

Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation Theses

<<THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF FAMILY LITERACY IN THE PROCESS OF READING EDUCATION>>

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FAMILY LITERACY ENVIRONMENTS AND PARENTAL
ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING IN RURAL AREAS OF SZEKLERLAND**

<< Néma Judit-Eszter >>

Doctoral Supervisor: Prof. Kerülő Judit, PhD



University of Debrecen
Doctoral School of Humanities
PhD Program in Sociology and Social Policy
Subprogram in Regional Studies
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I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Justification of the Topic: Problem Statement

In my doctoral dissertation, I investigate the process of fostering reading habits among children from families living in rural social environments, approaching the topic as an interdisciplinary issue within the framework of reading sociology and the sociology of education. To explore the regional family literacy and social context, I examine the underlying narratives behind parental attitudes towards books and culture. The aim of the research is to identify, through semi-structured interviews, attitudes that position both the current state of reading and its social implications through the lens of families raising children as readers in the Hungarian rural community of Transylvania (Parajd, Romania). As a long-term objective, I intend the results to be applicable on a macro level for researchers in family sociology, reading sociology, and educational sciences.

The problem statement of my dissertation emerged from the insight that in the digital revolution, raising the youngest generations as readers has become a significant challenge. My study is based precisely on this cohort experience, which I have also witnessed as a Hungarian language teacher, and which is thematized today both by families and academic discourse as a problem. It is a fact that the needs of children born into the 21st-century digital world, the so-called Net Generation (Prensky, 2001), have fundamentally transformed the canon of literacy worldwide, thus also reshaping parental attitudes toward reading. Along with this, changes in reading habits, the very existence of reading, and the rapid innovation of platforms and tools raise the issue of the obsolescence of reading sociology studies conducted 5 to 10 years ago — thereby opening new avenues for addressing the contemporary relevance of cultural and reading research facing crisis (Tóth, 2017). Moreover, in today's increasingly digital context, the sociological consensus around reading at the turn of the millennium often holds the invasion of ICT devices responsible as a rival to reading, seen as a key factor in the 21st-century cultural crisis (Gereben, 1997, 2002, 2019).

The urgency of repositioning reading as a key competence is supported by international school reading assessments (PISA, PIRLS): Hungarian children perform below the international average, with a quarter of them functionally illiterate¹. Romanian students' results are significantly worse than those of Hungary in all previous assessments, with

¹ According to the terminology used in PISA assessments, students who struggle with tasks at level 2 in reading comprehension are considered functionally illiterate. These students have difficulty identifying the main topic of a text, distinguishing information, and interpreting it. In Romania, the proportion of those who find even the easiest reading comprehension tasks challenging is alarmingly high: 42 percent (OECD, 2023).

functional illiteracy measured at 42% in 2022 (PISA, 2018, 2022; OECD, 2023)². Research on social, school, and cultural mobility has demonstrated since the 1960s and 1970s (Bee et al., 1969) the role of parents in children's socialization, academic performance, and social integration. In parallel, contemporary school mobility research increasingly explores the influence of home conditions and environment behind poor PISA results. IEA PIRLS studies specifically highlight the role of the family's socioeconomic and cultural capital, revealing a strong correlation between students' attitudes, their home environment, and academic achievement. Furthermore, social mobility research identifies the lack of reading skills as a key factor in reproducing educational inequalities and in the failure of later labor market and social integration (Kertesi, 1995; Blaskó, 2002; Toc, 2018; Győri & Balogh, 2020), thereby emphasizing the decisive role of reading competence in children's development and successful adulthood. My goal is to map how consciously rural parents in my research area participate in transmitting their cultural capital, specifically in fostering their children as readers. Accordingly, based on the literature, I do not regard parents merely as agents, but rather interpret their role as that of "teachers" with a capital T (Holloway, 2016).

Secondly, the cultural disadvantages inherent in rurality await further research. The latest reading sociology studies near the rural area of my research site date back to 1991 (Gereben, 1991). The timeliness of my research is justified by the fact that reading studies conducted over the past half-century have not yet addressed the challenges caused by digitalization, even though reading culture has undergone significant change due to it. Within the theoretical framework of the research group analyzing the region (KAM Anthropological Research Institute, Miercurea Ciuc), Székelyföld is characterized as a "peripheral region struggling with unresolved regional development tasks" (Biró, 2008). The decades-long presence of development policy in the region has emphasized the area's peripheral status and its industrial-economic and digital lag. The lack of institutions and social disadvantages related to educational attainment and employment further focus attention on the challenges of local education and cultural transmission.

² Romania ranks 45th out of the 81 countries assessed in reading comprehension, significantly lagging behind the OECD average and placing second to last in Europe. In the reading skills test, Romanian students achieved an average score of 428 points, similar to the 2018 results; however, this score is 6 points lower than in 2015 and 10 points lower than in the 2012 PISA assessment. Hungary's average reading comprehension score was 473 points, reflecting a 3-point decrease compared to four years earlier. The downward trend also applies to Hungary, although it ranks 31st among the countries surveyed (Gál, 2023).

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research is to explore the comparative social, cultural, and attitudinal factors that influence children's transition to becoming readers. Through semi-structured interviews with 20 mothers with a university degree and 20 mothers with a lower level of education, and through content analysis of these interviews, I seek to answer the question of how conscious parents with different levels of education are of the transfer of their cultural capital.

I examine the issue of raising children to become readers as an interdisciplinary question at the intersection of reading, educational sociology, and pedagogy. In my analysis, I consider it important to use the relevant theoretical framework in an iterative manner and to integrate it adequately.

My goal is to reframe the challenge of teaching reading in terms of digital inequalities, based on the interaction between the socioeconomic background and sociodemographic factors of families living in rural areas. Given that ICT devices are traditionally seen as rivals to reading and are therefore subject to opposition, in my dissertation, I also discuss the presence of digital media and the attitudes of parents and children towards their use in the context of reading, seeking to answer the question of how these factors influence the development of reading habits.

A further aim of my research is to adapt the internationally recognized methodology of Home Literacy Environment (HLE) research (Weigel, 2005) to the local research context. Beyond identifying the components of the model, I investigate the occurrences and proportions of these elements within the local social environment, so that the analysis of the results can help outline alternative approaches suitable for future family literacy research in the Hungarian linguistic area.

II. 1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Digitization and reading popularity

How do parents view the influence of digitization and the use of ICT devices in leisure time on their children's desire to read and the popularity of reading?

What differences can be observed between the opinions of parents with and without a university degree regarding the relationship between ICT devices and reading habits?

2. The impact of early childhood family literacy

How does early childhood family literacy manifest itself in parental practices, and how does it influence children's desire to read, their love of books, and the development of active reading habits later in life?

Are there differences in the practices and attitudes of families with and without college degrees?

3. The impact of reading on children's cognitive and multifaceted development

How do parents view the role of reading in their children's cognitive and versatile development, and what positive effects do they attribute to reading on their children's abilities, skills, and development?

What differences can be observed between the opinions of parents with and without a university degree regarding the effects of reading?

4. The impact of the living environment on family literacy

What role do the infrastructural conditions of the living environment play in the effectiveness of families' reading education activities?

Are there differences between the environmental obstacles and opportunities experienced by parents with and without a degree?

The first question of the research focuses on how digitization and ICT devices used in leisure time influence the popularity of reading. In this context, I examine how the accessibility factors (Resources, Boundaries) known from Home Literacy Environment (HLE) research appear in parental opinions, with particular regard to the relationship between ICT devices and reading. My research question also examines the relationship between the quantity of leisure activities that support cultural capital and the characteristics of the family literacy environment. I seek to answer how the more conscious use of leisure time is related to the development of reading habits in everyday family life. I therefore begin my investigation by exploring reading habits embedded in leisure time use in the context of family life.

In terms of leisure activities, the types of activities provide the variables for my study: hobby priorities, types of activities, those in which parents and children participate together, and/or the child's own favorite activities and reading, as well as their relationship with ICT devices.

Based on the above, I complement my research question with parental ICT-awareness education methods. My aim is to understand parental regulations regarding ICT device usage: how much, what, and when children can use or watch, as well as the devices targeted by parents' conscious educational attitudes, including TV, computer, smartphone use, and book preferences.

The second question of the research focuses on how the family literacy environment in early childhood contributes to the development of a love of reading and the formation of active reading habits later in life. I examine how this process can be interpreted in the context of the cultural dimension and family literacy, using Bourdieu's theory of capital conversion as a theoretical framework. My research question also examines how factors classified as Active HLE (Participation) in Home Literacy Environment (HLE) studies appear in the everyday practices of families. I pay particular attention to the role of active parental models and methods of promoting reading. I seek to answer the question of how these factors support the development of reading motivation and reader identity.

As a variable, I highlight the size of the family book collection, as many studies link this to children's reading habits and academic success (Andor, 1999; Martini & Sénéchal, 2012; Hegedűs, 2014; Toc & Gheba, 2015; Toc, 2018). Maternal education is embedded in the discourse of sociocultural background effects. The maternal childhood model is introduced as a variable to represent the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital.

I also examine the context of school and cultural mobility based on the collected data, considering that the reading socialization process is significantly influenced by the family's socio-economic background, cultural patterns, parents' education, family literacy awareness, and cultural capital factors (Nagy, 2006, 2009). The family's educational level and relationship to cultural capital positively affect children's reading competencies, school success, and reading socialization effectiveness.

Based on Bourdieu's cultural capital definition (1989), which distinguishes three forms—incorporated (embodied), objectified (books, paintings, devices), and institutionalized (school diplomas)—I identify three variables:

1. The material, objectified form as the existence and size of the family library,
2. The incorporated form as underlying reading habits, including the routine of reading and storytelling,
3. The institutionalized form as the presence of maternal diploma.

A positive attitude toward book-based cultural carriers is necessary for transmitting the material manifestation of culture, as this gesture enables “the enjoyment or use” of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1989). This appears as the dimension of storytelling routines in my research because cultural skills transmission is embedded in family habits, which create a connection between the family’s cultural level and children’s academic results (Bourdieu, 1989). Variables here include the timing, frequency, and place (reading nook) of storytelling/reading and the ways these are established, so that the resulting narratives can outline a complex family literacy environment.

The third question of the research focuses on how reading education can contribute to children's cognitive and multifaceted development, which can be measured in a criteria-oriented way in their development. I examine the mechanisms through which the development of children's complex abilities can be supported by the development of reading skills. I seek to answer the question of what pedagogical tools and methods of teaching reading promote the development of cognitive and versatile competencies.

I identify Parental Reading Beliefs – Affect from family literacy research methodology through parents’ opinions on the benefits of reading.

Based on the above, I record the following dimensions, drawn from the literature, regarding the multiple benefits of reading:

- The dimension of reading and attachment-based upbringing (closer parent-child bond),
- Early speech productivity,
- The impact on literacy skills,
- Reading and social and personality skills (empathy, social knowledge),
- Reading and morality, values (moral lessons, instructive content),
- The developmental effect on cognitive skills and further education (Kádár, 2012; Czachesz, 2014; Nyitrai, 2016; Béres, 2020; Néma, 2023c).

Conceptualizing these dimensions, I rely on educational theory, which widely agrees that “listening to stories helps children abstract from current temporal and spatial relations and supports understanding different relational systems. Storytelling significantly contributes to vocabulary growth” (Nyitrai, 2016). “Limited vocabulary hinders reading ability development” (Józsa & Steklács, 2009). “Research and everyday experience show that if parents regularly read stories to young children, beyond the joy of shared time, they significantly help children to read earlier and more independently after decoding, infer meanings of new words, and learn autonomously through reading” (Czachesz, 2014).

“Children who frequently listen to stories develop about 1.5 years ahead of peers who rarely have this experience” (Nagy, 1980). “Books support self-awareness, learning about the world, daily conflict resolution, competent social relations, and successful social integration” (Béres, 2020). “Children who are read to and discussed books with have fewer behavioral problems” (Wells, 1986; Czachesz, 2001).

In the dimension of reading benefits, I emphasize the importance of the following variables from parental reading beliefs:

- Attachment dimension: memories, favorite situations, preferred reading methods, interactive parent-child cooperative reading,
- Speech development: timing of first words and sentences related to books,
- Social skills: friendliness in kindergarten, empathy, fairness,
- Cognitive skills: timing and method of learning to write and read,
- Reading and academic success: quality of school performance.

The fourth question of the research focuses on how the infrastructural conditions of the living environment influence the effectiveness of families' reading education activities. I examine how the effects of the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) methodology arising from the environment (Environment) manifest themselves in family practices. I seek to answer the question of how factors in the physical and social environment shape children's motivation to read and the development of their literacy skills.

To address this, starting from the territorial delimitation of my target group, I identify the rural environmental conditions dimension; the presence of reading mediators and reading promotion institutions or groups; and the places and methods of obtaining reading materials. When widening this dimension, I consider the presence of institutions, peer parents, and educated intellectuals, seeking the tendencies of knowledge-based vs. industrial social structures in the local community.

Variables include the types of rural vs. urban family programs; the presence of reading mediators such as parents, teachers, libraries; book acquisition methods and locations (local or online shops), library membership, and frequency of library use. Beyond institutional frameworks, I look for formal or informal parental forums, groups, clubs, or communities, both real and online.

A key issue emerging in the rural environment is the problem of cultural capital that can be mobilized locally. Regarding future prospects, I define variables such as children's place, field, and language of further education (Hungarian, Romanian), career choices and success, and whether they return home.

III. APPLIED METHODS

Data collection was conducted using the qualitative sociological, semi-structured interview method (Heltai & Tarjányi, 1999), where the structure of the questions was developed based on the preliminary theoretical framework of family literacy. Unlike an inductive approach aimed at social description, my focus was rather on formulating rules and contexts. This way, the expectation of transferability can be met, presumably avoiding a direct temporal and spatial binding of the results.

Sampling procedure: For selecting interviewees, I asked mothers raising primary school-aged children in Parajd, balanced equally between graduates and non-graduates (those with lower educational attainment). The subjects were chosen through non-probability sampling, using expert and snowball sampling methods. The total number of interviews recorded was 40 (20 graduates, 20 non-graduates).

Research period: During the year 2024, I was able to complete and record the 40 semi-structured interviews within the time interval from spring to autumn.

Ethical considerations: I paid particular attention to anonymity to avoid identifiability throughout the study. In the transcripts of the interviews, I also replaced individuals' names with their initials. The interviewees gave their consent statements, allowing their opinions to be used for scientific purposes.

In presenting the research, I prefer the iterative theory-building method interpreted within the framework of grounded theory ("the grounded theory") (Szokolszky, 2004).

Applying Fairclough's (1992) 3D model of discourse analysis, the discourse analytic procedure aims not to learn more about the interview texts themselves (discourse), but through them to gain knowledge about society and its mechanisms of operation (Discours).

The model's fundamental premise is that texts can never be understood in isolation from the social environment they are produced in and reflect, but only in relation to other texts (intertextuality) and the social context. For this reason, I conducted the micro-level (textual analysis) content analytical procedures, followed by macro-level (society-explanatory) analysis methods, in the following way:

1. Description of the linguistic characteristics of the text.
2. Interpretation of the discursive processes related to the production and reception of the text.
3. Presentation of the broader social practice and context in which the communicative event occurs (Huckin, 1997; Van Dijk, 2000).

When analyzing my research material, I mainly identified elements of the Family Literacy Environment methodology in the categorization of content analysis: restrictive, active, and passive family literacy environmental factors; “formal” and “informal” home literacy interactions; “indirect” learning model factors based on the suggestion of Weigel et al. (2005), supplemented with categories of parental demographic factors, parental reading-writing habits, parental activities, and parental reading beliefs. I define the categories of the hidden home curriculum components (cf. “curriculum of the home”) as an overarching context during the comparative analysis of the two groups (Cline, 2010).

In the first step of content analysis, I identified the narrative text elements and statements with the help of software (MaxQDA). Professional workshops dealing with software data analysis published positive reviews on the applicability of MAXQDA (Dömsödy, 2014; Sántha, 2013, 2015, 2016), which is why I chose this program.

The entire Word document consisted of approximately 280 pages of interview texts, containing the full narratives of the 40 interviews. The documents available for analysis were grouped into two main categories: Graduates and Non-graduates. Within the Non-graduates group, I created subgroups according to educational attainment, such as 0_grade; 4_grade; 8_grade; Vocational school; 12_grade, with the interview corresponding to the interviewee’s highest completed grade.

During data processing, I applied a combined, mixed logical procedure: I created a deductive main coding system a priori based on the hypotheses formulated from the literature, under which I inductively generated subcodes by reading the text corpus through an iterative procedure (5 main codes assigned to 4 hypotheses, with 31 subcodes organized thematically).

The search for meaning and interpretation, the subcoding, was done through thematic grouping of identical statements, based on words, phrases, and semantic relations, inductively creating categories from concrete observations, thus conducting a qualitative discourse analysis along the thematic network of the texts. The automatic coding function of the content analysis software also helped in finding correlations between semantic fields and concepts, although I reviewed every coding to ensure the program’s reliability.

The production of main codes was followed by the assignment of text segments, which inductively generated the creation of subcodes. When defining the subcodes, I took care to avoid overlaps between categories, sometimes renaming, regrouping, or merging statements into a more justified subcode.

After re-reading and analyzing the narrative with discourse analysis, 3,413 statements were assigned to their appropriate groups within the coding system. At this stage, the units of analysis were sometimes defined as words, simple or complex sentences, other times entire paragraphs, thus forming text fragments equivalent to single statements. Often, I accepted a broader textual context (“context unit”) as an analysis unit according to the demands of sense and meaning (Gheyle – Jacobs, 2017: 8; Krippendorff, 2004: 101).

IV. RESULTS

The first question in my research sought to answer: "How do parents view the impact of digitalization and the use of ICT devices in leisure time on their children's desire to read and the popularity of reading? What differences can be observed between the opinions of parents with and without a university degree regarding the relationship between ICT devices and reading habits?

Examining the dimension of ICT awareness education discourses, beyond the variables and sub-variables of ICT device use (how much, what, when, and what device is targeted by parents' conscious educational attitudes: TV, computer, smartphone use, and books), I obtained important information about parental regulations, educational principles, and attitudes toward digital culture. The first research question received different answers in my two target groups, depending on parents' digital literacy awareness and digital inequalities. According to my two target groups, ICT device use is present in all social strata (as evidenced by the fact that the use of digital devices ranks third among non-graduates, with 86 statements, and among graduates, with 91 statements). My research clearly shows that device ownership is high among parents with lower levels of education, but as a consequence of the low digital literacy of parents without a degree, they mostly identify the device as a toy (see 1.2.e. In the ICT opinions sub-category, only 13 out of 231 statements rated smart devices as useful, and all of these came from the graduate target group). It has been proven that "among less educated users, the internet is consumed indiscriminately and mechanically, with ICT devices being used primarily for entertainment purposes" (Néma, 2024a: 3).

As a result, it can be demonstrated that device availability and internet access alone do not increase digital literacy or cultural capital among non-graduates. Discourse analysis of the research also showed that if device use is not constructive in families with low levels of education, it tends to perpetuate existing social inequalities and increase learning disadvantages (Ritók, 2014; Galán, 2019).

From the set of statements related to regulation, I was able to identify parenting styles related to digital device use (see Grossbart, 2002; Livingstone, 2007; M. Valcke, 2010; Alvarez, 2013; Wong, 2015; Özgür, 2016; Bodó, 2019; Néma, 2024a), where half of the parents surveyed responded in an authoritarian or authoritative-democratic manner to increased digital device use. The desire for control and the need to maintain "healthy boundaries" was certainly significant in the discourse of graduates, while in the responses of non-graduates regarding the regulation of leisure time, I repeatedly encountered statements thematizing discourses of control failure (see 1.2.b. Digital control sub-code 173 comes from 83 non-graduate mothers, and in sub-code 1.2.f. Criticism of others' ICT use, 57 of the 78 statements come from graduate interviewees).

In addition to awareness of ICT control and the educational use of devices, the reading education activities of parents with a university degree are clearly more effective (see subcode Love of reading: 146 statements from parents with a university degree vs. 44 from parents without a university degree, Reading embedded in everyday life sub-code: 106 statements from graduates vs. 24 from non-graduates). At the same time, during the iterative research, I was able to identify more nuanced dimensions when answering the research question.

The second research question, in which I sought to find out "How does early childhood family literacy manifest itself in parental practices, and how does it influence children's desire to read, their love of books, and the development of active reading habits later in life? Are there differences in the practices and attitudes of families with and without college degrees?" During my research, both the quantitative data from the number of statements and the discourse analysis provided answers to the above questions (see 2. Reading methods, main codes of instructions).

The comparative table below clearly highlights the effectiveness and activity of reading education between the two target groups.

Table 1: Comparative presentation of subcodes illustrating active family literacy environment

Code Name	Total Statements	Statements by Degree-holder Mothers	Statements by Non-degree-holder Mothers
3.d. Love of Reading	190	146	44
2.i. Titles, Favorite Readings	148	126	23
2.h. Bedtime Stories and Early Reading	144	133	11
2.e. Acquisition of Reading Materials	130	99	31
1.1.d. Reading Embedded in Daily Life	130	106	24
3.c. Reading Mediation Person	126	102	24
2.d. Home Environment, Library, Collection	83	72	11
2.c. Parent's Childhood Reading Experience	79	65	14
1.2.c. Digital Experience vs. Reading	66	60	6
2.b. Mention of Parental Model	52	41	9
2.g. Book Giving	32	22	10

Source: Own editing

Generally, in all family literacy practices, degree-holder mothers dominated in activity. For instance, only 11 non-degree-holder mothers mentioned the Bedtime Stories and Early Reading subcode compared to 133 degree holders. Similarly, in the Digital Experience vs. Reading subcode, there were 60 statements from degree holders and only 6 from non-degree holders.

The Home Environment, Library, Collection subcode (72 degree-holder vs. 11 non-degree-holder statements) and the Parent's Childhood Reading Experience subcode (65 vs. 14)

clearly confirm the hypothesis, reflecting important background factors in reading education research (cultural socialization, parental modeling). The mother's education and her relation to cultural capital directly influenced children's reading competencies, school success, and the effectiveness of reading education (Nagy, 2006, 2009; Niklas & Schneider, 2017; Zhang & mtsai, 2023).

Cultural accessibility in Parajd also manifests the „Matthew Effect” (Gereben, 1997) through the intergenerational transmission of parental education. Based on the theoretical frameworks of inherited (family) and acquired (school) assets (Hradil, 1995), it can be said that family background significantly determines access to cultural capital dimensions in the rural region studied. In the examined context, children's reading education aligns more with Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction (1978, 1999) than DiMaggio's cultural mobility theory (1998). Although reading could play a key role in vertical social mobility for children from lower-educated families, a strong familial reproductive intent is perceptible in the studied area. Despite changes in traditional class structures regarding cultural carriers and digitalization surges, similar to Szabó's (2018) research, I found in Parajd that Bourdieu's habitus theory still applies in the process of children's reading education. This underscores the need for stronger cultural capital based on broader environments, quality education, and institutions to reduce academic-cultural inequalities and secure a progressive future for children from lower socioeconomic families.

In my third research question, I sought to find out “How do parents view the role of reading in their children's cognitive and multifaceted development, and what positive effects do they attribute to reading in terms of their children's abilities, skills, and development? What differences can be observed between the opinions of parents with and without a college degree regarding the effects of reading?”

When analyzing parental reading beliefs – Affect category in the family literacy study, I marked the main discourses of the Positive Effects of Reading subcode as variables. The subcode with a high number of statements (Positive Effect: first place with 223 statements among degree holders, 7th place with 55 statements among non-degree holders) confirmed the dimensions supporting this hypothesis, revealing known concepts from literature about the multiple benefits of reading: the connection between reading and attachment in parenting, early speech productivity, literacy skills development, social and personality skills (empathy, social knowledge), morality and values (moral lessons, instructive nature), and the cognitive

and academic benefits of reading (Wells, 1986; Czachesz, 2001; Béres, 2020; Cheung & mtsai, 2021; Lai & mtsai, 2022; Wirth & mtsai, 2022; Zhang & mtsai, 2023).

In my research, the third question was also confirmed by the Bedtime Stories, Early Reading subcode (133 statements from degree holders vs. 11 from non-degree holders). These predominantly expressed insights that listening to stories and reading help children detach from current temporal and spatial contexts and facilitate understanding various relational systems. Beyond the joy of shared time, reading greatly supports children's cognitive development, acquisition of prosocial behaviors, healthy self-image formation, conflict management, and gives reading children academic advantages compared to peers—the parental opinions mirrored theoretical educational viewpoints (Nagy, 1980; Czachesz, 2014; Józsa & Steklács, 2009; Nyitrai, 2016; Altun & mtsai, 2022).

The positive role of reading and books in child-rearing—i.e., families that read and tell stories more often have more manageable educational problems—was clearly confirmed in the degree-holder group (cf. 2. Reading Methods, Family Model, and 3. Reading – Parental Beliefs main codes). In contrast, in the interviews with less-reading, lower-educated mothers, there were multiple expressions of parental helplessness regarding influencing children's leisure time and ICT use; complaints about children's behavior appeared only among this group (cf. 1.1. Leisure Use main code and 1.1.c. Time Management, Daily Routine; 1.2.b. ICT Control subcodes in non-degree narratives).

While the intellectual mothers interviewed primarily imagine basic socialization through the practice of reading and base their ICT attitudes on a classic book-based cultural framework, media researchers aiming to develop digital competencies. They continuously organize parental mediation activities, their reports reveal difficulties in reception and encountering basic limitations. It is evident that, in the rural context studied, the rise of digital content has not yet become part of the culture of families with university degrees. The protection and preservation of the old, classical value system observed in my research may explain the ambivalent attitudes toward digital culture and the delay in the adoption of digital culture in the region (Biró, 2019).

In my fourth research question, I sought to answer: “What role do the infrastructural characteristics of the living environment play in the effectiveness of families’ reading education activities? Are there differences between the environmental obstacles and opportunities experienced by parents with and without a university degree?” In this set of questions, I identified the issue of the environmental effects of the HLE methodology

(Environment), for which I designated the following dimensions: rural environmental conditions; the presence of reading mediators, reading promotion institutions, and groups; and the location and method of obtaining reading materials.

The subcodes created inductively and data-driven based on the HLE Environment methodology and coding structure supported the hypothesis, as family literacy statements referred not only to the home but also to the sociocultural and infrastructural dimensions of the residential environment. Parental opinions confirmed that the following also have a direct impact on the possibilities of nurturing reading habits:

- In the subcodes 4.a. Nostalgia for the parent's childhood (33 mentions) and 4.b. Dissatisfaction with the parent's own childhood (27 mentions), the lack of reading opportunities appeared as a memory among non-degree holders, while abundance was reported in the accounts of degree holders. The intention or obstacle to intergenerational transmission of patterns further reinforced the fulfillment of the hypothesis.
- Subcodes 4.d. Suggestions (33 mentions) and Institutions (37 mentions) pointed out that strengthening reading culture necessarily requires the cooperation of external local actors; the family's efforts alone are insufficient.
- From the subcode 4.f. The child's future (100 statements), it became clear that parents are aware that potentially weak local opportunities in cultural and educational fields may reduce their children's chances of academic mobility.

I also interpret the uncertain attitudes toward digital carriers in the statements of degree-holder mothers as a factor stemming from rurality. Due to infrastructural conditions, the prestige of digital and IT-based occupations is low in the rural environment, and my interviewees also undervalued the importance of ICT devices; acceptance of digital content has not yet developed in their value system. Some admitted that these competencies would indeed be necessary according to contemporary expectations, yet they elaborated at great length on their harmful effects and therefore prefer to equip their children with smart devices as late as possible.

While among degree holders I managed to obtain narratives explicitly about principles of nurturing readers also relating to the above institutions (4th question block), my research experience yielded surprising results from the non-degree group in statements grouped under the subcode Criticism of the Settlement (4.c. Criticism of the settlement and cultural environment: the most frequent subcode among non-degree participants with 155 statements). This particularly frequent subcategory clearly shows that parents experience infrastructural

deficiencies (clubs, libraries, education, community life beyond tourism, community spaces, cultural programs) as obstacles in the process of nurturing reading habits.

All this, producing results similar to school mobility studies (Toc & Gheba 2015; Toc, 2018; Vasile et al., 2020), shows that home reading encouragement cannot be separated from the wider residential environment. The HLE is built not only from internal family practices but also from external environmental conditions—thus confirming my fourth hypothesis, that rurality and the local environment limit families' literacy opportunities.

Although the critical reflections in the interviews were surprisingly strong, they indirectly showed that parents perceive the role of the necessary conditions for developing a reading culture—even if they can only articulate them as absences. The structural constraints expressed in the statements therefore precisely confirmed the validity of the fourth hypothesis.

V. RESEARCH REPORT

Achievement of Research Objectives

In my research, I was able to thoroughly explore the family literacy factors and tendencies influencing children's reading development in the society of Parajd. I examined the tendencies prevailing in the rural area of Sóvidék using a semi-structured interview method, where I collected narratives from 20 mothers with university degrees and 20 mothers with lower educational attainment (40 interviews in total).

Significance and Novelty of the Research

The research innovatively combined four major themes: 1. Resources/Boundaries (access): leisure time use and ICT use, 2. HLE/Participation (active family involvement), 3. Parental reading beliefs, and 4. Rural environmental factors in nurturing readers. Due to its structured nature, it measured not just the effect of a single factor (e.g., digitalization), but interpreted the success of reading development within a complex socio-cultural field.

This kind of multivariable, synthesizing approach fills a gap in home literacy research, as HLE methodology and similar international research conducted in English-language contexts have not been synthesized in this way in Hungarian-language research before.

The hypotheses were processed through structured and refined semantic codes to offer a new type of reflexive, parent-centered interpretation of the general causes of the decline in reading (digitalization, generational patterns, family environment, mothers' educational level,

broadier local-rural environmental effects).

The refined ICT subcodes I applied (e.g., digital control, smart devices vs. reading) allowed for a deeper interpretation in my qualitative analysis than known quantitative approaches. Meanwhile, no prior sociological research linking reading and digitalization had been conducted in my research area (Sóvidék, Parajd).

By differentiated categorization examining active and passive educational influences, the effectiveness of cultural capital transmission (class homology) could be well modeled. The comparative analysis of different target groups based on educational attainment revealed differing forms of love for reading and valuation of it as a cultural good between mothers with and without university degrees.

Including structural factors of the rural environment through parental critical narratives shed sociostructural light on the problem of nurturing readers, for which no prior educational-theoretical or reading-sociological research had been conducted using qualitative methods.

From a fresh perspective, the research could open new interpretative fields in exploring the mechanisms of nurturing readers, especially in the context of disadvantaged rural areas.

Further Research Perspectives

Continuing the research could be relevant in the targeted examination **of the hybrid relationship between digital devices and reading**, as although I originally assumed traditional book-based cultural carriers behind the gesture of reading, the data found iteratively expanded the theory towards the digitalization context. The digital space is not only a competitor but can also be a potential tool for supporting reading (audiobooks, e-book apps, platforms).

If the digital literacy of parents and teachers becomes increasingly higher and more conscious, **longitudinal follow-up of these same families** could provide valuable data regarding changes in family literacy over 3–5 year periods—especially considering the rapid changes in cultural consumption habits of digital culture and the net generation.

Integrating the pedagogical-institutional perspective would also enrich the value of the current research, allowing for expert **interviews with teachers and librarians**—forming a social discourse and effective collaborative reader education.

Regional comparative research could expand the findings by comparing rural-urban and center-periphery relations if sampling were repeated in urban environments. For deeper understanding of territorial differences, qualitative studies of three region types—rural, small-town, and large city—using parallel thematic interview structures and comparative coding would provide useful data.

VI. ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCHER



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PhD Publication List

Candidate: Judit-Eszter Néma
Doctoral School: Doctoral School of Human Sciences
MTMT ID: 10087532

List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (8)

1. **Néma, J. E.:** "Az íriszembe amit beégettem...": Egy világutazó asszisztensnő narratív életútja.
Valóság. 2024 (3), 58-76, 2024. ISSN: 0324-7228.
2. **Néma, J. E.:** A rurális közegben élő szülők IKT-attitűdjei, nevelési stílusai - Az olvasóvá nevelés digitális kihívásai.
Acta med. sociol. 15 (38), 22-42, 2024. ISSN: 2062-0284.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19055/ams.2024.05/28/2>
3. **Néma, J. E.:** Küzdelem a kultúra átörökítésére Sóvidéken.
Magy. szle. 33 (3-4), 36-48, 2024. ISSN: 1216-6235.
4. **Néma, J. E.:** Az olvasás funkciójának narratívái rurális családi literációs kontextusban: Szülői olvasói attitűd kutatás.
Acta med. sociol. 14 (36), 88-107, 2023. ISSN: 2062-0284.
5. **Néma, J. E.:** Olvasásszociológiai paradigmaváltás Erdélyben: A kulturális szegmentáció és a modern osztályfejlődés aspektusai Pierre Bourdieu homológiaelmélete mentén.
Valóság. 66 (1), 82-91, 2023. ISSN: 0324-7228.
6. **Néma, J. E.:** Szempontok a megváltozott olvasási szokások oktatási integrációjához a generációkutatás tükrében.
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7. **Néma, J. E.:** A családi literáció szerepe rurális közegben élő diplomás családok olvasóvá nevelői habitusában.
Iskolakultúra. 32 (12), 89-110, 2022. ISSN: 1215-5233.
8. **Néma, J. E.:** Népmeséink az értékszociológia kontextusában: A mitopoétikus világkép kognitív nyelvészeti megalapozottsága a Fehérlófiában.
Valóság. 65 (8), 47-55, 2022. ISSN: 0324-7228.





Hungarian scientific articles in international journals (7)

9. Biró, A. Z., Sárosi-Blága, Á., Fülöp-Székely, A., Kovács, O., **Néma, J. E.**, Szász, M. M.:
Adminisztratív státussal nem rendelkező települések helyi közösségként való működésének vizsgálata.
Pro Sci. Ruralis. 2023 (2), 133-163, 2024. ISSN: 2457-9068.
10. **Néma, J. E.**: Az IKT-eszközök szülői kontrollja az olvasóvá nevelés családi literációs gyakorlataiban.
Pro Sci. Ruralis. 2023 (2), 79-89, 2024. ISSN: 2457-9068.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59357/ProSciRural.2023.2.05>
11. **Néma, J. E.**: A szegénység csökkentésére irányuló szakpolitikák konceptuális megközelítései.
Pro Sci. Ruralis. 8 (1), 145-155, 2023. ISSN: 2457-9068.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59357/ProSciRural.2023.1.08>
12. **Néma, J. E.**: Örökbefogadó lokalitás: A vállalkozói beágyazódás mint a lokális közösségek újjáélesztésének záloga.
Pro Sci. Ruralis. 7 (1), 139-142, 2023. ISSN: 2457-9068.
13. **Néma, J. E.**: A ruralitás társadalmi innovációs kulcsszereplői.
Pro Sci. Ruralis. 6 (2), 180-187, 2021. ISSN: 2457-9068.
14. **Néma, J. E.**: Az agrárélelmiszeri szektor és vállalkozói szellem a Covid-19 pandémia válságában.
Pro Sci. Ruralis. 6 (1), 199-206, 2021. ISSN: 2457-9068.
15. **Néma, J. E.**: Írás-olvasási kompetenciák fejlesztésének faktorai az inkluzív koragyermekkori nevelés jegyében.
Pro Sci. Ruralis. 5 (1-4), 257-263, 2020. ISSN: 2457-9068.

Hungarian conference proceedings (1)

16. **Néma, J. E.**: Családi literációs környezeti faktorok és az olvasóvá nevelés problematikája a székkelyföldi ruralitásban.
In: Tudományos megismerés: kihívások és esélyek : A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia DOMUS programjának 25 éves jubileuma kapcsán szervezett Konferencia anyaga. Szerk.: Biró A. Zoltán, Státus Kiadó, Csíkszereda, 94-99, 2023. ISBN: 9786068052502

Hungarian abstracts (6)

17. **Néma, J. E.**: Az újratemelő oktatási egyenlőtlenségek mutatói az olvasást érintő jóléti indexekben (PISA-tesztek).
In: A jövő pedagógiája. A XV. Országos Taní-tani Konferencia előadásainak szerkesztett változata (absztrakt kötet). Szerk.: Komjáthy Zsuzsanna; Erdei Róbert, Miskolci Egyetem Kiadó, Miskolc, 100, 2024. ISBN: 9786156835017





18. **Néma, J. E.:** Szülői nevelési stílusok a digitális literáció vs. olvasóvá nevelés oppozíciójában.
In: A jövő pedagógiája. A XV. Országos Taní-tani Konferencia előadásainak szerkesztett változata (absztrakt kötet). Szerk.: Komjáthy Zsuzsanna; Erdei Róbert, Miskolci Egyetemi Kiadó, Miskolc, 99, 2024. ISBN: 9786156835017
19. **Néma, J. E.:** "Az íriszembe amit beégettem...": Egy világotazóvá vált erdélyi asszisztensnő interkulturális életútjának elemzése narratív élettörténeti interjú módszerével.
In: Tudomány: út a világ megismeréséhez : absztrakt kötet. Szerk.: Tóth Dalma, Gadó Irén, Debreceni Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Politikatudományi és Szociológiai Intézet, Debrecen, 10, 2022. ISBN: 9789634904779
20. **Néma, J. E.:** A meseolvasás funkciójáról alkotott szülői attitűdvizsgálat vonzatai erdélyi rurális miliőben.
In: XIV. Nemzetközi nyíregyházi doktorandusz és posztdoktori konferencia : Absztraktkötet. Szerk.: Rusinné Fedor Anita, Tóth Dalma, Zakor-Broda Rita, Debreceni Egyetem Egészségügyi Kar, Nyíregyháza, 42, 2022. ISBN: 9789634904755
21. **Néma, J. E.:** A netgenerációk kultúrafogyasztása ? A könyvalapú olvasástól a digitális kultúra térnyeréséig.
In: XIV. Nemzetközi nyíregyházi doktorandusz és posztdoktori konferencia : Absztraktkötet. Szerk.: Rusinné Fedor Anita, Tóth Dalma, Zakor-Broda Rita, Debreceni Egyetem Egészségügyi Kar, Nyíregyháza, 40, 2022. ISBN: 9789634904755
22. **Néma, J. E.:** Az olvasás funkciójáról alkotott diplomás szülői attitűdök elemzése Parajd község családi literációs kontextusában.
In: Tudomány: út a világ megismeréséhez : absztrakt kötet. Szerk.: Tóth Dalma, Gadó Irén, Debreceni Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Politikatudományi és Szociológiai Intézet, Debrecen, 10, 2022. ISBN: 9789634904779

The Candidate's publication data submitted to the Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of the Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) database.

04 August, 2025



ADDITIONAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (13)

1. Néma Judit-Eszter: **Olvasásszociológiai paradigmaváltás. A digitalizációs kontextus, a családi literáció szerepének felerősödése az olvasóvá nevelés szakirodalmi diskurzusában.** „Tehetségből fiatal kutató” – Fiatal kutatóvá válást és szakmai karrier utat támogató interdiszciplináris konferencia, Szociológia és Társadalompolitika Tanszék, Debrecen, 2022. május 14.
2. Néma Judit-Eszter: **Az olvasóvá nevelés lehetőségei rurális családi literációs kontextusban.** Tudományos megismerés: kihívások és esélyek - A magyar tudomány ünnepe konferencia, Sapientia Erdélyi Tudományegyetem, Csíkszereda, 2022. november 17.
3. Néma Judit-Eszter: **Az olvasás funkciójáról alkotott diplomás szülői attitűdök elemzése Parajd község családi literációs kontextusában.** Tudomány: út a világ megismeréséhez konferencia, Debreceni Egyetem, Szociológia és Szociálpolitika Tanszék, Debrecen, 2022. november 19.
4. Néma Judit-Eszter: **„Az íriszembe amit beégettem...” Egy világutazóvá vált erdélyi asszisztensnő interkulturális életútjának elemzése narratív élettörténeti interjú módszerével.** Tudomány: út a világ megismeréséhez konferencia, Debreceni Egyetem, Szociológia és Szociálpolitika Tanszék, Debrecen, 2022. november 19.
5. Néma Judit-Eszter: **A meseolvasás funkciójáról alkotott szülői attitűdvizsgálat vonzatai erdélyi rurális miliőben.** XIV. Nemzetközi nyíregyházi doktorandusz és posztdoktori konferencia, Debreceni Egyetem Egészségtudományi Kar, Nyíregyháza, 2022. 12.09.
6. Néma Judit-Eszter: **A netgenerációk kultúrafogyasztása – A könyvalapú olvasástól a digitális kultúra térnyeréséig.** XIV. Nemzetközi nyíregyházi doktorandusz és posztdoktori konferencia, Debreceni Egyetem Egészségtudományi Kar, Nyíregyháza, 2022. 12.09.
7. Néma Judit-Eszter: **A rurális közegben élő diplomás családok olvasóvá nevelése, családi literációs kontextusa – Egy Elő kutatás konklúziói.** Hatékonyság és koherencia a pedagógiában, gyógypedagógiában és tanárképzésben nemzetközi tudományos konferencia, Miskolci Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Tanárképző Intézete, Miskolc, 2023. február 3.
8. Néma Judit-Eszter: **Esettanulmány: a népnevelői mozgalom, a kulturális tőke rurális recepciója egy erdélyi tanítónő hagyományápoló, identitásörző pályaképén keresztül.** Hatékonyság és koherencia a pedagógiában, gyógypedagógiában és tanárképzésben nemzetközi tudományos konferencia, Miskolci Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Tanárképző Intézete, Miskolc, 2023. február 3.
9. Néma Judit-Eszter: **Sóvidéki szülők digitális literációja az olvasóvá nevelés összefüggésében.** Magyar Tudomány Ünnepe: Tanulás vidéki térségben: helyi adottságok,

globális kihívások Konferencia, Sapientia Erdélyi Magyar Tudományegyetem, Csíkszereda, **2023. november 24.**

10. Néma Judit-Eszter: **Szülői nevelési stílusok a digitális literáció vs. olvasóvá nevelés oppozíciójában.** XV. Taní-tani Online Nemzetközi Tudományos Konferencia, A jövő pedagógiája (Modern pedagógia, digitális oktatás II. szekció), Magyar Pedagógiai Társaság, Miskolc, 2024. február 2.
11. Néma Judit-Eszter: **Az újratermelő oktatási egyenlőtlenségek mutatói az olvasást érintő jóléti indexekben (PISA-tesztek).** XV. Taní-tani Online Nemzetközi Tudományos Konferencia, A jövő pedagógiája (Oktatás és társadalom szekció), Magyar Pedagógiai Társaság, Miskolc, 2024. február 2.
12. Néma Judit-Eszter: **A netgeneráció olvasóvá nevelése – sóvidéki helyzetkép.** A Magyar Tudomány Ünnepe - A Tudomány: út a világ megismeréséhez Konferencia, Sapientia Erdélyi Magyar Tudományegyetem, Csíkszereda, 2024. nov. 15.
13. Néma Judit-Eszter: **IKT-attitűdök az olvasóvá nevelés problematikájában. Kortárs kihívások a köznevelésben és a felsőoktatásban,** Nemzetközi online konferencia, (Mesterséges Intelligencia a köznevelésben, aktuális köznevelési, felsőoktatási kérdések szekció), Miskolci Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Tanárképző Intézete, Miskolc, 2024. 10. 11.

KÜLSŐ KUTATÁSBAN VALÓ RÉSZVÉTEL:

„A média hatása a gyermekekre és fiatalokra” kutatási program (2021-2025). Sapientia Erdélyi Magyar Tudományegyetem, Csíkszereda.

„Falusors – székelyföldi kistelepülések belülről nézve” (2023). Domus szülőföldi csoportos pályázat, Sapientia Erdélyi Magyar Tudományegyetem, Csíkszereda.

Csoportvezető neve, országa: Biró A. Zoltán, Románia

Résztvevők neve, országa:

Sárosi-Blága Ágnes, Románia

Szász Mária-Magdolna, Románia

Néma Judit-Eszter, Románia

Fülöp-Székely Anita, Románia

Kovács Ottilia Enikő, Románia

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