, it is not possible to stay in every involved family and live there for a longer time (whether in the terms of lack of space or other objective reasons). All these mentioned situations are real limits of this type of research.

In relation to these problematic sites of research, more questions arose:

Can actual research of cultural capital provide sufficient explanation of acquiring and transmission of cultural knowledge between generations?

Are there any other resources that enter into the complex developing process of cultural level of family environment? How can we reliably examine them, what relevant methods we should choose?

Research shown that parental involvement is played out in a whole complexity. But we should still have on our minds that it is only one of many other factors that influence students' achievement and school results. We should not ignore examining of other environment (school environment, peer environment) and try to examine them as objectively as possible.

10. Conclusion

My initial findings presented here suggest that there should be a relation between the influence of emotional capital in the family and determining of the further educational path of the child. I was talking about only partial data because research is still ongoing.

Two main categories of emotional capital that I mentioned in paper are stratified into the other sub-categories as a variations, according to the degree of consistency of parental approach. Emotional capital and its various sub-categories appear as a part of a complex strategic practices and approaches of parents in relation to the further development of the children.

Cultural capital is largely made up from the immaterial level of families (such the most difficult to grasp), that includes not only involvement in the educational process of the child, but also the emotional capital, the actual communication between the parents and the child, specific moments of family climate, their mutual interactions and everyday elements of complex family lifestyle, that is very hard to operationalize. The importance lays on cognitive background of families. But it is not just about ownership of books in the home or intensity of reading literature, or knowledge itself, but it is also about dedicated time to children and emotional parental support.

I believe and hope that further research will bring more interesting information that may help us to move forward in the research of cultural impact of families on children's education.

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