

Cultural consumption proposed by parents and cultural consumption chosen by children

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Abstract: This article highlights aspects of cultural consumption proposed by parents to children with ages between 7 and 11. The approach had an exploratory type, with the main purpose of highlighting the differences regarding cultural consumption compared between families living in an urban and a country environment and between cultural consumption proposed by parents and cultural consumption accepted by children. Results do show that there are significant differences on these plans; the data can be used by parents to adjust their educational endeavors and by teachers to provide effective information to parents in order to ease the structuring of their children’s free time activities.

Keywords: family, parents, children, cultural consumption, urban-country environment

1. Theoretical Premises

The family is the first social group in a children’s social becoming. In this group the children learns the social methodology applied in all social life, this learning process being close related with the actions undertaken in the family education. The child’s family life, from birth until entry into school, is crucial in his personality development. It is considered that the family must respond to almost all the needs of a child therefore it has to produce love, attention, approval, respect, to a certain level, among its members. (Muntean, 2006, p.81) Family conflicts, emotional problems, frustrations, failures in education will adversely affect the child's personality. Although the society’s

change from traditionalism to modernism and post-modernism has dramatically changed the meaning of socialization, the parents remain active models of socialization.

The family is the preferred place in the formation of the “habitus” (meaning an acquired system of preferences, principals of “seeing” and deducting [...], ongoing cognitive structures (which are essentially the product of acquired objective structures) and [...] action schemes which give an orientation and awareness to certain situations and the adopted response”(Bourdieu, 1999, p.32)

In this context, "family provides the first integrated framework, which systematically impose the values and ideologies of the group. When you reach school age, the child is taken from an educational system that refines and strengthens family habitus extension. Pedagogical work family and the school is completed by social class, which provides individual language codes, cultural predispositions and the relationships with specific entry for that class in the social field. "(Hatos, 2006, p.214)

Our research approach was based as a theoretical principle "on an argument referring to the circular causality between the culture and the personality of one, stipulated more than half a century ago in cultural anthropology, meaning that a cultural experience produces, through education and socialization, a certain type of personality, which at its own turn affects one's culture."(Rotariu, Iluț, 2006, p.33)

In this context it is important to define culture. BEAUVOIS (apud Iluț, 2004) points out that culture means all the influences that oppose nature using the communication, the speech, the beliefs and the representations. In the opinion of Moles, culture has two extreme meanings, an individual one and a collective one. The cultural meaning, for the individual perspective, is the development of personal intelligence and sensitivity by attending cultural works. The cultural meaning, for the social perspective, is the collective experience, full and objective, which is passed on from generation to generation. Another acceptance is that of a system of cultural goods, with their acknowledged value and culture, containing all the institutions and activities involved in promoting it including cultural creation. (Moldoveanu, Ioan-Franc, 1997, pp.10-11)

Cultural practices that are practical and can be observed and compared are specific to certain cultures. They are part of the concept of culture along with social customs, manners and the set of shared

behaviors submitted to future generations by community members (Roth, 2002; Costin, 1996; Neculau, 2004). Cultural consumption, from this perspective, involves a series of actions that individuals undergo in order to access culture's products. By doing so, they obtain satisfaction and recognition through cultural services. Cultural services, means "activities performed for the benefit of cultural consumers, with or without their direct participation, in order to fulfill the specific needs and satisfaction expected by them." (Moldoveanu, Ioan-Franc, 1997, p.15)

Our study aimed to compare the children's preferred, free times, activities and the cultural propositions of their parents. This study is part of a larger research which became a ph. D thesis entitled *Parents' set of value and the proposed cultural consumption for children*.

2. Objectives and hypotheses

General objective: Comparison on proposed cultural consumption to children from different living environments, with ages between 7 and 11, by their parents.

Objectives:

- a. Identify the main features of the proposed cultural consumption.
- b. Highlighting the relationship between the proposed cultural consumption and the activities chosen by young children.

Main hypothesis

The cultural consumption varies according to area of residence, urban - country.

Working hypothesis

- a. The activities of cultural consumption and leisure are mainly learning activities in extension of school.
- b. There are significant differences between the activities proposed by parents and those chosen by children, for leisure time.

These are the objectives and assumptions used to guide our research, the following data will confirm or deny our assumptions.

3. Subjects

Given the objectives and the research hypotheses, we have chosen to use contrasting subjects, chosen on grounds of living environment. Consequently, the research was conducted on a sample of 520 subjects, grouped in 260 families: 147 families from country areas and 113 from Arad County. Arad is the only city in the county capable

of providing significant differences from one environment to another. Within the group of urban subjects (city of Arad) we used a stratified sampling. 10 schools were chosen to represent all areas of the city and within those schools, parents from all levels of primary school were chosen. For the chosen families, the presence of both parents was a must, regardless of the legal status of cohabitation. The families were chosen based on their availability. Country villages were chosen at different distances from the city of Arad, thus taking in account of the possibility of accessing different cultural products. From each town there were chosen 5 to 10 families, depending on town size, with at least one child of an age between 7 and 11 years, also depending on their availability.

One of the main independent variables considered in our research is the area of residence. 56.5% from the chosen families came from rural environment and 43.5% from urban areas.

4. Research tools. Questionnaire

The method chosen to collect data on cultural consumption proposed children by parents was the questionnaire.

Based on theoretical data and in accordance with the objectives and assumptions, the following categories and variables built the questionnaire. We present those used in this study.

Variables and indicators

1. The parents' expectations on children's cultural consumption
 - Knowledge of cultural: consumption preferences of children;
 - Activities considered beneficial for children;
 - Compliance with the children's options of cultural consumption;
 - Parents' satisfaction regarding children's cultural options.

Independent variables: age, occupation, educational level, residence, religion, nationality, level of income.

It was intended, in forming the questionnaire, for the questions used (introductory questions, filter, bifurcated, identification, factual) to be formulated in simple terms, clearly, without double negation. Most questions were closed, using Likert scale to reflect either the frequency or the intensity of a certain phenomenon. Some questions show the subjects' character, depending on the subjects' opinion about himself.

5. Analysis and interpretation of data

To highlight what kinds of activities are proposed by the parents, they were asked to assess the answers with notes from 1 to 5, depending

on the regularity with which the activity is proposed. Most often they are offered activities such as: to read books, to learn a foreign language, to participate in religious activities, to go on trips or study some more. The least often are proposed going to cinema or watching rented movies. After comparing the tests we obtained $\chi^2 = 2174.444$ at $p = .000$, which means that type of activity affects the extent to which it is proposed to children, during free time.

TV programs for children, allowed to be viewed in most cases, are the cartoons and geographical, historical, natural sciences documentaries. To these, in many cases, are added films for children, shows for children, religious shows. Very few parents allow children to watch movies, series and entertainment that are not addressed to their age category. In some isolated cases it is chosen a sport show or the children do not watch TV programs at all.

Games offered differentiate according to the child's sex. Thus boys are proposed, in most cases, action games, organized sports (football, tennis, swimming) and construction or logic games, while girls play relating games and outdoor games, playing with dolls, lego, puzzle. It points out that parents consider organized sports as games, without taking in consideration a very important aspect of games – the relaxation. In very few cases parents propose computer games.

Next we compared the frequency with which each activity is proposed in an urban or rural area. For all types of activities have different environments. Thus, in rural areas there is a greater frequency for activities such as: reading books, gardening, listening to country music, household activities and religious activities. As can be seen from Table 1, the frequency for other activities is higher in urban areas.

Table 1
Scores obtained for different activities depending on environment

	Books	Newspapers/ Magazines	TV Programs	Rented movies	Cinema
Urban	3,98	3,05	2,69	1,50	1,66
Rural	4,12	2,98	2,65	1,22	1,38
	Sport	Outdoor activities	Gardening	Organized environment	Socializing with friends
Urban	3,74	3,82	2,19	2,58	5,02
Rural	3,24	3,35	2,36	2,48	3,02

	Parties	Entertainment	Country music	Shows	Theatre
Urban	2,65	2,51	1,88	2,82	2,84
Rural	2,14	2,37	1,90	2,39	2,15
	Museums	Music	P.C.	Household activities	Foreign languages
Urban	2,82	3,27	3,19	3,00	4,10
Rural	2,35	3,18	3,07	3,18	3,86
	Religious activities	Extra school	Practical activities	Playing	Others
Urban	3,60	3,58	3,37	3,81	2,17
Rural	4,18	3,42	2,74	3,31	0,88

Although every activity varies from rural to urban environment only for some the frequency is very different. Table 2 summarizes the results of the inference test t, which is the Student test for independent samples. These results show significant differences, depending on the environment, below the .05 threshold for watching rented movies, watching movies at the cinema, playing sports, hiking, visiting exhibitions, going to the theater, visiting museums, attending religious activities, taking practical skills courses, playing in the park and other activities.

In the areas where averages are lower, mainly rural areas, the institutions specialized in providing cultural activities offer significantly different activities from one area to another. This reflects a reduced possibility to access those activities (from parents' side) aside from the possibility to propose them to children. Only the religious activities have a higher frequency in rural areas compared with urban areas.

Table 2
Results of inferential studies

	t	df	p	
Book reading	-1,011	258	,313	
Reading magazines	,517	258	,605	
Watching TV	,330	258	,742	
Watching rented movies	3,189	258	,002	
Going to cinema	2,769	258	,006	

Sports	3,157	258	,002	
Hiking	3,750	258	,000	
Gardening or fishing	-1,112	258	,267	
Organized activities	,572	258	,568	
Going out with friends	1,522	258	,129	
Going to parties	3,405	258	,001	
Attending entertaining shows	,973	258	,331	
Country music shows	-,148	258	,883	
Attending art galleries	2,885	258	,004	
Going to theatre	4,589	258	,000	
Going to museums	3,132	258	,002	
Listening to music	,611	258	,542	
Using the computer	,769	258	,443	
House holding activities	-1,194	258	,233	
Learning foreign languages	1,608	258	,109	
Attending religious activities	-4,259	258	,000	
Extra school activities	,925	258	,356	
Attending practical skills classes	3,803	258	,000	
Playing with friends	3,699	258	,000	
Other activities	6,614	258	,000	

Differences that are obtained due to mother's religion can be studied in Table3, which shows the averages for each activity. The tests for statistical inference show significant differences in the following:

- Watching TV (hi square = 37.872 at p = .000)
- Watching rented movies (hi square = 13.335 at p = .020)
- Gardening or fishing (hi square = 20.522 at p = .001)
- Take part in activities inside organizations (hi square = 19.509 at p = .002)
- Go to parties (hi square = 24.181 at p = .000)
- Going to entertainment shows (hi square = 16.144 at p = .006)
- Attending country music concerts (hi square = 23.952 at p = .000)
- Taking part in household activities (hi square = 31.939 at p = .000)
- Participating at religious activities (hi square = 32.141 at p = .000)
- Taking practical skills courses (hi square = 11.333 at p = .045).

Table 3

Averages for activities proposed to children, according to mothers' religion

	Books	Newspapers/ Magazines	TV Programs	Rented movies	Cinema
Orthodox	4,06	3,10	2,89	1,37	1,56
Catholic	3,87	2,93	2,93	1,40	1,60
Pentecostal	3,95	2,73	1,83	1,20	1,24
Baptist	4,45	2,73	2,27	1,27	1,45
Adventist	4,00	3,08	2,33	1,08	1,58
Reformed	4,25	2,75	2,50	2,50	1,00
	Sport	Hiking	Gardening	Organized activities	Meeting friends
Orthodox	3,49	3,61	2,10	2,38	3,21
Catholic	3,33	3,40	2,73	2,13	2,67
Pentecostal	3,46	3,59	2,34	3,02	2,76
Baptist	4,00	3,36	3,27	2,91	3,09
Adventist	3,25	3,17	2,83	3,42	3,42
Reformed	1,75	3,25	3,75	1,50	3,50
	Parties	Entertainment shows	Country music	Galleries	Theatre
Orthodox	2,58	2,61	2,10	2,63	2,59
Catholic	2,40	2,27	1,73	2,40	2,40
Pentecostal	1,76	1,88	1,29	2,68	2,10
Baptist	2,00	2,18	1,36	2,64	2,45
Adventist	1,75	2,08	1,50	2,17	1,92
Reformed	1,50	2,50	1,75	1,25	1,75
	Museum	Music	P.C.	Household activities	Foreign languages
Orthodox	2,65	3,19	3,15	2,85	4,02
Catholic	2,40	3,47	3,07	3,47	3,87
Pentecostal	2,46	3,05	3,10	3,63	3,78
Baptist	2,45	3,45	3,27	4,27	4,36
Adventist	2,25	3,75	3,00	3,17	3,33
Reformed	1,25	3,50	2,25	4,00	4,50
	Religious activities	Extra school	Practical classes	Playing	Others
Orthodox	3,73	3,58	3,05	3,64	1,55

Catholic	3,73	3,53	3,07	3,13	,80
Pentecostal	4,59	3,44	3,15	3,46	1,00
Baptist	4,45	3,45	3,36	3,27	1,91
Adventist	4,42	2,67	2,42	3,17	1,75
Reformed	3,75	2,50	1,00	2,75	1,00

Children's preferred activities

Obtaining an image, as close to the reality as possible implies studying the children's pick for extra activities aside from studying the activities proposed by parents. Regarding this matter, the activities preferred by children (thus obtaining a higher score) are playing in the park or the street with friends and use the computer. Other favorite activities are listening to music, hiking, meeting with friends, watching TV or carrying out religious activities. Least preferred activities are watching rented movies or going to cinema. Differences obtained depending on the type of activity are statistically at a threshold of $p < .001$, due to the value obtained for the inference test, at which $\chi^2 = 1977.401$ at $p = .000$.

Comparing the favorite activities, on rural and on urban environment, we can observe that some are more preferred in rural areas than in urban areas. Those are: hiking, gardening, organized activities, meeting friends, listening to country music, listening to music, using PC, attending religious activities and playing outside. In all other cases, children from urban areas get higher averages than children from rural areas.

Table 4

Averages of preferred activities in accordance with the environment

	Books	Newspapers/ Magazines	TV Programs	Rented movies	Cinema
Urban	2.93	2.96	3.84	1.81	1.77
Rural	2.86	2.69	3.71	1.44	1.61
	Sport	Hiking	Gardening	Organized activities	Meeting friends
Urban	3.61	3.72	2.19	2.33	3.54
Rural	3.17	3.76	2.24	2.54	3.69
	Parties	Entertainment shows	Country music	Galleries	Theatre

Urban	3.12	2.82	1.72	2.70	2.69
Rural	2.51	2.70	1.94	2.58	2.26
	Museum	Music	P.C.	Household activities	Foreign languages
Urban	2.86	3.75	4.04	2.72	3.64
Rural	2.61	3.82	4.07	2.65	3.44
	Religious activities	Extra school	Practical classes	Playing	Others
Urban	3.16	2.73	2.98	4.03	2.01
Rural	3.68	2.55	2.58	4.31	1.02

The tests for statistical inference show significant differences in the following:

- Watching rented movies: $t(258) = 2.848$ at $p = .005$
- Practicing a sport: $t(258) = 2.629$ at $p = .009$
- Attending parties: $t(258) = 3.472$ at $p = .001$
- Going to theaters: $t(258) = 2.717$ at $p = .007$
- Attending religious activities: $t(258) = -3.365$ at $p = .001$
- Playing in the park: $t(258) = -2.157$ at $p = .032$

Activities chosen by children

A large percentage of parents reported that they leave the choice of an activity to their children in "a large extent" (45.8%). They are followed by parents that they leave the choice of an activity to their children in "either in small or large extent" (27.7%) and those who respond in a "small extent" (15.4%). After calculating the significance of differences found between the frequency distributions we obtained hi square = 153.654 at $p = .000$, which shows that parent's answer varies widely depending on the type of answer.

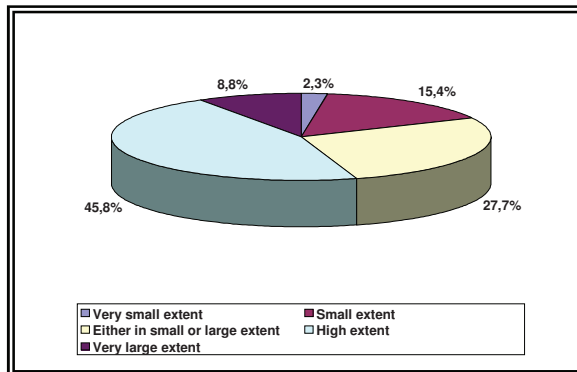


Figure 1 The amount of children's choice in choosing their free time activities

As the parents let children choose their leisure activities an average $m=3.43$ and a standard deviation $sd=0.93$ is obtained. Next we made comparisons between these averages and some socio-demographic variables. Thus, we can observe that parents from urban areas leave the choice for leisure time activities to their children with a higher average (average 3.57) than parents in rural areas (average 3, 33): $t(258) = 2.006$ at $p = .046$.

The mother's religion have a significant impact on the freedom that children have on choosing leisure time activities - $hi\ square = 19.738$ at $p = .001$.

The amount of satisfaction with the activities chosen by children, from parent's side

Taking in consideration the children's choice of leisure time activities, we find important the satisfaction of parents in this endeavor. Most parents (51.5%) are "highly" satisfied with the activities their children choose to spend leisure time in, as can be seen from the following figure. Very few parents are not happy with the choices of children "very little" (0.8%) and "small extent" (5.8%).

Testing whether the distribution of frequencies is significantly different, depending on the response of parents, we have $hi\ square=215.731$ at $p=.000$ showing that significantly more parents are satisfied with activities chosen by children.

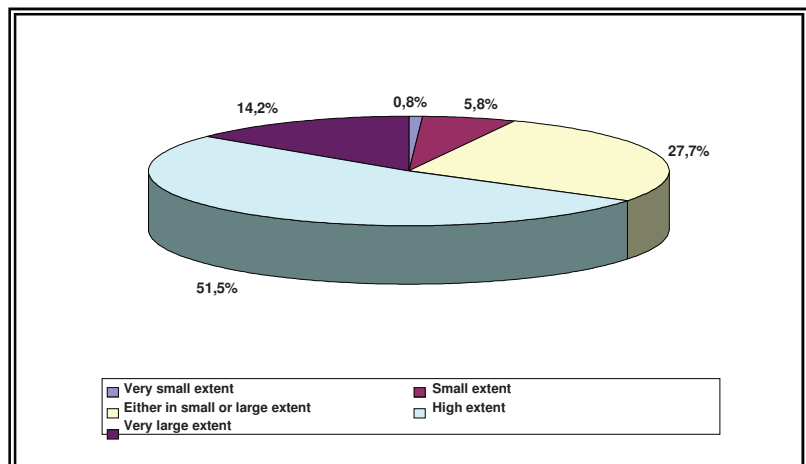


Figure 2 Parent's satisfaction with the children choice for leisure time activities

The average for parent's satisfaction with the children choice for leisure time activities is 3.73 (SD = 0.80). When variables such as environment, family values, religion, mother, child sex and number of children in the family were applied to the degree of satisfaction of parents regarding children's choice for leisure time activities no statistically significant differences were observed.

Conclusions

The most common activities proposed to children are: to read books (the books are intended mainly for stories, but there are also the families who propose specific reading encyclopedias or books with religious stories; in very few cases other genres are recommended), to learn a foreign language, participate in religious activities, hiking and extra school activities. The less commonly proposed activities are to watch rented movies or to go to the cinema. For all types of activities have different averages for families in urban and in rural areas. Thus, in rural areas some activities are proposed with a greater frequency than in urban areas, as follows: reading books, gardening, listen to country music, household activities and religious activities. The urban share is higher for computer use, TV, parties, performances, film screenings, etc. Activities with the highest frequency in children's choice, obtaining an average higher than 4 are: playing in the park or on the street with friends and use of the computer. Other favorite activities of children are listening to music, hiking, meeting friends, watching TV or carrying out religious activities. Children like the least to watch rented movies or go to the cinema. There is a fairly large discrepancy between the preferences of children and parents proposals. We believe that a better understanding of the real needs of children should lead to better connection between them, at least in terms of organization of cultural consumption and other educational and recreational activities. As it can be seen, both our hypotheses are confirmed, there is a significant difference between the activities proposed and those chosen. It is clear that a child will choose activities that refer to playing because they have between 7 and 11 years. But what is worrying is that parents do not seem to take in account the age factor, proposing with a much too big frequency, learning activities even in the spare time. What we did not approach, in this study is the children's satisfaction level, regarding the proposed activities and the efficiency of the proposed activities. This aspect can be the hypothesis of another study. Nevertheless the data obtained may be used, by parents, for raising their

awareness on the children's needs and adapt their approach to the real needs, thus maintaining a favorable climate for learning and development.

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