

SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES OF THE PROCESS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Culture is defined, from the point of view of social sciences, as a way of life specific to people, which consists in tool making, as well as in a process of learning or transmission of knowledge, behaviors and skills from one generation to another. Culture cannot exist outside of groups, communities or societies. In the process of socialization, parents play an essential role; sociological research discovered that there are four styles of parenting: authoritarian, permissive, authoritative and uninvolved. But this typology can know a series of nuances regarding the way in which the role of parents in educating their own children is perceived in various cultures. On the other hand, there are other factors and agents that influence the process of children's socialization, for example the older sisters or brothers, members of extended family, or peer groups.

KEYWORDS: *children's socialization, cultural differences, culture, living standards, parenting.*

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1. INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

Sociological research has been concerned with the study of the notion of culture since the foundation of sociology as a science. Therefore, the notion of culture is an integral part of sociological research, being defined in a broad sense as a way of life specific to people, which consists in tool making, as well as in a process of learning or transmission of knowledge, behaviors and skills from a generation to another (Anastasiu, 2011). In other words, these are nothing more than strategies created by people in order to adapt as best as possible to the environment in which they live and shaping that environment in such a way as to best suit their needs. This process can only take place within a society; therefore, culture cannot exist outside of groups, communities or societies (Macionis, 2005; Kendall, 2011; Haralambos & Holborne, 2008; Ferrante, 2011).

The sociology of culture consolidated as a distinct science starting from the observation that the main components of the notion of culture are not related to its elitist dimension, or to the idea that culture is a privileged domain, intended exclusively for creators or consumers of the arts or literature, but is rather interested in current practices of life, in everyday social life, which includes the field of arts or literature, but is not limited to it (Billington & Strawbridge & Greensides & Fitzsimons, 1991). Moreover, the sociology of culture does not establish any form of hierarchy, it does not value superior certain concerns of people in relation to others. It follows from here that the sociologist of culture is not concerned with ranking, but with knowing and understanding socio-cultural phenomena (Lindholm, 2007).

From this point of view, culture is directly related to the idea that people's actions can only be understood through an analysis that takes into account the fact that they are decisively influenced by

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their social component. In the terms of the sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel, the "sociological perspective" implies highlighting the social character of all phenomena and processes within society, or what Simmel calls "societal production" (Simmel, 1950). The social condition of man is based on permanent interactions between people who share the same culture.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND SOCIALIZATION. THE FOUR STYLES OF PARENTING

There is a strong connection between culture and socialization, which is synthesized, among others, by the concept of enculturation, which can be defined as the process by which an individual internalizes the norms and values of the group to which he belongs for a relatively long period. In other words, enculturation can be understood as a means through which social influence, both explicit and implicit, can be achieved.

From this point of view, parents play an essential role (Berns, 2010), their lifestyle, manifested including in the way of educating their own children, directly influences the growth and development of children. To demonstrate the role that the parent's style of education plays in raising their child/children, sociologists have argued that there are three such styles (adapted after Baumrind, 1971, Meadows, 2010):

1. The authoritarian or even dictatorial style in certain situations refers to those parents who claim unconditional obedience of the child to the rules established by them. The general idea is that the parent should have unlimited control over their child or children. There is no emphasis on the child's feelings and emotions, the interaction between parents and children being deprived of warmth and having a low degree of tolerance and empathy. On the other hand, parents are extremely present, even when they are not physically there, in the life of their child or children. Children with parents who practice this authoritarian style tend to be anxious, introverted, not to interact spontaneously with other children or with other people outside the family environment. They also lack curiosity and show little interest in the elements of novelty or surprise in their lives or those that bring unexpected changes.
2. The permissive style of parenting refers to those parents who, most of the time, leave their children free to express themselves as they wish, to make decisions regarding important aspects of their lives. The parent-child relationship is characterized by an accentuated emotional side, not infrequently the feelings of love between them being often highlighted. Parents are very little involved in the child's obligation to strictly follow various rules. Children educated by their parents in this way often fail to adequately control their emotions and feelings, they also do not take into account the observance of unanimously accepted social rules and norms. Also, they have an immature behavior and are very hard to please, being in a permanent competition, explicit or implicit, with others. In general, these children cannot conform, have difficulties in tempering their impulses and lack teamwork skills.
3. The authoritative or trustworthy style is characteristic of those parents who regard their child as a person with a high degree of maturity. Parents who adopt this style of parenting make special efforts to behave as correctly as possible with their child or children, without diminishing his or them personality and without forcing him or them to obey unconditionally in front of the rules they imposed. Thus, these parents try to be as reasonable as possible in their relationship with their child or children. They do not shy away from expressing their emotions and feelings of love towards their own child. The studies carried out by sociologists of culture (Matsumoto & Juang, 2003) have shown, moreover, that this is the most frequently encountered style, but also the most suitable for the good development of the child. And this is because children educated by parents who have adopted the authoritative style manifest to a very large extent a strong self-confidence, a high desire for autonomy and communication and social interaction skills. In general, these

children are optimistic, in a positive mood and full of enthusiasm. As I said, interaction with other people does not scare them, including when they have to communicate with unknown people. In addition, the level of self-esteem of these children is high, being very concerned with performing in school and showing a high degree of maturity in their relationships with others.

Later, other researchers claimed that there is also a fourth style, which is different from the three described above. It is titled:

4. Uninvolved style of parenting. Parents who adopt this style are so overwhelmed and preoccupied with their own lives (professional or not) that they are perceived by their child or children as being indifferent to his or their needs, desires and aspirations. Undoubtedly, the parents show a minimum of involvement, but this usually aims at ensuring the basic needs of the child and nothing more. On the other hand, in certain situations, this style of parenting can degenerate into an extreme, deeply negative form, namely that of almost total neglect of the child or children.

3. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN CHILDREN'S SOCIALIZATION

From the perspective of the sociology of culture, this typology can know a series of nuances regarding the way in which the role of parents in educating their own children is perceived in various cultures (Longhurst & Smith & Ogborn & Bagnall & Crawford & McCracken & Baldwin 2008). For example, the idea of parental control over the child has a profoundly negative connotation in Western culture, while in some Asian cultures this seems to be very natural. On the other hand, a comparative study between mothers in the U.S. and those from Japan, regarding the method of educating their first child, highlighted the fact that Japanese mothers are more oriented towards an emotional approach with their own child in relation to mothers from the USA. Also, Japanese mothers showed greater flexibility than U.S. mothers, frequently appealing to their authority as mothers. The researchers highlighted the fact that there are significant differences regarding the notions of enculturation and socialization between the U.S. and Japan, in the sense that in the U.S. special emphasis is placed on the system of rewards and sanctions, while in Japan the personal or impersonal bonds between adults and children are highlighted.

Another cultural difference regarding the process of children's socialization manifests itself in terms of the child's sleep with the parents. In the U.S., the child has his own room separate from that of the parents, in which he must sleep alone the whole night. The child's sleeping alone in the bed in his room is not a form of abandonment, but it is a way by which he must have a high degree of independence from his parents, independence that is thus gained step by step from an early age. In addition, to help him to create a comfort zone, a familiar space, the child is encouraged by the parents to sleep with his favorite doll or toy and to have favorite things such as a personal pillow etc. On the other hand, in certain European cultures, among which we also include Romania, this way of reporting to children is seen in the opposite sense; thus, the child sleeps with his mother from the first year of life. Also, the rituals regarding the moments before sleep are missing, the emphasis being placed on maintaining a special bond between mother and child. It is inconceivable that a child should be left alone during the night. It is unthinkable that a child should be left alone during the night, even if his parents know very well that there is no real threat to him. And when a new child is born, not infrequently the oldest child is moved to a new bed in the same room or will sleep with another member of his family.

On the other hand, the process of socialization of children varies from one culture to another depending on the various living standards of the people. Cultural differences are often related to the fact that, in certain cultures, especially Western ones, the woman holds a job during the period in which she is pregnant, and later, when the child reach two years old or one year old (or just a few months, the legislation of different Western countries can vary quite a lot in this area), she will return to her profession, while in other cultures the woman does not have a stable profession. This significant

difference in women's professional status often has a profound impact on how both boys and especially girls are educated. In cultures where the mother does not have a stable profession, she often values the family and the type of family-specific socialization more highly, considering that it is not mandatory for girls to have a profession, but it is much more important for the woman to be devoted to her own husbands and children.

The research carried out by sociologists of culture has highlighted the fact that there is a set of objectives that the family, as an agent of socialization, specifically pursues. A first level, the basic objective is to ensure the physical health of the family members and the necessary conditions for their survival. The next level is that of developing, especially in the case of children, of those behaviors suitable for social interaction. Finally, those behaviors that are related to deep cultural values are followed, such as the creation of the child's moral side or his desire to perform at the social and educational level, but also to develop himself. In general, in cultures where the standard of living is high, the emphasis is on the last two levels, while in cultures dominated by poverty and technological underdevelopment, as well as the absence of the comforts of everyday life, but also of some basic services, such as the medical one, a great importance is given to the first level.

4. OTHER FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PROCESS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIALIZATION

The process of socialization related to the notion of enculturation is also influenced by other factors besides the parents, namely older sisters or brothers. Some sociologists of culture have demonstrated the fact that a multitude of values, beliefs, behaviors and cultural attitudes specific to a certain social group are transferred from older sisters or brothers to younger ones.

The role of older sisters or brothers in the socialization process is all the more important in pre-industrial societies, where families have a large or very large number of children and where there is a strong influence of the first-born on younger sisters or brothers. This influence can work in two ways, on the one hand, the oldest child in the family can establish himself as a model worthy of being followed by the younger ones, due to the very high degree of his involvement in raising and educating of his younger siblings, or, on the contrary, as a person to be avoided (especially in situations where the first-born behaves abusively towards the little ones).

Also, the extended family plays an important role in the process of children's socialization. There are not rare situations in which grandparents, for example, are involved in educating their grandchildren and are an active part of family life. In addition, they are concerned with the transmission of family traditions and values, but also of the specific culture of the social group from one generation to another. Besides, the education that the members of the extended family give to the children can differ substantially from that specific to the nuclear family. This can be seen in many Eastern cultures, where grandparents or other relatives on the father's or mother's side may have as much decision-making power as members of the nuclear family.

But, despite the cultural differences, there are also certain general constants: namely, mothers are invariably seen as the persons who have the basic role in raising and caring the babies, and the child frequently interacts with her or his father, sisters or brothers and with other members of the extended family.

The group of friends or peer groups and the type of socialization it implies occupy an essential role especially during childhood or adolescence, after which its influence gradually begins to fade (Anastasiu, 2011).

To emphasize the importance of friendship between children of the same age in the process of socialization, as well as the influence of the culture of a certain group in the overall process of enculturation, the sociologist and anthropologist Margaret Mead (1978) argued that there are significant differences in the relevance of this agent of socialization from one culture to another. Thus,

Mead operated the distinction between the concepts of postfigurative, cofigurative and prefigurative cultures (Mead, 1978).

First, postfigurative cultures are characterized by the fact that social change occurs slowly, which has a major impact on the entire process of enculturation. Within these cultures, the process of socialization is carried out in the sense of educating children and young people by mature people, whose age is significantly older than those who are being educated. The type of education put into practice by older people is not abstract or deductive, but essentially practical and deeply personalized. Therefore, cultural transmission has a strictly determined meaning, namely that from adults, understood as the storage of knowledge and skills necessary and sufficient to provide a model of social success. Therefore, cultural transmission has a strictly determined meaning, namely that which comes from adults, whose knowledge and skills are necessary and sufficient to provide a model of social success. And this model must be imitated by all members of the group, especially the young ones.

On the other hand, cofigurative cultures are predisposed to a greater degree of change at the social level, which means that the role of adults in the education of children is significantly diminished. In other words, parents continue to educate their own children, but the process of children's socialization is influenced not only by parents or other adults, but also by other children who are close to them. There is, of course, a process of cultural transmission from one generation to another, but older people within the group or community are no longer seen as the sole depositories of the essential knowledge or skills. In other words, parents continue to educate their own children, but the process of children's socialization is influenced not only by parents or other adults, but also by other children of the same age. For example, there are situations where children who feel the need to learn certain skills or have access to certain knowledge want to be helped rather by other children than by their parents or other extended family members.

Finally, the prefigurative culture is dominated by a very rapid socio-cultural change, so that there is a reversal of traditional educational roles, in the sense that young people learn new skills and knowledge, especially in the technological and scientific field, which are inaccessible to people with an older age. In this case, young people are the ones who transmit the relevant information to mature people, the transfer of knowledge being carried out in a reverse way in relation to that specific to postfigurative societies. Moreover, the elderly feel strongly that society belongs by now to the young people and cannot help but understand that only by making a minimal effort to adapt to the rapid changes taking place in society can they integrate. Which is not to say that older people can't have feelings of social and cultural abandonment, the more so as their knowledge and skills are considered outdated by new generations.

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