Summary of doctoral dissertation

Joanna Kukier, M.A

Title of work: Media literacy of the elderly in the network society

Keywords: media literacy, media competences, seniors, elderly, network society, mediatization, digital exclusion

This dissertation is an attempt to capture the ways in which contemporary seniors adapt to technological changes accompanying the networking of everyday and social life. The formulated research problem concerned the conditions of this adaptation or its lack, and particularly the role of media competences in the functioning of seniors in the network society. The assumptions and goals of the work were related to this research problem. The assumptions were based on the hypotheses according to which **(H1) the functioning of networks in society mobilizes seniors to increase their media competences to a varying extent**; and **(H2) increasing the level of media literacy resulting from, among others, media education and seniors' online activity play an important role in reducing the digital exclusion of this social group.** The research objectives were factual, theoretical and empirical in nature. In the first one, the author sought to determine (Pb1) what is the socio-cultural position of seniors in contemporary networked societies? The second research question was theoretical in nature, and the aim of the analyzes was to determine (Pb2) what is the usefulness of media theory, including mediatization theory and network theory and network society, in terms of characterizing socio-cultural changes related to the media to which seniors are subject? The third research question also referred to theoretical issues to check (Pb3) what is the usefulness of the concept of competences in terms of the characteristics of seniors' online activity? In order to answer subsequent research questions, empirical research was planned, which sought answers to the following issues: (Pb4) what is the scope and nature of seniors' communication activity carried out online?; (Pb5) how online communication tools enable seniors meeting their communication needs, including social contact needs?; (Pb6) What is the importance of media competences for the activity of seniors in the online society? (Pb7) What is the importance of media education for seniors' online activity and how does it counteract their digital exclusion? Both hypotheses were confirmed.

The following dissertation consists of four chapters. The first one: Seniors in contemporary society, presents the actual situation - the social characteristics and position of seniors. The second and third chapters are theoretical (Theories of communication and media

and theories of communication networks, Media competences), and the fourth (Online activity of seniors - results of own research) contains the results of empirical research.

The main research method used to collect empirical material were individual *in- depth interviews* (IDI). 31 seniors (including 20 women and 11 men) aged over 65 living in the Lublin Voivodeship took part in the interviews.

The first hypothesis: (**H1**) **The functioning of networks in society, to a varying extent, mobilizes seniors to increase their media competences,** has been confirmed (based on the answers to broadcast questions: Pb1, Pb2, Pb3), because it was found that: 1) the socio-cultural position of seniors in modern networked societies is diverse, and the group of older people includes people with different levels of online activity. This is influenced by numerous factors, including: access to technology, educational support, and social policy; 2) the theory of mediatization allows us to understand the role of the media in the everyday life of seniors, and particularly the differences in their use for particular activities. 3) the concepts of media competences are useful in explaining differences in the readiness of seniors to improve their level, due to the different components of these competences.

Based on the seniors' statements, the second hypothesis was confirmed: **(H2) increasing the level of media literacy resulting from, among others, media education and seniors' online activity play an important role in reducing the digital exclusion of this social group** and the following conclusions were presented (based on answers to research questions Pb4, Pb5, Pb6, Pb7): 1) multi-faceted needs and interests of seniors lead to various activities on the Internet, which include obtaining information, social communication, entertainment, health, pursuing passions and dealing with official matters ; for many older people, the Internet is not only a window to the world, but also the main source of knowledge, immediately available; 2) traditional media are giving way to digital platforms that provide access to a variety of content, from information to entertainment; 3) the network allows personalization of content, adapting it to individual needs and building social bonds; 4) the Internet supports education and health care through access to information; 5) online shopping is becoming popular among seniors, although some of them are concerned about the security of transactions; 6) online entertainment includes, among others: searching for information about culture, participating in online events, or sharing content.