

## **ȘTIINȚE PEDAGOGICE**

### **CHILDREN’S SOCIALIZATION IN MODERN SOCIETY: THE EROSION OF EMOTIONAL BONDING BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN AND THE EROSION OF CHILDREN COMMUNITY**

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*This scientific paper has revealed the problems with institutions of children’s socialization (family and children’s community) in modern society. These problems are the erosion of emotional bonding between parents and children and the erosion of children community. The reasons for the erosion of emotional bonding between parents and children are determined. They are change of the system of social relations which caused the significant shifts in the system of adults’ values, change of quality of communication in families. The difficulties of modern family education have been determined. They are “distant” or “phone” education; great informational influence on children; lack of parents’ emotional contact with their children; formation of social infantilism; “social orphanage”. The paper uses data gathered from theoretic search and empirical investigation (data gathered from 31 families, from children and their parents). The results have shown that there are difficulties in communication and interaction between parents and children. These difficulties are caused by social-economical, moral-judicial, cultural-educational conditions (when parents have to spend much time at work and have no time to communicate with their children), parents’ inattentiveness, absence of their willingness and possibilities to communicate with their children, a low level of parents’ pedagogical culture, children’s overreliance on computer games and virtual world.*

The problems with childhood and children’s socialization in modern world have become popular recently. For instance, F. Aries [3], H. Hengst [14], N. Postman [15], A. Solberg [16] have asserted that in modern life conditions childhood loses its specific feature which distinguish it from adults’ world: children games which were various and exclusively for children disappear, and they are replaced by computer games which are not only for children and can influence them badly; now different children things (clothes, food, films, entertainments for children) imitate adult life greatly. There are a lot of reasons for this phenomenon. They are political, social-economical situation in society (many families take much notice of their financial problems but very little notice of their children as parents simply may not have enough time for children and wish to communicate with them after work), low cultural level of people (many of them realize the value and uniqueness of childhood but in real life they seldom create necessary conditions for their children’s full and round development, for realizing their ambitions and their self-affirmation), aggressiveness of media environment which influences children more and more and day by day has less cultural and spiritual potential. The erosion of bonding between parents and children and diminishing (and sometimes even destruction) the role of family as a traditional institution of child’s socialization are the main reasons for erosion of boundaries between children and adult worlds, loss of originality of childhood.

It’s well known that parents are of great importance in child’s life as communication with parents is the main source of information about the surrounding world for children; and their developments and world perception depend greatly on the patterns of interactions with the world which parents demonstrate them. Besides, as A. Akin and D. Streltsova [2] assert, when a child is born, a peculiar bonding appears between a mother and a child. It is very important for parents to set this bonding as early as possible, because it helps to understand

children, their needs and wishes better, sometimes even without words (it is particularly important when children are very young); it helps parents to study their children, to have emotional connection with them (as children may not tell their parents about their problems, but attentive parents may guess that their child have a problem due to some intuition and emotional bonding).

We should admit that the problem of children's socialization in modern society is important and pressing, that is why some scientists and pedagogues have studied different aspects of it. For example, Ph. Aries [3], D. Feldstein [13], H. Hengst [14], G. Kodzhaspirova [6], O. Komyakova [7], N. Postman [15] and A. Solberg [16] have investigated modern world influence on the culture of society, demographic problems and children in particular. R. Patzlaff and M. Glokler [10] have studied media environment influence on children and their development and socialization. V. Abramenkova [1], I. Zagarnitska [5], I. Rogalska [11] and A. Rogozyansky [12] have investigated the peculiarities of modern children's socialization. T. Kravchenko [8], L. Olhovyk [9], G. Svyatnenko, L. Volynets, and Ye. Lutsenko [4] have investigated the problems with children's socialization in family. But such problems with modern children's socialization as the erosion of emotional bonding between parents and children and the erosion of children community have not been under careful consideration in pedagogical and psychological literature.

The article aims at the study of modern problems with children's socialization (the erosion of emotional bonding between parents and children and the erosion of children community).

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The study is based on literature sources, author's own results working with children for 12 years and interviews. The study has been initiated due to the author's interest and significant results of observation carried out while working with children and their parents for more than 12 years. These results have shown that there are great problems with children and parents' communication in families, which influences children's socialization and peculiarities of their interaction with people around, their attitude to the surrounding world. We have also scrutinized the psychological, sociological and pedagogical literature dedicated to various aspects of children's socialization in modern world and found the confirmation of our suggestions.

As a part of the project, we have conducted interviewers (31 Ukrainian families, parents and children). The questionnaire included questions which helped to learn about education traditions in a certain family, the peculiarities of communication, emotional bonding between parents and children in families, spiritual, cultural and moral values which they considered to be important to form in children. Special care was taken to check with respondents that we had understood them correctly. Beside, we have been careful to compare the information received from different respondents with each other and with information received by other scientists.

### **The Erosion of Emotional Bonding between Parents and Children**

There are some reasons for the erosion of emotional bonding between parents and children.

The first reason is a change of the system of social relations, which causes the significant shifts in the system of adults' values [8]. Difficult social-economical situation in society has resulted in parents' spending little time with their children as they spend much time at work in order to ensure adequate living standards of their family.

We have questioned 31 Ukrainian families (parents and children) in order to find out conditions and state of family communication and bonding. According to the results of our questionnaire, more than a half of parents (55%) spend with their children not more than 1.5 hour a day (including cooking and meals, bathing procedures and getting dressed). Surely, it

depends on child's age (the younger the children are, the more time parents spend with them), but sometimes parents of small children (even babies) spend little time with them allowing a computer or a TV-set to educate and entertain their children. One mother even was very glad and proud of her little son (who was 1 year old) that he was considered to be very independent (he could turn on TV himself and watch it for hours not disturbing his parents). But the problem which the parents did not notice was that communicative skills of this child had not even begun to develop (the boy did not want to go for a walk and play with other children; he only wanted to watch TV). Many parents (84%) confirmed that it is necessary to communicate with children and to spend time together, but only 35% told that they spent with their children more than 2 hours a day.

The table 1 illustrates the kinds of mutual activity in families (parents and children together) and the percentage of families which prefer a certain kind of activity.

Table 1

The Kinds of Mutual Activities in Families and the Percentage of Families which Prefer a Certain Kind of Activity

<b>The kinds of mutual activities in families (parents and children together)</b>	<b>The percentage of families which prefer a certain kind of activity</b>
Watching TV or a computer	32%
Household activities	23%
Discussing some topics	16%
Reading books and discussing them	13%
Outside activities (sport, going on picnics, etc.)	10%
Hobby	6%

As the table shows, intellectual and physically active kinds of spending free time in families are not very popular. It is caused by parents' low cultural and spiritual level and lack of understanding of the necessity to have full and diverse family life in order to influence children entirely.

Moreover, women's social position has changed; the realization of their ambitions (but not family) often comes to the fore. That is why women's professional work becomes widespread, which influences the duration and nature of communication in families.

Parents' constant being at work, household activities and nervous tension which is connected with them, tiredness cause reducing parents' time for communicating with their children, common activities, joint pastime, which often has negative impact on children [4; 8; 11]. The deficiency of dialogue, which arises as a result of that, causes the lack of parents' attention to their children's problems, needs and interests.

The second reason is change of quality of communication in families. Significant deformation of family relationships, which are manifested in mutual estrangement of children and adults, breaking close emotional relationships, bonding between the older and the younger generations, become the reason for children's mental distress in family. That is caused by the lack of parents' pedagogical knowledge and skills. Many parents do not know simple facts about children's development and education and shift their responsibility for children's education to educational establishments, while forgetting that parents are main people in children's life, and child's attitude to the world and life depends on parents. By demonstrating indifference, not paying enough attention to a child, having little interest in his/her life, parents form child's same attitude to them, indifferent attitude to people and selfishness with respect to family.

### **The Difficulties of Children' Education in Modern Families**

Among the difficulties of modern family education we can often distinguish the following:

- “distant” or “phone” education.
- significant informational influence on children.
- absence of emotional contact between parents and children.
- formation of social infantilism;
- “social orphanhood”.

Let's describe these problems in details as they are interrelated.

Because of parents' stirring life, “distant” family education becomes more and more popular. As there is a high level of development of informational technologies in modern world, parents often use “phone” education [9]. The problem here is that parents often forget that they should have visual, spiritual contact with their children for establishing emotional bonding with them, as a smile, embrace, live emotions can influence them better than any telephone conversation because they touch child's emotional sphere.

In modern world children sometimes do not have enough parents' care, and thus they find themselves in free uncontrolled living conditions. Left to their own, they are greatly influenced by other factors, mass media in particular. Technical means (a computer or a TV-set) fill the vacuum of communication; sometimes they even successfully substitute mother's lullabies for children [5]. That impacts their development greatly. Such children become acquainted with different information that is important for their development not with the help of the nearest, but with mass media, which too often has extremely low level of information content and the form of its presentation that does not corresponds to children's development.

For example, recently many parents have consulted psychologists, as they have problems with their children's rude attitude to adults and scornful attitude to peers, particularly to the opposite sex. These parents did not talk to their children about the relationship between a man and a woman; they did not explain to them the necessity to respect other people and to build relationships with other people on the basis of love and mutual respect. As a result, children got information (incorrect, misinterpret, with negative emotions) about relations with people, especially with the opposite sex, from mass media and while speaking with peers. These children begin to understand relationship between a man and a woman as something dirty, negative and, as a result, they have significant problems with communication with the opposite sex, their own parents and other adults, as children begin to perceive negatively all people.

Because of weakening the influence of family, implementation of unisexual model of gender socialization and “family decay” children become less focused on romantic love and family values, but more focused on sex appeal. This focus is closely connected with the increase of deviant behavior [1].

This is proved by the results of numerous investigations connected with different aspects of family education and children's development in families. For example, famous Russian scientist V. Abramenkova [1], according to the results of her study testing children's paintings, has asserted that there is a tendency of changing the traditional boys' identification with fathers and girls' identification with mothers, when way of the image, color spectrum, figures reveal the similarity of children and adults. Nowadays children sometimes even do not paint their parents (especially fathers) or paint them roughly, using dark colours. In some children's paintings it is difficult (and sometimes impossible) to determine the gender identity of children themselves and the members of their families.

The significant changes in children's conception of themselves and their future are detected. For instance, the characteristic features of boys are lack or wrong understanding of their positions in a family and increase in the proportion of individualization of their own “I”, particularly in cultivation of physical strength (sometimes with criminal shade). The characteristic features of girls are active “professionalisation” (an image of themselves in future

professional sphere), a sharp decline in images of themselves in future family life [1]. That causes children's lack of understanding of family values and in future adult life – their unwillingness to have family and children, to take care of them. Some may say that it is their own choice and we should respect it. Certainly, we should. But let us think of what will happen if we do nothing about forming family values in our children, esteem, love and care for one another (parents and children)? If our children do not want to have their own families and children and do not want or cannot be responsible for their parents and children, they will not have future. We would have no future.

Thus, children's formation of wrong image of a family, impossibility and unwillingness to realize themselves in their family, transformation of their spiritual values and personal position in family take place in children's mind.

Lack or absence of necessary attention and emotional contact between parents and children may cause the formation of children's wrong world view, their disharmony in mental health and self-determination.

Sometimes it may happen that a child has a problem and wants to have advice. These are parents who may give good advice, as they really love their child. But the absence of emotional contact between children and their parents may lead to children's unwillingness to communicate with parents, and their problem remains unsolved. The absence of the contact causes failure in children's socialization, developing their inclinations and creating the conditions which are necessary for children's self-determination.

It is necessary to notice that changes in children's images, in traditional relationships in the system “child – adult” lead not only to decline of parental authority, family values, formation of children's social infantilism but to the loss of virtuous attitude of people (including children) in gender relations, personal life, which is manifested in people's incapability to build a family, to establish emotional contacts with people of opposite gender, in absence of morality in relationships.

At the same time, as Kodzhaspirova G. noticed, “adults themselves began to occupy children less and do not have a clear position of their attitude and demands for children” [6, p. 51]. Such a phenomenon as “social orphanhood”, when adults just refuse to educate their own children, becomes wide-spread nowadays.

As a result, there is an “estrangement of all adult community from childhood. This estrangement has achieved hideous forms and it manifests itself in the absence of psychological mood and willingness to interact” [13, p. 13]. A. Rogozyansky has expressed an interesting idea that the problem with parents and children does not exist nowadays, as adults refused to act as parents and mentors; there is no family life where adults and children have opportunity to realize themselves as parents and children [12].

At the same time, Komyakova O. has told, “Parents' common life with children and their willingness to work, play and communicate with children are often absent in modern life. There are no really close relationships between parents and children. Children assimilate isolation and arbitrariness. They get used to doing and living without love, and they themselves become incapable to love. They want to know other people rationally. But we can know a person only with love. When we love, we try to understand a person's soul, and this person reveals towards us as if letting to be near. Modern adults and children experience a critical shortage of this” [7, p. 24].

It is widely known that family education has a long-term effect: positive or negative features, personal qualities which were formed in childhood, having parents' relationships as an example, remain in children for their whole life, influence the choice of personal educational impacts in their adult life and are manifested in their interpersonal contacts in different spheres of life. That is why the role and importance of a family is so great.

#### **The Erosion of Children Community**

Modern children often feel disharmony in the relationships between them, in children subculture. Adults often show their non-perception, disregard and disrespect for children and

their aspiration to act as they want, according to their wish. As a result, the relationships between the older and younger generations may be broken.

Inability to communicate, to understand other people and their problems, to make concessions, which is caused by parents' negligence in family and informational aggressiveness of media environment, leads to children's incapability to realize their ambitions in child community. Besides, this community itself performs the function of socialization poorly. There are some reasons for it.

Firstly, some elements of children subculture which are traditionally for children (round dances, folk dancing and competitions, certain elements of children folklore, etc.) are going to disappear in modern society; new elements of children subculture replace them, but actually these are elements of teenage subculture or adult culture (for instance, computer games, multimedia space, the world of fashion, etc). Thereby a peculiar replacement of children subculture with adult culture occurs, and children have to socialize in adult society from early years of their life.

Secondly, nowadays a sufficient number of children cannot adapt to the real world because of their overuse of computer games, Immersion in virtual world, as it seems easy for them to realize their ambitions and to communicate in virtual world, not in the real world. These children cannot get in touch with real people, as in virtual world they do not have to make efforts interacting with other people and they do not work at developing themselves; they do not have to make significant efforts to get some results in a game. While chatting with people in social networks, they can create an image for themselves and be who they want to be (not themselves), and when some problems arise, these children do not think of their solving – they just switch off the computer (that is why such children try to solve their real life problems the same way – just running away from problems but not really solving them). So, the importance and necessity of children community are gradually disappearing as an institution of children's socialization, because children do not feel the need in them any more (as it is much easier to socialize in virtual world); they have real problems with life communication. Unfortunately, not all parents help their children to establish contacts with the outside world and teach their children to solve different life problems.

Recently Japanese scientists have discovered a new disease (the similar cases were detected in other countries of the world too, but it is in Japan where this disease becomes wide-spread – more than 10,000 young Japanese have it). It is about young people who lost their connection with the surrounding world, their social contacts. These young people do not want to see their nearest and dearest people. Ant that is not a passing fancy, it may lasts for months and even years and becomes pathology, as these people lose their individual autonomy. In computer games and virtual life a child can easily is lost in the space of individual world. Unfortunately, this disease cannot be cured even by psychiatrists [10].

### **Conclusion**

So, traditional institutions of children's socialization (family, children community) lose their significance more and more. The changes of the institutions of children's socialization and the ways of cultural transmission occur: the direct way (by adults and peers) of culture transmission and the way of transmission with culture objects (books, toys, works of art) are replaced with television screen ways of cultural transmission and television screen socialization. As a result, children's loneliness and the generation gap grow; emotional bonding between parents and children disappears or becomes catastrophically depleted, because trusting relationships between them are not formed but they are necessary for a child's full mental development. It complicates a child's opportunity to establish a live dialogue with the surrounding world and provokes sharp conflicts in dealing with people; children get deprived of opportunities to harmonize their relationships with the natural world, daily reality and art, which logically destroys the originality of childhood.

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