

# Habitus formation and perceived academic norms of Hungarian communication scholars

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**Abstract:** Communication education has a long history in most Western societies, but its development dates back only a few decades in Central and Eastern Europe. Taking Hungary as a case study, this paper investigates how young communication scholars perceive the quality of their education, the norms of their academic field and their future career prospects. Building on 15 semi-structured interviews, our study found that young Hungarian academics perceive severe contradictions within the field of communication studies and, most importantly, contradictions between international and regional habitus and norms. The perceived struggle between international and regional norms and habitus forms an ambivalent field in which family background, international mobility, financial circumstances and future career plans play a more crucial role in habitus formation than formal education.

**Keywords:** Communication education, field theory, academic capital, habitus, scholarly norms

## Introduction

The education of communication studies has a long history in the Western world (Pooley & Park, 2013), especially in the US (Simonson, Peck, Craig & Jackson, 2013), but there are several world regions where teaching communication as an academic discipline started only a few decades ago. In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the four decades of Soviet oppression made independent communication research impossible, thus scholarly research on communication and related fields, as well as the teaching of communication studies started only after the transition (Dobbins 2011; Dobbins & Kwiek, 2017). Hungary was one of the first CEE countries to develop university-level communication education, and since the late 1990s, Hungary has offered doctoral training in communication studies as well (Demeter & Horanyi, 2015). Thus, the Hungarian case is prototypical in the CEE world region because other CEE countries have followed a similar path of development (Perusko, 2013a; 2013b; Stetka, 2015).

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Building on semi-structured interviews with 15 junior Hungarian academics with communication related education and research focus, we analyzed the social characteristics of young communication scholars with specific emphasis on their family background, their doctoral education, the role of their supervisors and mentors, the development of their career, and their perceptions of regional and international academic expectations. The reports of young communication scholars are especially important in the CEE context, since this is the generation that first experienced the internationalization of the discipline on the one hand, but, on the other hand, their supervisors and training institutions are most likely represent a scholarly habitus that was developed before the transition (Dobbins & Knill, 2009). Thus, being in an intermediate state between old and new scholarly norms and values, our respondents can shed light on the transitional nature of communication research.

As a theoretical framework, we used Bourdieu's field theory (Bourdieu, 1988; 1996). With the field-theoretic concepts of habitus, norms, and capital, we analyzed and described the landscape of Hungarian communication education and communication research as it is perceived by junior scholars. Our findings reveal a complex picture of the field with several intersectional features shaping the character of Hungarian communication studies. We found that the maturity of the field is hindered by severe financial uncertainty, the lack of transparency, the low quality of PhD training, but our most important finding is that the field suffers from being in an ambivalent state, governed by contradictory norms. Junior scholars are subjected to both the local norms of informalities, activism, politicization, and the international norms of mobility and publication pressure. In this ambivalent state, communication education is generally inadequate to prepare young scholars for a successful academic career. Meanwhile, family background, the norms shared by the doctoral supervisor, and the requirements of their institutions are more important sources of professional habitus formation than formal education. However, the unpredictable nature of these latter sources of habitus destabilizes the careers of young scholars, since it is impossible to develop a long-term career plan without professionally mastered, stable, internal norms, and predictable external requirements.

### **Academic habitus and academic capital in doctoral training**

In the context of higher education (HE), a growing body of research addresses the experiences of young researchers entering an academic career (Dany, Louvel & Valette, 2011; Gopaul & Pifer, 2018; Haider et al., 2018; Ivemark & Ambrose, 2021; Kyriakou et al., 2018). Studies present the young researchers' experience from different perspectives, examine students' backgrounds and their study motives and experiences (Andrew et al., 2020; Nori, Peura & Jauhiainen, 2020; Walker and Yoon 2016); PhD students' expectations and realities experienced during their studies (Pretorius and Macaulay 2021); academic culture in the PhD process (Santos & Patrício, 2020); or the intergenerational divide between younger and older academic generations (Kwiek, 2017).

More specifically, the Bourdieusian framework (Bourdieu, 1988; 2004) is used to highlight the academic environment and agents' practices in the field of academia (Demeter 2018; Gopaul 2015; Nori, Peura & Jauhiainen 2020; Pretorius & Macaulay 2021; Rothenberger, Auer & Pratt 2016; Walker & Yoon 2016). According to Bourdieu, science can be considered as a specific social game which scholars play in accordance with well-established norms that should be internalized in the form of an appropriate habitus (Bourdieu, 1998; 2004). The behavior of young researchers in the field is based on norms that become a determining element of their habitus during family, school and workplace socialization. In Bourdieu's theoretical framework, the norms are seldom mentioned, but, as Rothenberger et al. (2017) concluded, the importance of norms can be explained with the help of the concepts of the field, habitus and

capital. The essence of norms is to regulate behavior, so they function as moral prescriptions and as justification for the actions of social agents.

There are two related concepts in the field-theoretical tradition that can help understand the role of norms in education, namely “doxa” and “illusion”, from which doxa is almost identical in meaning with norms (Nguyen, 2019). Doxa consists of the “rules of the game” that are “set by those dominant in the field and tacitly accepted by the individuals active within the field” (Pretorius & Macaulay, 2019, p. 626), in our case, in the Academia. In return, illusion is defined as “an individual’s understanding of how to navigate the practices in a specific field which is dependent on an individual’s agency” (Pretorius & Macaulay, 2019, p. 626). As related to the habitus, we can roughly say that illusion can be considered as a conscious part of the habitus as, according to Bourdieu, one’s habitus is mostly unconscious in itself, we can face only its manifestations by different kinds of acts, communication and perspectives. Accordingly, this present study uses the concept of norms in line with the concept of doxa, while *illuio* is not discussed in itself, but only as the realized part of students’ habitus.

For Bourdieu, habitus is the scheme of perception, thinking, and action that creates individual and collective practices (Bourdieu, 1977), through which people deal with the social world (Atkin, 2000). In other words, habitus is a sense of how to play or to have a feel for the game (Hadas, 2019; Rothenberger et al., 2017) on the field and remains unreflected as long as the behavioral strategy promises success. According to Demeter’s analysis (2018), the most important habitus related to early career researchers are publication habits, proper conduct, cooperation skills, and networking. In the Bourdieusian framework, habitus is both inherited from the social background of the agents and acquired through education and the professional environment (Bourdieu, 1996).

In each case, habitus is interiorized through the accumulation of different types of capital (Fáber, 2017; Hadas, 2001). Each specific kind of capital is the extension of the economic sense of capital, since Bourdieu’s purpose was to “extend the sense of the term ‘capital’ by employing it in a wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks or circuits within and across different fields” (Demeter, 2019, pp. 98–99). For example, several authors name the importance of language capital, which Yosso (2005) considers to be decisive. In addition to a high level of knowledge of a foreign language (primarily English), knowledge of Anglo-Saxon rhetoric and academic writing skills also constitute parts of the language capital. As Lauf (2005) and Demeter (2018b) point out, international discussions are almost exclusively open only to those researchers who present their findings in English. There are some exceptions, but researchers speaking or writing in other (national) languages can expect a significantly lower international recognition (Lauf, 2005; Liu et al., 2018).

In addition to the abovementioned types of capital that are characteristic of higher education and the field of academia in general, we consider a specific kind of capital, namely supervisory capital that applies mostly to PhD students. Research proves that the doctoral supervisor plays a prominent role (Baird, 1995; Carpenter, Makhadmeh, & Thornton, 2015) in the knowledge, experiences and relationships that doctoral students acquire during their studies and whether they ultimately complete their course of study (Devos et al., 2015) as well as what academic or scientific performance they deliver (Jairam & Kahl, 2012). Paglis et al. (2006) pointed out that the quality of a supervisor’s work has a direct impact on doctoral students’ research productivity, career commitment, and self-efficacy. Mackinnon (2004) highlighted the fiduciary nature of the student-supervisor relationship in research supervision. This assists candidates with socialization, cultural indoctrination, and other aspects of knowledge that enable them to survive and prosper in academia (Halsse & Malfroy, 2009; Jones, 2013).

## **Hungarian communication education**

Communication studies are politically sensitive disciplines that need a freedom of communication and an academic autonomy, both of which were very limited during state socialism. Therefore, CEE communication scholarship is still a consolidating field (Perusko, 2013a; 2013b) in terms of both communication education, communication research, and its academic institutionalization (Stetka, 2015). Szabó (2021) provided a detailed analysis on the history of Hungarian communication research where she emphasized the paradoxical state of the discipline. On the one hand, communication has become one of the most popular fields of study where many university departments see especially high application rates. On the other hand, “the embeddedness of the discipline is still considerably low in both the national and international academic community” (Szabó, 2021, p. 97). The Hungarian Communication Studies Association has no official relationship with the related international associations such as the International Communication Association (ICA) or the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), and the international visibility of Hungarian communication scholars is very low (Demeter, 2020).

On the level of university curricula, there is no general recommendation for communication studies in Hungary, and different universities emphasize different issues within communication scholarship. In most cases, communication studies are, even on a departmental level, closely connected with more established research fields such as political science, sociology, social psychology, linguistics, or rhetoric (Szabó, 2021). Specifically, on a doctoral level, the first PhD degrees in communication were awarded in linguistics at the University of Pécs where, within the Doctoral School of Linguistics, a communication subprogram was launched in 1997. Therefore, PhD degrees in communication were awarded from the mid-2000s. Until recently, all communication doctoral programs were held in Hungarian, and publishing in internationally recognized journals was not mandatory. Nowadays a doctorate in communication can be obtained solely at Corvinus University’s Social Communication PhD School where, since 2020, English is the language of training.

However, even this program can be completed without international peer-reviewed publications as the accepted journal list of the PhD school contains many Hungarian journals. Because the doctoral school of communication has limited space, many Hungarian communication scholars have a PhD in closely related fields such as political science or sociology (Demeter & Horányi, 2015).

## **Data and Method**

The study is based on 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews with junior Hungarian academics (who have acquired their PhD within the last ten years) to investigate the perceived norms, the appropriate academic habitus, and the most useful types of academic capital within their academic environment. All respondents are either PhD students in communication in a related field, or already have a doctorate. The interviews were carried out between January 2019 and February, 2020. We conducted semi-structural interviews to reach a deep knowledge from respondents’ lived experience, attitudes, and perspectives (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012) and to find meaningful patterns from the detailed descriptions offered by our interviewees (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). We used purposive maximum variety sampling (Patton, 2002) where participants were selected to reflect an appropriate level of diversity in information-rich cases relevant to our research focus: different subdisciplines, different family backgrounds, different levels of seniority, and different genders (see Table 1).

*Table 1 Sample description*

<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Subject of PhD studies</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Highest degree of the mother</i>	<i>Highest degree of the father</i>	<i>Seniority</i>	<i>Current employment</i>
P1	communication	39	female	high school diploma	elementary school	PhD student	non academic
P2	political communication	42	male	skilled worker certificate	skilled worker certificate	PhD	academic
P3	communication	39	female	high school diploma	skilled worker certificate	PhD student	non academic
P4	political communication	33	male	MD	MD	PhD	academic
P5	communication	40	male	skilled worker certificate	skilled worker certificate	PhD student	non academic
P6	communication	37	male	MA	PhD	PhD	academic & non academic
P7	communication	32	female	MA	MD	PhD student	non academic
P8	sociology	32	male	MA	MA	PhD	non academic
P9	communication	33	female	MA	MA	PhD student	non academic
P10	political science	42	male	high school diploma	high school diploma	PhD	academic
P11	sociology	28	female	MA	MA	PhD student	academic
P12	sociology	44	female	MA	MA	PhD	academic
P13	history	44	male	high school diploma	MA	PhD	academic
P14	critical geography	38	male	MA	PhD	PhD student	academic
P15	communication	48	female	high school diploma	high school diploma	PhD	academic

The confidentiality of respondents was guaranteed. The interviews (conducted by the authors) lasted between 45 and 90 minutes on average, 12 in person and 3 by Skype. The schedule of the interview was divided into three parts: in the first part, we asked questions about the respondent's family background, then about their education and career path, and finally about their academic habitus. Interviewees were also encouraged to speak about connected areas.

The sample is a non-traditional group of communication students and researchers, in the sense that—as is very common in the Hungarian academic environment—most of our interviewees did not start their PhD studies immediately after graduation (Andrew et al. 2020). Several of them are first-generation intellectuals from low socio-economic status families with

significant capital deficits (Thomas & Quinn, 2007). Not all of the interviewees work in the academic sphere, some of them have left the academic profession and some have not been able to gain access into the (national) higher education or research network. Due to this, they are older and more experienced (than the traditional students and researchers) and many of them are building alternative careers, which significantly influences their behavior in the academic field. These circumstances, as we will highlight in the results section, affect both their motivations and academic habitus.

### **Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)**

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim following the transcription rules proposed by Dresing et al. (2015). We carried out a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis using Atlas.ti, in which we combined inductive and deductive principles. Two authors individually analyzed the same raw material, one using an inductive approach, while the other used a theory-driven coding system. With this parallel analysis, we stayed open to what the data told about using an inductive approach (to be as close to our sources as possible), but with respect to our field-theoretical approach, we had some previous concepts such as norms, habitus, and capital that are central to take as a starting point for our analysis. At the end of the process, we discussed the results, obtained consensus, and provided carefully selected quotations to illustrate our findings.

We coded the text in Atlas.ti, which means that it attached labels to segments of data so as to find the most important themes and general patterns. After systematic coding, we generated categories and subcategories, and developed conceptual maps based on this data. With category development, we reduced and summarized the information from the material and compared it with our theory-driven coding system. Finally, we summarized the material into a combined code system.

### **Findings**

The most general finding of our research is that the field suffers in an ambivalent position that has consequences to all the analyzed levels. As Table 2 shows, the main discrepancy can be found between the local and international fields that has an influence on capital accumulation, on norms and also on severe differences in academic habitus. Our analyzed junior scholars tend to direct themselves – or, in other words, they are directed by different factors – towards either the local or the international field, but a “common” academic field that contains most norms from each field does not exist. As illustrated on Table 2, results point to several oppositions between shared norms, ways of capital accumulation and habitus that divide the Hungarian academic field, constituting an ambivalent state where local and international cultures are relatively separated.

*Table 2 The ambivalent field of Hungarian communication studies*

LOCAL FIELD	INTERNATIONAL FIELD
<b>CAPITAL LEVEL</b>	
Family, social and cultural capital	
Students with less cultural capital	Cultural capital with role models
Low mobility	Childhood mobility
Post-communist legacy of informalities	Familiarity with international norms
Less criticism	More critical attitude
Adapt to authorities	Anti-establishment
Education and academic capital	
Dependent on formal education	Professional experience beyond formal education
Tied to local knowledge	Familiarity with international standards
Supervisor with local habitus	Supervisor with international or multiple habitus
Economic capital	
Dependent on salary	Background support
Needs multiple jobs	More focus on academic work
Low mobility	Mobility
<b>NORMS LEVEL</b>	
Informalities	Competition
“shadow academia”	Transparency
Careers depend on authorities	Plannable career trajectories
Assessment depends on authorities	Exact assessment
Following post-Soviet legacies	Following international frameworks
<b>HABITUS LEVEL</b>	
Compromise	Criticize
Prudence	Open communication
To integrate into the existing conditions	Changing the establishment
Settle in Hungary	Move abroad
<b>AMBIVALENT FIELD – CONFLICT LEVEL</b>	

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younger generation - older generation  
 regional norms - international norms  
 publishing in English - publishing in local languages  
 dependent on academic salary – relatively independent

## Discussion

### *Family norms*

Family is a place for the accumulation and transmission of capital in various forms, thus it plays a decisive role in maintaining social order (Bourdieu, 1996). For example, student performance partly results from the transmission of cultural capital, using reconversion strategies derived from family stratification. Research confirms that family background plays an important role in applying for doctoral school: scholars found that “(...) the influence of the childhood family extends all the way to doctoral education.” (Nori, Peura, & Jauhiainen 2020, p. 518).

Based on our analysis, in the case of first-generation intellectuals, family background is more of a hindrance to education and research. The feeling of social backwardness becomes even stronger in an international environment, while the desire to mobilize is a very strong internal motivating force. As they have not encountered the patterns of behavior defined by international academic standards at home or during their previous studies, they master the rules of the HE space much later and might feel inferior to their middle- or upper-class peers:

“I’m surrounded by horribly smart boys and girls, but they seem to have decided that [they would become academics] somewhere around the age of 16. I don’t really meet anyone who didn’t come from a family where they are aware of what being an academic means from the start, and that’s how they consciously begin and push, push, push consistently, without being distracted by anything, such as activism of some sort, and that’s how they goes forward. And I’m surrounded by a lot of peers with such a terribly spectacular career, which is partly frustrating to see academics five to six or seven years younger have such publication lists and academic success that are amazing.” (P2)

For researchers from an intellectual family, further learning means the enthusiastic pursuit of family good practices, parental roles, or meeting family expectations. If a young person only ever sees her parents with a book in their hands, “it certainly contributes to her becoming a book-devouring, science-loving person” (P4). Learning can appear “as an expectation, a compulsion that must be met under family pressure” (P9).

Researchers with an intellectual parental background generally love to learn, and know how to study, but they enter the HE arena with higher expectations and a more critical approach as well. For those who are first-generation intellectuals, the need to understand and shape their own social reality were also reported as being a fundamental norm, and they felt it more difficult to adapt to academia and are therefore usually less critical.

### *Doctoral school norms*

It is in doctoral school, at the latest, that young researchers will begin to become familiar with the norms and values that control the academic field and define researchers’ habitus. However, the norms conveyed by Hungarian doctoral schools are often not in line with those experienced



in the international field. Interviewees see that doctoral schools continue to place too much emphasis on teaching, on attending university classes, and on meeting exam requirements. University faculty and students alike are overwhelmed. The requirements do not focus on research, publishing, and the importance of national and international cooperation. As well, doctoral schools do not properly define research habitus (publishing, receiving scholarships, and attending conferences):

“The approach does not require any publication of the activity performed by the students, from their field of research being published, from time to time.” (P7)

Young researchers who enter doctoral school with strong academic capital, who are familiar with international norms, and have strong academic motivations tend to question and override the norms of the doctoral school, and might even distinguish themselves from their senior colleagues, including their professors in the PhD school. The international competition in research is obvious to young researchers who have been working in academia for a few years, but for older generations, who are already high on the career ladder, the international dimension of research is largely absent—part of the legacy of the communist regime (Kwiek, 2017). As one of our interviewees explained:

“In doctoral school, I tried to publish articles in international journals, but there was zero support from my supervisors. They didn’t have international publications and they have a very modest international impact. [...] Even if they had wanted to, they couldn’t have helped with publishing.” (P6)

### *HEI norms*

The norms in the third group, those required by the HE arena, were mentioned most often as these are the most important standards from a career perspective for young researchers. As Hungary became part of the European Research Area more than 20 years ago, research and HE activities are evaluated not only on a national but on an international scale as well.

According to the interviewees, the norms of recruitment, professional development, designability, competitiveness, transparency, scientific goals, methods, and quality are unclear and thus do not show convergence with international standards.

“The Soviet-style academic system is still in force throughout the region. Even now, I don’t really see us getting closer to international standards.” (P6)

Researchers are personally interested in research as a source of revenue. As one of our respondents put it more cynically, “I know what can make money, let’s look at an area where the EU is giving a lot of money now.” (P6) The publication quality expectations of international journals force researchers to build their research on robust empirical evidence and an internationally recognized theory. However, the know-how to conduct research of that kind “does not necessarily exist or does not exist for everyone in Eastern Europe or Hungary.” (P2) While our respondents reported that the recruitment of researchers in universities and research institutes is organized along the logic of informalities, while criteria of scientific excellence are pushed into the background (Havas & Faber, 2020), the international field expects scientific excellence based on fundamental principles of research integrity and internationally recognized publications. International and some national forums such as the European Commission’s ERC or the Hungarian research excellence program called *Lendület* (Momentum) require international research excellence. Applications cannot be submitted without completing such

an impact assessment. However, Hungarian social scientists and communication scholars in higher academic positions might have a low international publication output (Tóth & Demeter, 2021). The issue of performance appraisal is a hot topic for our respondents. Most of them say that domestic academic and HE career paths are not competitive and not transparent. One of the young researchers concludes:

“I have seen plenty of colleagues hired in the meantime who have been hired as associate professors without the required five years of experience or international publications. No one looks at this, everyone interprets these rules in a way that suits them... If, say, you compete for a job and one is backed by X and the other by Y, then the competition is between the influence of X and Y. You are such a contribution.” (P6)

### *Habitus formation*

According to Moore (2013), symbolic capital and habitus are closely interrelated and, in some contexts, even interchangeable. The formation of habitus and the acquisition of symbolic capital are the same processes from different perspectives. In this part of our analysis, we divide the interviewees’ reflections on the rules of the game in academia into two parts: we first summarize the information that surfaced in the context of their general research habitus, then explore issues of publication habitus. By the former, we mean how young researchers find the guiding principles and practices of acting as researchers, the key to making a living in the academic field. Then we show how they relate to academic writing as a necessary scholarly activity, according to how and for what purposes they think about publishing, and which of their writing practices are reported on.

To understand the development of our respondents’ academic habitus, we should emphasize that, for many of them, their career choice was entirely contingent. There are only a few who knew from the beginning that they wanted to get a PhD degree. During their studies, many of them realized that this was viable, or indeed an attractive career path for them in an intellectual (but not in an economic) sense. One of the interviewees was under pressure by their family to build a scientific career, while others were encouraged to get a PhD degree by their close relatives or their classmates. Some researchers had a full-fledged confrontation with low family expectations, “What I may have mentioned, it was the family background. There was a conflict, and I felt like I would be someone if I get a PhD” (P9), while other’s goals reflected the desire to prove that they are able to achieve: “The basic mood of my family has always been that every one of us is stupid.” (P15)

Hungarian social scientists are typically forced to have several sources of income, thus, in addition to their academic career, they typically also build up an alternative career. They are forced to do so either by the financial conditions or by the fact that they have not yet gained an academic job status.

“I need a doctorate as another alternative in my life to have diversified opportunities.” (P1)

“Science is a very exciting field, but to practice as a freelancer, doing it like a clown—I don’t know if I want to do that.” (P4)

“I don’t want a position, I want a job, so I want to work for a salary.” (P5)

Some scientists are driven by other ambitions such as political activity, activism, the pursuit of social good and, of course, those are some who want to gain relevant work experience before becoming fully committed to a scientific career or gain a stable (well-paying) position and earn recognition for themselves. Others want to keep their opportunities open to the market.

“I’m a private tutor, I deal with that. I am a private teacher and I give coaching sessions via Skype.” (P5)

“I’m a programmer designing and developing medical applications.” (P9)

Overall, we found a lot of frustration, a lot of financial and time pressure on young researchers while they fritter their talents away working on many underpaid or unpaid activities. They were frustrated and realized that they saw bad models around them which could not rival international academic expectations, while their career prosperity in the Hungarian academic field is not related to meeting international standards.

Based on their testimonies, the key to prosperity in a Hungarian context is, firstly, the system of relationships that trumps qualifications for employment; secondly, fitting into the dominant political direction (compliance, reliability); and thirdly, access to financial resources (through grants) for oneself. However, no one is taught how to obtain funding, not even in doctoral schools.

“What I see is that there is a centralized management clique, so if you get on well with them, you can get a job as a teacher or a researcher. If not, it’s hard to join.” (P5)

Some interviewees gave a sad summary of their experience in terms of career progress:

“In Hungary, you can easily work your way up to the position of an associate professor through servility and networking, without any effort at all. All it takes is medium-level HR skills. [...] Normally, I would imagine the faculty of an institution of higher education to be a group of people who are selected, committed, talented, and who can speak foreign languages.” (P8)

As a summary of their pessimistic experiences in Hungarian academia, 7 of our 15 junior respondents expressed the motto: “Abroad, abroad, abroad!”

### *Research and teaching*

Indirect statements of the interviewees showed that the following personal qualities and habitus support academic well-being: initiative habitus, independence, practicality, self-confidence, passion, enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and perseverance. Most typically, a personal and unconditional commitment to research and teaching was considered as a necessary precondition of staying on the academic track: it should be part of the habitus. Our respondents said that, for them, doing research and developing their knowledge is a source of joy. However, they also mentioned that teaching activities are undervalued, even though one of the main purposes of universities is to educate. Most interviewees considered teaching as a chore: something obligatory, unpopular, not valued or rewarded, but rather demanding and burdensome. Only a few respondents had had the ambition of a teaching career at the beginning of their university studies, and, in the context of teaching, the power motif was raised as well.

“Education is a position of power. Only this is not seen or used by many people. So the fact that you have students, that you make pedagogy out of it, that you are in a position that you have to be listened to by them because you are the teacher, that’s power. You produce your (own) audience.” (P14)

### *Academic writing*

Since publication constitutes one of the most important parts of academic capital, a proficiency in writing high-level research papers is a necessary part of academic habitus (Demeter, 2018). As far as academic writing skills are concerned, there was a broad consensus among our respondents that there are fundamental shortcomings in doctoral schools: they do not prepare students to produce high-quality publications. Except for one respondent, all interviewees confessed that their doctoral schools did not teach academic writing at all, there were no forums where manuscripts for publication could be discussed with the participation of professional audiences. The importance and practice of manuscript discussions were mentioned by those two interviewees who were working in research institutions, and not at universities. Co-authored articles and writer collaborations with a supervisor were also not typical. They also reported that peer-to-peer author relationships are not supported by the publication scoring system or their organizational (academic or educational) culture.

“It may be a co-authored article, but then it isn’t worth the full points, I think that’s a problem. So it does not inspire students to work together, to collaborate. (P3)

The publishing paths are formed along the knowledge gathered from here and there from private diligence. There are only a few PhD candidates who publish with their supervisor (also), their mentor provides professional and active support for academic writing. When listing the reasons for the low international visibility of Hungarian researchers, respondents cited such arguments as low self-confidence in writing, lack of necessary skills, lack of time, and the protracted review processes. They also argued that academic publishing has become a mass production process and that publication activity is not the only yardstick for measuring excellence.

### *Accumulation of Academic Capital*

In the field-theoretic framework, we should examine what kind of investments characterize the agents’ behavior in the field (Hadas, 2001), what types of capital acquisition and accumulation can lead to a dominant position (Bourdieu, 1988), so which kinds of capital are legitimate (Fáber, 2017) in the scientific field (Demeter, 2018a). Listening to the interviewees’ reports of their family backgrounds, doctoral studies, and the publication dimension of their scientific work, we concluded that Bourdieu’s basic capital types should be supplemented with further different capital dimensions. Eddy (2006) distinguished between three types of academic capital that arise within the academic sphere and that are closely related to scientific activity, namely publication, teaching, and networking capital. Demeter (2018a) distinguishes between economic, social, symbolic, and academic capital. Many types of capital were accumulated outside the scientific field, but identity capital (Tomlinson, 2017) is typically accumulated through studies. The common characteristics of these complementary types of capital are that they help candidates complete their studies successfully and become social scientists (in terms of their personal or professional identity, i.e. not from the perspective of how someone can obtain a job, especially an academic full-time job). In the following sections, we review

different types of capital that other theorists have discussed in the context of higher education and research.

*English, mobility and internationalization*

In several cases, our interviewees themselves reflected on the English language as a form of academic capital. The candidate who was proficient in English interpreted this as a significant advantage in terms of access to international literature, joining current scientific flows/tendencies. But as he points out/mentions, his senior colleagues and superiors take a dim view of this, as they cannot boast either international accolades or ambitions. (P14)

“At our department, standards were so low that faculty were not even aware of the international literature; they didn’t read it and didn’t know what was in it (in the international science discourse).” (P14)

“With really dusty thoughts, without knowledge of a foreign language, people are sitting there (I mean at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), I don’t know, I think science is an international discourse and as much as it can be international.” (P4)

Although it does not appear in Yosso’s system, mobility capital is closely related to language competencies and language capital. Exit from the national framework is a goal and a measure of value in the reports of many interviewees, a hallmark of scientific quality. In line with the conclusions of other theorists (Asheulova & Dushina, 2014; Aksnes et al., 2013, Demeter, 2018), young social scientists also see that mobility increases their chances in the academic field and opens up new career prospects.

“I never wanted to go abroad, but somehow I felt like I would be able to bring home so much more of such innovative thoughts that I would then be able to use here in the ‘revolution’.” (P2)

“I was very inspired by my years abroad. So I lived in Italy for one year during my master’s degree, I spent two years in Krakow during my religion study, and there I was surrounded by an extremely inspiring, quasi-American environment at Jagiellonian University. So I saw a very different kind of making/cultivating science than people do at Hungary in their praxis anyway.” (P4)

At the same time, several respondents interpreted entering the international scene (moving abroad) as an escape or a desire to flee—an indication of how difficult it is for talented Hungarian researchers to thrive and gain recognition in their native country.

“I don’t want to get out from Hungary, but in Hungary mediocrity will always be in the favored position [...] That’s why I’m suffocating here [...] I don’t know of anyone who is a high-quality professional and who doesn’t want to run away from here.” (P8)

There were also those for whom the first study trip (summer university) gave the initial impetus, as they had not previously received any encouragement or guidance on how to look at and enter the international scientific field.

“That summer university gave me the motivation to sit down and finalize my PhD. And then when I came home, the world opened up, as I realized that I can go abroad for conferences, but until now, no one had ever told me that.” (P10)

### *Networking*

Most of the interviewees claimed that their doctoral school had not even prepared them for the most fundamental publication challenges, let alone teach them how to building contacts and join a research network. Just as doctoral training programs fail to teach students how to obtain research funding, they also fail to accumulation of social capital and networking. None of these topics are on the agenda, so doctoral students often come face-to-face with these shortcomings for the first time when they participate in part-time study abroad, win a scholarship, or meet foreign supervisors.

Networking and looking for collaborations are lucrative investments that pay off as co-authorships and citations, so they are sources of academic capital. (Coccia & Bozemann, 2016; Henriksen, 2018; Ronda-Pupo & Katz, 2018). First, their international forms—linked to the linguistics capital—mean significant capital sources, although, for the time being, even domestic and institutional collaborations and co-authorships are in their infancy and based on little researcher awareness in Hungary. Hungarian university culture and evaluation system of publications are unfortunately not conducive to collegial collaborations.

“I want to publish with someone because I think the time for publishing alone has expired. [...] Well, it would be so good to put together the knowledge in my head with someone else from another point of view! I want it terribly and then it could motivate me. I would be very motivated/inspired if I didn’t have to work alone.” (P15)

The above quotes illustrate well that even if young researchers are/were open to professional collaborations, the science metrics are not favorable for cooperations. Because of this, they also miss out on publication points and the emotional benefits of possible collegial support. The private counterpart of social (academic) capital could be the familial capital, which provides emotional and practical support and helps doctoral students cope with challenges, difficult situations, and with the pressure they have on them. (Yosso, 2005). However, several respondents lack these advantages: one of the reasons is that their parents are often non-graduates and do not even know the challenges of graduate and doctoral studies. In contrast, we also find researchers with stable family backgrounds, including multi-generation intellectuals, who received financial support, intellectual guidance, emotional and motivational aid from their parents or their relatives.

### *Supervision*

Jones’s (2013) research covers 40 years of academic articles, in which six key themes of supervision were discussed: preparation for teaching, doctoral program design, employment and career opportunities, writing and research, the student/supervisor relationship and doctoral student experience. In the capital dimensions of those areas covered by Jones’s conceptualization, our participants emphasized the importance of their supervisors.

“Participation in all of the existing researches or working groups was possible because my supervisor involved me in them.” (P3)

Overall, respondents saw their supervisors as representatives of a different type of school, who can only provide support within their own (old) system within an institution or in Hungarian academic life. Most supervisors do not have any appreciable international publication performance, experience, or knowledge to pass on. Because of this, it is not uncommon that young researchers change supervisors (sometimes also research topics) or, in a radical case,

their doctoral school, or leave the research career for a long time. According to the testimonies of our respondents—and in line with Havas and Fáber's (2020) observation—the supervisor's social networks represent the largest capital.

“My supervisor is not a great theoretical expert either, but he has ideas and connections.” (P11)

“My professor asked my current head of department for a conversation with me and advised me to bring a CV and a list of publications, but they never looked at them. I printed them out and took them with me, but I don't think they ever looked at them.” (P6)

### *Economic capital*

Economic capital is the root of all other types of capital and often acts as a substitute for other forms. In Hungarian terms, however, this is perhaps the most common deficit in doctoral studies. Even candidates who live in good financial conditions, come from an intellectual family, and have opportunities to study abroad reported that it was a kind of “grace period” for them when they won a scholarship and obtained financial resources. The amount of the doctoral scholarship is so low that it in itself predicts the years of deprivation for someone who has no other income a solid financial base (either in the form of parental support or civic employment).

“Without these supports (e. g. László Sólyom Scholarship), it is certain that I could not have finalized my dissertation.” (P4)

The Hungarian scholarship system only provided more favorable learning conditions for the Hungarian doctoral student coming from abroad (from the territory of the former Yugoslavia). For Hungarian students, international partial scholarships are not a sufficient source either, they only accept travelling by obtaining full scholarships. (Since they have no savings to supplement the cash benefit.)

“Scholarships in the social sciences, well, they either don't exist or I don't know about them.” (P5)

At the same time, the key to professional advancement is the acquisition of financial (and, of course, reputational) resources:

“I can only get into the next salary class, when I win a tender in 5 million Hungarian Forint value at least.” (P7)

“I have to produce high-quality results for my international ambitions without having the necessary financial or institutional conditions.” (P8)

“I should have held six or seven courses for free as a PhD student and then I insisted that I was not going to work without a salary and then we got into a fight, I just don't know why.” (P14)

## **Conclusions**

Based on our results we can conclude that social sciences, including communication studies, are in a constant struggle in Hungary that is a consequence of an “ambivalent field” in which contradictory norms and, consequently, different academic agents with contradictory habitus coexist. The first tension can be found between scholars from an intellectual background and

young academics from working class families. This tension that entails differences in economic, social and cultural capital, also intersects with the second tension between younger and older generations of scholars. Third, the most general tension that entails the former two is characterized by the differences between the norms of the international scholarly community and the legacy of the post-communist norms of the CEE academia. As our explanatory model (Table 2) indicates, it is hard to follow both international and regional norms that are significantly different from each other and, according to our respondents, do not even seem to converge.

International norms are typically held by academics who are younger and are from families with a considerable academic capital. These young scholars are more critical, not only of local education, the quality of their doctoral supervision, research assessment, and recruitment processes, but also of the regional academic culture as it is. As they are most likely familiar with international norms and fluent in English, they might leave the region and try to develop a career abroad. Their conception of excellence radically differs from the reality of the Soviet-style Hungarian academia where informal networks that constitute a specific kind of social capital are more important than meeting any formal criteria. For scholars from working class families and thus with less social, cultural, academic, and economic capital, international norms can be more intimidating, as they neither encountered them through their non-academic social relations, nor were they taught international standards through formal education. Thus, being less familiar with academic norms outside the regional context, they are usually less critical of academic authorities and might tend to conform to domestic norms. Moreover, as it is very hard to make a living from an job in Hungarian academia, only scholars with a financially supportive background can afford to focus entirely on their academic work, which draws another dividing line between “fully involved” and “part-time” academics.

As our respondents confessed, the main problem with this ambivalent field is that it makes it very hard to develop a long-time career plan, since an academic career in communication studies and related disciplines depends more on social connections within and beyond the family and on informal relations with authority figures than on any formal, written and transparent criteria. The final outcome of the constant struggle between international norms and local informalities cannot be predicted since young upper-class scholars with more academic capital who, in theory, would be able to change the rule of informalities by confronting them with international standards are instead trying to leave the country in the hope that the habitus they represent fits better with the norms of Western institutions. In the meantime, less mobile young scholars, typically those with less academic capital, might adapt to the local norms because otherwise they remain to be part of a minority of scholars that criticize the local academic establishment and thus they would have limited career prospects. Unfortunately, our respondents’ testimonies show that formal communication education is currently not suitable to prepare young doctoral students for an academic career that meets both national and international standards, since demarcation lines between those standards are present even at the level of doctoral education.

Our results have several implications to the scholarly discussion on the Bourdieusian approach to higher education in general, and to field-theoretical studies on doctoral training in particular. First, our results contribute to a relatively new direction within the Bourdieusian framework that deals with the analysis of multiple or plural habitus (Hadas, 2022). Our results support Hadas’s observation by which through the change of social structures, habitus change correspondingly, and thus they can be become plural. It implies that, in theory, academic context can help to develop and also to maintain different habitus implementations. In our case, students that adopt international habitus through education can develop a local habitus simultaneously, and the opposite direction is also possible. Further studies should address the question of the plural habitus of postdocs and junior researchers through deep interviews with



scholars educated abroad. Second, our study implies that it is essentially important to measure scholars' habitus and shared norms when addressing policy issues in higher education. Internationalization can be a legitimate aim for higher education policy and it is especially important in the case of smaller countries where the number of national students constantly decreases. However, these policies cannot be imported from Western cultures without addressing intercultural differences in education and training.

### Limitations

Our research have several limitations that should be stated. First, the limited number of respondents makes it harder to abstract more general assumptions. However, the number of young Hungarian communication scholars is relatively small, thus future research might consider scholars from a bulk of related disciplines such as political science, cultural studies or even psychology. Second, we considered only a limited set of Bourdieusian concepts and mostly focused on habitus and capital. Future analysis should extend our model by involving other related field-theoretical concepts such as *Illusio* or *Doxa*. Finally, our research is based on interviews, and, as a consequence, the results are not representative for young Hungarian communication studies. Future research should extend the analysis by other methodological approaches such as surveys and focus groups, and even scientometric analysis on the research performance of the analyzed scholars can contribute to our knowledge on the habitus of junior communication scholars.

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