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Abstract:The family as a specific group and social institution in its own way expresses her individuality and identity and value among the other environments of the claims as to the socio - cultural importance.

In the theoretical analyzes undertaken authors were heading to show these selected variables, which most would be able to show a distinct socio - cultural status of the family in the most obvious way, regardless of context its occurrence, which falls in the implementation of the role assigned to it. The article described the aspects such as structural and functional elements that define the family, unique psychosocial mechanisms of enabling the family to the effective implementation of the process of socialization, the spiritual dimension of identifying specific family (with regard to the fundamental assumptions of the Church's teaching in relation to the family), specificity opportunities for religious and cultural socialization, the importance of family and cultural capital of verbal function (including function relational, situational and cumulative) and non-verbal language that may be relevant to particular families, as the original medium for the educational

Keywords: socio-cultural importance of family, cultural socialization, religious socialization, language functions in the family, cultural capital of the family; mechanisms of family influence, changing socio-cultural situation of the family

Introduction

In examining the subject of family, it is worth stressing the fact that it constitutes a part of a priority research plan in a wide range of questions that can be tackled within the field of all social sciences. Moreover, the modern methodological approach adopted in social sciences stresses the necessity of presenting a specific issue, which constitutes the fundamental subject matter in a given research approach, inter-paradigmatically, which obviously concerns the topic of family as well. The aim of the article is to increase the chance to present adequately the entire

field of study. If one attempts to deal with the issue of socio-cultural variables which condition the position of family in the Polish ethos, it is firstly necessary to consider the fundamental indicators of its nature as a group and social institution, incontrovertibly established in the output of social sciences to date.

I. The nature and the value of family in theoretical analyses

Social sciences, including sociology and social pedagogy certainly agree on the statement that the family constitutes a community which acts as an intermediary between an individual and the global society. Family, as the smallest social unit and at the same time an institution, is a fundamental, constructive element of any society and the most lasting element of social organization [Marshall 2004].

The role and the social competences of the family are determined by those of its features which are not analogous to any other social group or institution. Its specificity is best reflected in the following facts: it enables and regulates the most intimate experiences of a person, providing him or her with the sense of emotional security, also in the sphere of reproduction. Reproduction in the family proceeds not only in the biological sense, but also in the cultural one, as the older generation transfers the basic values of the society and behavioural patterns regulated by tradition and custom to the younger one. The family divides the roles and power basing on such criteria as age or sex. The family is characterized by a specific type of integration based on frequent and direct relations. Finally, integration in a small society of the family is oriented towards preparing the young individuals for joining in the broader community within the global society. [Fichter 1968].

From the psychological works in the current topic, it is worth referring to its presentation in which the family is defined above all as a system of mutual relationships and emotional support, or, to put it in a different way, as “an interpersonal system of intra-group relationships” [Rembowski 1986]. In this understanding of the system, through its specific features it has its effects on the specificity of each family and a sort of its identity. Family members, living under one roof, incessantly influence one another, therefore forming various systems of family relationships. Everything that “happens” within the family creates it, endowing it with a specific character both as a whole and individually shaping definite behaviours of its members.

An important aspect of family relations is cooperation. This aspect is highlighted by Makiełło-Jarża [1998], who stresses the fact that family is the basic frame of reference for each of its members, who maintain a close contact that also assumes the reciprocity of services and cooperation in the process of self-realization. In this presentation of the issue, what is strongly emphasized are the bonds and interactions that link the members of the family system, and which directly and in a definite way condition the identity, behaviour and abovementioned cooperation of all the members of the family community. It needs to be stressed that in the

family system understood in this way there exist various subsystems, for instance husband-wife, mother-child, father-child, child-child [Niewiadomska 2000]. Perceiving the family as a system which belongs to the current of psychological studies is obviously one of the methods of defining its specificity. Such a view is important as it simplifies the understanding of the aspects of a family's unity and its distinctiveness from other systems. Moreover, it allows for reaching the sources of its internal potential and dynamism, triggered both in everyday life and in extraordinary circumstances.

In the pedagogical view, the value of the family is perceived above all in the context of its significance for upbringing. In its definition it is stressed that it constitutes a natural and basic environment of life and upbringing for the younger generation, providing the conditions for harmonious and many-sided development. In this case, the specific nature of family is of basic significance, as it cannot be fully replaced by any other groups or institutions. The upbringing activities of the family cannot be substituted by any other environment or institution, as none can reconstruct those specific features which have been highlighted above, or the specific bonds which link the family members to one another [Izdebska 1993].

In the discussed approach another highly significant dimension of the family, apart from the psychosocial or the legal, is the spiritual one. The spiritual dimension is possible to be realized obviously on the basis of the abovementioned aspects of the psychosocial family life which are shaped by such characteristics as intimacy, familiarity, common interests, activities and plans; fertility and spirituality. Family is a group in which the bonds of love and consanguinity gain the highest significance, constituting its foundation [Adamski 2004]. The family, which is perceived by pedagogy mainly from the angle of the child brought up in it, is for him or her the environment of natural upbringing. Participating daily in natural situations of family life, a child develops personality, actualizing his or her potential [Pindera 2000]. The unique specificity of educational influence of the family has its roots in this approach in the importance of the people closest to a person. For it is the family members who are most significant for a child in the first years of his or her life [Budzyńska 2000].

Family's spiritual dimension and its objective source is best indicated, however, in the teachings and pastoral work of the Church, in which the family is given one of the foreground positions. It is clearly reflected among others in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the documents of the Second Vatican Council, or the teachings of John Paul II. In the teachings of the Church, the family is described above all as a natural community, based on indissoluble matrimony, raised by our Lord Jesus Christ to the rank of a sacrament. Its essence is the spiritual community of the people who form it – spouses, parents and children. In this concept, the family has a fundamental right to develop and bring up the young generation, while its sanctity has its roots in the sacred nature of matrimony. It performs the

only and unique role conveying the gift of life, binding its members with love, mutual concern and involvement. As one of the most valuable goods of humankind, it should be subjected to special care, as according to John Paul II “the history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family” [John Paul II 1994]. In the teachings of the Church, the family is also referred to in a more momentous way, namely as Home Church, a sign and an image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. This expression stresses the unity of the family members on the basis of the community of faith, hope and charity.

In the fundamental definition of the family which the Church assumes, it bases on the scientific findings of the abovementioned disciplines of social sciences. It is reflected in the following description of the family, given by the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society” [The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1994].

The family in the teachings and concern of the Church is assigned significant social task, not only because of the fact that “[...] among these many paths [along which man walks], the family is the first and the most important” [John Paul II, *Letter to Families* 1994], but also because it has particularly important tasks to perform in the modern world. John Paul II stated repeatedly in his various enunciations “the future of mankind comes through the family.” The essence of the Church’s expectations from the family is in regarding it as a natural community of life and love. Therefore, the essence and the tasks of the family are ultimately determined by love, and the family’s mission is to protect, reveal and convey the love which is the living image of God’s love and Christ’s love [John Paul II 2000]. The family as a community of love has a unique potential: “By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory” [The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1994]. In this light, large families appear as those which in a special way opened themselves to life. It was to those families that Holy Father directed his words in Ludźmierz on June 7, 1997, when he said: “I also wish to offer a special greeting to the Association of Large Families, present here to seek Mary’s intercession for the happiness of their families, which is often not easily attained. In today’s world you are witnesses to the happiness that comes from sharing love, even at the cost of many sacrifices. Do not be afraid to bear this witness! The world may not understand you, the world may ask you why you have not taken an easier path, but the world needs your witness — the world needs your love, your peace and your happiness” (John Paul II, 1997). The specific tasks of a

family in the qualitative spiritual dimension are realized in the process of religious socialization.

II. The family and religious socialization

Religious socialization in the family is an important dimension of the young generation's integration with the society. The aspects of this issue are manifold. This article, however, will refer to the one connected to the necessity of answering a child's questions about boundary situations. A child should be prepared for unavoidable crises related to the breakdown of certain roles in the family resulting from chance events – the death of the father, mother or siblings. It is those situations which most strongly provoke reflection on the essence of life from the eschatological point of view. In these existentialist aspects, religious socialization appears as a process of enabling the child to face a "boundary situation," which tends to be closely connected to accepting personal sacrum, that is, religion. R Bellah [qtd. in Radwan 1979] states that "nobody can be successfully and effectively prepared for fulfilling the role of an adult in spite of constant threats, the perspective of disease, old age and death, without referring to positive and negative religious sanctions." Only the consciousness of reward or punishment being the single alternative after death can turn out to be a successful socializing factor, enabling a person to responsibly accept social roles.

In this understanding, the process of religious socialization has its specific place in the family because the family in its nature is a religious institution, as it has to refer to a specific worldview. Therefore, family becomes an especially privileged channel of conveying religion to the young generation, as its natural socializing function is of a religious character [Voye 1969]. If in this view the ultimate foundation of socialization in the face of boundary situations is only a definite religion, then the family itself, the values, norms, as well as the symbolic and legitimizing system it promotes, have to belong above all to the young generation. Therefore, the family is at the forefront also in this respect in comparison to other groups and social institutions (as numerous sociological studies attest).

In this context, however, it is worth to articulate two important issues. Firstly, it has to be pointed out that at a certain stage in the personal development of a child, there comes a period of the young age crisis characterized, among other things, by the tendency to reject convictions and the verification of the notions to which the parents subscribe. Nevertheless, also in such a case, the author of this article is inclined to the view expressed by L. Voye [1969 p. 359], who emphasizes the fact that the ambivalence typical of the period of contestation in the young age, is characterized on the one hand by the fact that a young person strives to achieve originality and independence from their whole environment, and on the other hand, by the fact that they may also be "prisoners" of a certain new conformism towards the group to which they aspire, and that serves as a frame of

reference to their own convictions, which, however, cannot be fully verified. Such a relationship appears, first of all, in the function of conformism towards peer groups, whose acceptance is especially desired by a young person. It has to be added that groups enforce this kind of conformism through the system of sanctions of acceptance or rejection, which are based on the actual, almost vital need of a young person to belong to a youth group. Within the context of the statement quoted above, it has to be also pointed out that although adolescents gravitate very strongly towards their peer groups, they still derive their sense of importance, values and social position from the fact of belonging to their families, whose convictions they claim so often to reject. (In this case, there are also a number of examples of sociological studies proving that later in life the contesting youth seems to be returning to the patterns of religiousness experienced at home.) The second issue concerns the conditions of the process of religious socialization in the family. Nowadays, the family's socializing ability within the aspect of the transfer of religious convictions depends, to a large extent, on the degree of the family's willingness to cooperate with the Church. In the situation when the social space of a modern society is imbued with the pluralism of values and ideologies, when gone is the *overarching symbolic system*, embracing the whole society and usually derived from religion; when the socialization on all the levels, from national to family, is no longer of religious nature, it is obvious that the effectiveness of the socialization function of the family depends significantly on its cooperation with the institution of the Church.

It can be thus said that in a modern society, the whole process of the socialization of the young generation works in two directions. The norms of society-wide coexistence are implemented by all the educational institutions, whereas the values, norms, the legitimizing and symbolic system within the religious context are implemented only by the Church as a specialized institution, and also by the family, as much as it feels affiliated with the Church. Religion has been transferred from the public sphere and has become a domain of the private life, because fulfilling a public function by no means depends on religious affiliation. Under such conditions, however, the role of family increases, together with its chance to achieve more complete, more reliable and more thorough socialization as well as the related interiorization of church values by the young generation. In other words, nowadays, religious phenomenon is sometimes more interiorized because of the boundary situations than because of any positive society-wide sanctions. A person may be more or less religious because given convictions help to solve the problems of the meaning of life, overcome difficult existential situations, rather than because of the fact that religion guarantees the access to the recognized social roles.

III. Family and cultural socialization

Family, transferring the existing cultural values, developing the ones with which it is connected and creating new ones, constitutes a natural environment for the transmission of culture; therefore, family also shapes the proper references to the values, norms and patterns of behaviour appropriate to the cultural background with which it identifies. Such a perspective on family and its social importance is present in Wielgus's statement [2000] that "there is no exaggeration in saying that family has always been the basis of social life and that strong, long-lasting and trustworthy family structures are the main need of modern societies and cultures." The significance of family for the life of a person, the society and its culture should constitute a point of departure for the actual concern for the family's interest. The article, however, focuses especially on the fact that through the idiosyncratic features and psychosocial mechanisms possessed by family, it engages its members in the national and universal culture.

The young generation growing up in families base their personal identity mainly on the culture of the closest family environment. In turn, each family environment expresses in its own way its cultural similarity and individual identity, uniquely organizing its own system of values and the meaningful symbolic system. It can even be said that this internal system of the organization of values, symbols and rituals determines the cultural specificity of a given family. This specificity is, in turn, decisive in determining the character and the range of the participation of the members of the family in global culture.

With reference to the issue of cultural socialization of family, it is important to emphasize two fundamental mechanisms conditioning its character and effectiveness. The first one of them refers to the main functions of language, in its narrow sense, i.e. verbal, but also in a wider sense. In both of these senses, it is through language that the cultural socialization in family takes place. Language in family may perform at least a triple function. Firstly, the relational one, through which, according to H. Lefevr [1966], a person's belonging to a given family is being constantly determined and significant. Language, in this case, will be expressed in given verbal forms used by a person. The used words, sayings, construction, syntax, intonation, the style of word stress, verbalising skills – indicate to a large extent the family membership and culture of a given person. To a large degree, they point to the person's and the family's affiliation with a given culture and the level of its interiorization. In its deeper sense, they reveal a person's cultural identity and ideological orientation, as they are shaped, reach the consciousness and are revealed through language.

The second function of the language is cumulative in character, as it is through language that it is possible to gather and transmit the experiences and cultural heritage. Also in this case, each experience, cultural or general, is accompanied by a proper set of vocabulary with its proper effect and emotional accent, retained by

the verbalizing skills, firstly of those who transmit the symbolic content, secondly, by those who are to accept and interiorize it.

Language also serves the situational function as it makes it possible to describe and characterize the situations experienced and overcome, both individual and collective (generational, national) with all their idiosyncratic dramatic background. All the functions of language described above mediate in the discovery of social, family and cultural membership of a given person. Language can also be understood more widely, not only in its verbal form. It is not only through words that someone's system of values and cultural membership are expressed. In its wider sense, language is composed of exhibited mental habits, cultivated habits based on a given normative system, the modes of judgment, styles of celebration, rituals cultivated in the family. All of them, equally to verbal language, constitute the vital indications of bonds connecting a given person to their original systems of social affiliation, especially to the family.

Therefore the family, as a primal system of social affiliation suggests and transfers, especially to the young generation, the basic criteria of organizing and perceiving the cultural transfer. The interiorization of those criteria happens not only consciously; it could be assumed that it is even more common on the level of the most basic, subconscious mechanisms, basing on the unconditional trust a child has for the adult educators in the family. The other socializing subjects, such as the school or peer groups and especially the cultural transfers they convey will probably be perceived and assessed in the light of those primal criteria. It is worth adding that the cultural codes transferred in the process of socialization in the family environment tend to be permanently structuralized. It could be assumed that young people who come from culturally-challenged families stand little chance of relieving their shortages in this respect in comparison to the people from families with abounding cultural capital. The system of interschool selection is another factor working to the disadvantage of the former, as they are devoid of cultural skills and many positive experiences in this area.

In the discussed context of cultural socialization, an important aspect is so-called cultural capital of the family. This capital is measured by numerous factors, from the values cultivated in the family and their arrangement, through parents' education and their passive and active participation in the institutions promoting culture or in various initiatives. This capital also includes the presence of books and magazines of a certain level, the style of everyday life and of festive days, cherishing the memory about important events in the life of the family and about the ancestors, or the style of eating or furnishing one's house. It can therefore be said that the cultural capital of the family is determined by both idealistic and material dimension of handing down from generation to generation the cultural achievements, the family traditions, ancestors' history, preserving the genealogical bond, or even the shared views. Generally speaking, the family basing on its own

cultural capital involves the young generation through the socialization process in the regional, national and global culture, at the same time predisposes the young generation and determines its aspirations towards an active involvement in multiplying both individual and collective cultural achievements. The perception of culture in the family environment leads as a consequence to the structuralization of a definite cultural level of an individual on the basis of the suggestive associations of a family's specific cultural symbolism. However, an important remark needs to be stressed in this case too. That is to say, a long-lasting and deep influence of cultural transfers within a family will probably be conditioned by the psychological climate accompanying cultural socialization. Several factors may cause a child's submissiveness toward cultural transfer in the family. The most important of these factors, however, is a proper psychological climate in the family, which will probably guarantee, or at least substantially favour, cultural identification and reproduction of the transferred models of valuing, symbolizing and behaving in the young generation.

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