Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

0513

Tue 07 Dec 2021

17:00 - 17:20

Doctoral Socialization in Time of Pandemic: Reproduction of Inequality in the New Social Field

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Research Domain: Postgraduate Scholarship and Practice (PGSP)

Abstract: Bourdieu argued that the education system reproduces inequality; in light of the recent and unprecedented changes in our lives in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, doctoral programs need to continue to meet the needs of all students and allow successful socialization of the contemporary student population. This scholarly paper uses Bourdieu's conceptual tools to examine the new *field* of doctoral education in the wake of the pandemic restrictions, based on a combination of literature review and preliminary results from student interviews undertaken as part of a doctoral research project. Bourdieu's tools indicate a cumulative advantage for those already occupying more advantageous positions due to pre-existing holdings of valued *capital.* Many contemporary students face the same barriers to participation as they did prior to the pandemic adaptations, preventing them from acquiring necessary capital to enhance their position, furthering inequality for the same students already recognized as disadvantaged in existing literature.

Paper:

Background

Many doctoral programs still target the 'traditional' graduate despite the demographic having changed significantly in recent years (Baum & Steele, 2017; Gardner & Gopaul, 2012; Gardner & Holley, 2011; Gittings et al., 2018; Offerman, 2011). The now outdated perception of the 'traditional student' (Macfarlane, 2020) is of the young, single, white male, studying full-time (Acker & Haque, 2015; Offerman, 2011) with few external responsibilities, and in receipt of financial support from their families. In contrast, the contemporary student is frequently older, financially independent with myriad responsibilities, juggling family life and/or external employment (Naidoo, 2015; Offerman, 2011). Complicating this picture further are the significant changes that occurred in response to the pandemic; with COVID-19 likely to become endemic, the new measures centred around social distancing may remain, at least in part, in the coming years (Torjesen, 2021). This paper aims to examine the *field* of doctoral education, to map out the changes in valued components to ensure equity is not being inadvertently sacrificed as part of our pandemic response. This paper was constructed from a literature review for, and preliminary results from, doctoral research; Bourdieu's theoretical concepts (Bourdieu, 1977) can help us to understand the valued resources and thus competition within the field of doctoral education, and how this affects socialization in a post-

pandemic world.

Method

As part of a doctoral research project, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 doctoral students across three research-intensive institutions in one Canadian province, between October 2020 and May 2021. The participants represented multiple disciplines and were in different stages of their programs. As the analysis of the data is still in progress, the results of this study are at a preliminary stage; the focus of this paper is on the application of Bourdieu's conceptual tools to help aid our understanding of doctoral socialization in a COVID-adapted environment. Given that *how* we interact and integrate with others has now changed as our personal and professional lives moved online due to social distancing measures, we need to ask how this affects doctoral socialization and the strain these pandemic adaptations may place on students' ability to interact and integrate with their discipline and department.

Theoretical framework(s)

Doctoral socialization involves moving from novice to professional—student to scholar—by taking on the values, behaviours, and beliefs of discipline and department, through investment and involvement with various internal and external communities (Weidman et al., 2001, 2020; Weidman & Stein, 2003). Many valued activities for effective doctoral socialization transcend discipline, such as: developing relationships with faculty and peers; collaborating on research leading to publication—a proxy for academic 'success' (Gopaul, 2016); and conference attendance for networking (Gopaul, 2011, 2015, 2016; Walker et al., 2008). Not having the finances to undertake these activities—family financial support or grants and scholarships/fellowships—is a known barrier (Lindner, 2020).

A metaphorical social space, Bourdieu's *field* constitutes a hierarchical environment, a network of "relations between positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 16. Each field has different valued resources—*capital* (Bourdieu, 1986). There is competition for resources—different types of capital—in each field. Those with greater holdings of resources maintain higher position and greater power. Doctoral students are striving to acquire capital that is valued in the role of scholar in their discipline, as shown in Table 1.

Discussion and Conclusion

Those we would consider 'traditional' students still benefit in the new field; they have no external responsibility, taking time away from their studies. They have a secure financial position (economic capital), can purchase the technology (cultural capital) required to work from home during the pandemic, such as an internet connection and a computer. They have pre-existing social networks as former full-time, on-campus students, and can directly meet with known faculty and peers; preliminary results support previous research indicating students have greater difficulty forming relationships through structured online meetings (Alawamleh et al., 2020; Trespalacios & Uribe-Florez, 2020). Whilst students may have benefitted from the ability to network more widely with events being online, due to lower conference costs and no requirement to travel, those who couldn't attend before may still not have the time to attend, juggling family or employment responsibility

around collaboration and networking. With online, virtual connection, pre-existing holdings of social capital may hold more value as a resource in the post-pandemic field; those with pre-existing networks will more easily be able to collaborate. The same time deficit remains for those with fewer financial resources, who have to divide their time between employment and education. Prior barriers to successful socialization remain, despite changes to the working environment.

References: Table 1: The different forms of capital and how they apply to the field of doctoral education.

Type of Capital	Sub-form of capital	Capital as applied to the field of doctoral education
Cultural	Embodied	Knowledge of specific disciplinary techniques; Writing ability; Subject understanding; Confidence;
	Objectified	Publications; Books; Discipline-specific software/hardware;
	Institutionalized	Achievement of a credential – i.e., a PhD
Economic		Grants; Scholarships; Fellowships
Social		Thesis committee; Supervisor-student relationship; Collaboration on research with faculty and external researchers; Conference attendance for networking
Symbolic		Institutional affiliation; Reputation; Group membership

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