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FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY IN THE COFIGURATIVE AND PREFIGURATIVE CULTURE BEHAVIOURS

Annotation. Opening the political borders triggered cultural diffusion in the European countries as the open communicative space accelerated the pace of globalization processes. As a result, changes occurring within a society influence the lives of fundamental social groups, i.e. the families. The last decades in Poland have marked a period of intense changes in the everyday life culture, and the examples of the persons coming from three generations reflect the significance of prefigurative and cofigurative cultures.

Keywords: friends, social bonds, cofigurative culture, prefigurative culture.

Socialisation within multigenerational family

Multigenerational family is intuitively understood as a traditional model based on economic community, close or the same area of residence, and what matters most – patriarchal model of functioning. A man has been for ages perceived as the head of the family, exercising influence over other members of the family. Such a model used to be acknowledged regardless of the class or social level, recognised even to “external” degree, as it manifested “life wisdom”, i.e. the social experience, richest due to obvious reasons among the oldest generation. Family has always been a place where the young were undergoing initial introduction to the life of community. Children and teenagers became familiar with the social norms - i.e. customary rules that govern behaviour in a given cultural circle – thanks to their parents or grand parents. It was the duty of the oldest generation to transmit the cultural tradition and as a result ensure the permanence of the group, its specificity and diversity, providing sense of belonging and ethnographic, social and national identification. Moreover, it must be remembered that the cultural tradition was accepted by the youth respectfully.

Socialisation within the area of acknowledging the culture of morality seems to be for long assigned to the family as the most important tasks towards the society, nation, state and god, whereas towards the individual it is solely a consequence of the subordination involving comprehension of the

requirements and acknowledging the necessity. In this regard, the traditional cultural transmission within the families did not project subjective attitude to the domestic culture. However, it must be remembered that such area of transmission referred to becoming familiar with, and acknowledging primary and universal by nature values, i.e. beauty, the good, truth and affirmation of god. As far as socialization is concerned, it has been and still is crucial, as micro- or macro-groups cannot question such process since it secures the group coherence. Moreover, customs, traditions, rites and ceremonies are not sufficient and influential in terms of the sense of identity, as they are merely a manner of fulfilling or affirming values. Hence, at such level there is the possibility to modify the individual, family or small groups patterns of behaviour. In turn, it initiates the sense of liberty, but on the other hand – attachment to the individuals of similar approach or needs.

Nonetheless, there is also another stream of socialisation – preparation for practical tasks embracing social roles, to which the young generation should be well adapted. Within this stream the changes occur indubitably faster due to the fact that the society growth in terms of economy, technology and commerce takes place beyond the family circles. Moreover, it also requires skills acquired under experts’ supervision, i.e. subject to various forms of education, where sole transmission of values is insufficient. Notwithstanding, the education towards values defining a person in relation with others, work, own group and for the sake of approved duties and obligations is still fundamental. This type of socialisation is adjacent to the process of upbringing and hence more difficult to accomplish, as the tutors – educationists are expected to be mentally flexible towards the changing reality, capable of understanding the direction of changes and even if they disapprove them, still being able to come to terms with such a shift.

Quick changes within political, social and economic reality also evoke cultural changes, which, despite taking place slower, still appear as natural consequences of contemporary transformations. The cultural changes include inter-family switch, as the predominant processes taking place in the 20th

century such as wars, migration flows, economic instability and new technologies increased the worth of institutional education, significantly weakening the importance of the skills acquired in family circles. The grandparents' and parents' authority as of persons introducing to the adulthood significantly decreased, whereas among emotionally attached families such an authority became reduced to the respect towards such persons, admiration for their life in accordance with the rules, ability to make morality-based decisions in situations seemingly new, nonetheless still referring to the basic values defining human's behaviour preserving their dignity. However, it does not tackle the life decisions of the youth or young adults, hence the cultural transmission in a family, formerly strong and postfigurative, is significantly diminishing. Assuming that the core values are still clear and directional in existential orientation, i.e. interiorised by the family members, the hierarchy of values may vary in personal systems.

Emotional relationships

Contemporarily, the family should be considered as a group of people predominantly related emotionally, which constitutes a foundation for essential family's functions and their nature, not the chosen manner of accomplishment. For instance, the function referred to as economic by the family researchers, does not imply that all members shall directly contribute financially to provide for all the members. It means that in a non-pathological family, regardless of its model, there are determined ways of securing material needs. Contribution of workload in order to sustain housing conditions, food provision, taking care of the clothing and similar necessities are treated as contractual and constitute personal contribution to the material security of a family. Other functions, such as the care-taking, also confirm such a stand. The heart of the matter remains within their family's care, however organisational changes of the everyday life made it one of the extensions (possibilities) overtaken by institutions. These two exemplified functions alone imply the contemporary idea of adopting various styles of families. The decisive factors are examined by a person from the perspective of the opportunities and valorisation of the solution that is subject to these processes, for which the person is responsible. Opinions of the elderly are considered as perception of an issue from various angles, not as an analysis of anticipated reality that should result from such decision. The reasons for undertaken decision are searched for among examples of solutions to similar cases, whereas

information is sought among those experiencing similar or the same problems, taking their advice and considerate suggestions. Such role is played by a friend, that expresses benevolence not only towards the person, but also his / her family. Furthermore, such a friend knows the family members, is known by them and has the right to be familiar with their difficulties, also investigating various solutions to such problems. Apart from obvious friendliness, such a person is also perceived as competent to comprehend the problems as such a friend is at the same stage of own or family development, professional career, or personal experiences. Hence, it is a person from the same generation. Applying this term according to K. Mannheim allows to emphasise not only the chronological link, but also the influences originating from intellectual, social and political conditions, as such persons are the "objects of the same influences" (2). Moreover, they live in the same culture that constitutes their real world. Besides, friends of the family are contemporarily referred to as those emotionally attached, originating from the same generation, introduced by one of the member, accepted regardless of social, ethnic or any other background, having the right to participate in family's business when asked by any of the family member. This phenomenon reflects the cofigurative culture.

Meaning of cofigurative culture

The differences in perception between cofigurative and postfigurative cultures tackle the generation dynamics. Postfigurative culture involve reconstructing the attitudes of older generation by the young one with the implication that the passed-on patterns have been confirmed and in the next generation will be equally well applied. Moreover, it is more less commonly believed that changes occur at such pace that allows one to apply the fathers' heritage. Hence, the transmission is of descending nature. Within such perception of the social world, the family authority (e.g. a relative) was an elderly, whose life proved the great integrity. Moreover, such a person deserved and enjoyed not only a life success, but also respect from the surrounding. His or her friendliness towards the family members largely depended on the personality of such person. Additionally, such an elderly had the right to express opinions in all most important issues. Even if due to various reasons his or her advice was not followed, it was seriously taken into consideration. From the perspective of the youth such a friend of the family was a kind of "inheritance", and sometimes

a “necessity” resulting from the respect for the advanced age and tradition. Although the first generation accepted such a fact as relatively natural, the second generation (generally the grandchildren) considered accepting help and advice from such worlds apart person in terms of age as an unnecessary ballast in decisive moments, and description of such situations are reflected in many stories from novels coming from the turn of the centuries.

Cofigurative culture becomes significant in a social situation where changes are noticeable and palpable. Generation is understood in such case predominantly with regards to culture and history. It refers to those in a given age bracket, who established and shaped their life positions and orientation with regards to similar values (3). Each of the generation feels comfortable within such ethic and aesthetic framework of their peak life activity. Overall those were years of adolescence and adulthood, moreover – those with such attitude often affirm these period, customs and behaviours identifying as (with relation to K. Mannheim paradigm) objects of the same influences. They often use expressions such as “during my times” clearly distancing from the recent times, where they find it hard to settle in, resigning from the right to advise and assist the young, taking the approach of distanced observer, i.e. referring to nowadays reality as “strange days”, claiming “I don’t understand this world” etc. Such persons feel comfortable in a company of the same generation, hence their friends and colleagues are of the same age. They are concerned by similar life problems, participate in similar forms of artistic culture and social groups. It may be illustrated by senior clubs (not by the third age university), as their members are emotionally attached to the family or close persons from the early years. Acceptance of the children and grandchildren does not have to be related to understanding them, or trying to do so.

A specific generational closure is also typical for teenage subcultures, which – in forms of strike contrast of behaviour – appear and disappear spontaneously. However, it must be remembered that in their moderate version they have always existed, as they result from natural developmental features, e.g. sensitisation or readiness to participate in a culture (particularly in its artistic dimension), specific life tasks of this period, searching for new life paths, learning to make life choices, taking responsibility and paying the consequences of own decisions. The stormy period as the adolescence is often referred to as is characterised by a search for understanding in the surrounding and towards own self. The best

ground for such seeking is unquestionably the peer environment. Although the authorities are not radically rejected, they are subject to selection on the basis of competences. The parents’ friends are assessed critically, however the youth may consider them as a point of reference for personal behaviour and the friendliness of the elderly towards the teenagers is often reciprocated. It particularly takes place among families with good emotional relations and common respect, where the upbringing styles within such families are of democratic pattern. Such contemporarily broad perception of a family may be found in works of sociologists such as T. Szendlak who writes that “a family is a group of related persons, friends and other actors focused around a child and a parent, most often a mother” (6).

A friend is someone one cannot impose. A picture of such positive styles of upbringing with mutual respect between adults and the youth, even in a period of adolescence was reflected in research carried out by students of pedagogy (WSHE in Brzeg) tackling educational counseling. The age differences became ignored as far as the priority issues were concerned, i.e. the educational decisions. Apart from some exceptions, those leaving senior high schools considered their parents the best advisors, claiming that “they know me best”, “they know and want best for me” etc. Such approach was also confirmed in research among senior high school leavers from the cities of Dolny Śląsk in the years 2009-2010 (1). However, such recommendations were not considered solely as pieces of advice, order or guidelines, but it resembled a common reflection and co-decision as emphasized by the youth. The adolescents expressed their abilities, interests, plans and motivation, whereas the parents considered the opportunities together with their children. Hence, the cultural picture comes clear with two distinct generations, what – if perceived as a change in the Polish families styles – allows them to maintain positive bonds between the generation of children and parents, even manifesting tolerance (accompanied by the respect) for the generation of their grandparents. According to the research by J. Śledzianiowski, the bonds in Polish families were referred to as positive by 1212 pupils of secondary schools (5). It provides on one hand the sense of security and belonging, and on the other – as A. Tchorzewski claims – “it involves the recognition of the right to be unique, to chose own developmental path and personal growth of each family member, as long as the personal dignity and following common set of values are taken into consideration (4)

Changes within the behaviour are particularly visible in direct activities of everyday life activity, relation of the family structures influencing the shape of accepted activities, as well as intentions and accomplishment of specific tasks. And as a matter of fact it is fashion, i.e. the area of ephemeral changes, that becomes the point of reference for these common influences.

Fashion is predominantly manifested by the youth, what seems to be almost an exerted tendency. The adults can be selective about it, however if it's far from the main stream they are subject to so called satiric sanction, similarly as in the case of cooking interests, as it is noticeable in the culture of everyday life, particularly in case of the competences of low cultural contents within politics, social and artistic area. In terms of the sense of aesthetics, young generation seems to be dominant (especially the adolescents). Only the families with higher level of cultural competences can protect themselves against this specific violence of culture (with frequent transmission of preferences from the period of youth). Members of such families retain their freedom of choice, select the recommendation of the younger members of the family, simultaneously indicating the values of the transmission from the area of cultural heritage. However, also this case does tackle the transmission of patterns or manners, but as far as integrated families are concerned the transmission focuses on the values. Truth, the good and beauty are preserved as universal and in this regard the functionality of the family and cultural agreement are not violated. The freedom refers to the forms of affirmation and accomplishment of values, hence within this range of social contacts friends and close acquaintances of the descendants may become an interesting interlocutor and messenger of the new contents and a herald of changes that are introduced at different level in the everyday life cultural experiences.

Changes occurring within Polish families shall be perceived through the pace of changes within subsequent generation. The oldest generation used to gain their skills to perceive adaptive possibilities to new life circumstances, what in turn accelerated changes of upbringing styles and family model towards greater liberalisation.

References

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Summary

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Contemporary family, despite the tendency towards the nuclear structure, is not a confined group due to the fact that social bonds refer not solely to the members of biological family, but they also tackle the emotionally and intellectually attached ones within the natural family. The structure of interpersonal relations reveals the fact that not only the age and life experience of the seniors, but also their professional competences and personality features of the family members and friends shape the contemporary culture of everyday life, hence becoming crucial factors in adopting life orientation of people from various generations.

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