

THE PARENTAL RESPONSABILITY AND THE RELIGIOUS VALUES TRANSMISSION THROUGH FAMILY

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Abstract

The sociological approach about the effects of secularization on the modern family, specifically the filiation and parenting, combines the perspective of sociology of religions and the systemic-functionalist guidelines correlated with the symbolic interactionism within family sociology by deploying values and principles of Christian morality and philosophical ethics transposed to the family life through Christian Bioethics. Having in view the practical-axiological finality, the analysis of family subsystems from the perspective of the various ways of manifestation of family life in the context of modern and postmodern secular society, aims at outlining strategies of social and family policy on long, medium and short-term, having in view the concrete reality of the socio-emotional as well as the technical-proactive construction, of the family environment as a whole, with spiritual and religious valence.

Keywords: Religious identity; Desecularization of faith; Resacralization family life; Spiritual Kinship; Parenting indexes; Religious indexes.

Résumé

Le discours sociologique sur les effets de la sécularisation sur la famille contemporaine, sur la filiation et la parentalité, allie la perspective de la sociologie des religions à celle des orientations systémico-fonctionnalistes corélées à l'interaction symbolique de la sociologie de la famille par l'opération des valeurs et des principes de la morale Chrétienne et de l'éthique philosophique transposées au niveau de la vie familiale par l'intermédiaire de la bioéthique Chrétienne. Ayant en vue la finalité pratique-axiologique, l'analyse des sous-systèmes familiaux de la perspective des diverses formes de manifestation de la vie de famille, dans le contexte de la société moderne et postmoderne sécularisée, vise le contour des stratégies de politique socio-familiale à long terme, moyen et court, en tenant compte de la réalité concrète de la construction socio-affective ou technico-volontaire à valeurs spirituelles-religieuses du milieu familial dans l'ensemble.

Mots-clés: l'identité religieuse, la dessécularisation de la foi, la resacralisation de la vie familiale, les indexes de la parentalité; les indexes religieux.

Rezumat

Discursul sociologic despre efectele secularizării asupra familiei contemporane, în concret asupra filiației și parentalității împletește perspectiva sociologiei religiilor cu cea a orientărilor sistemic-funcționaliste corelate cu interacționismul simbolic din cadrul sociologiei familiei, prin operaționalizarea unor valori și principii ale moralei creștine și ale eticii filosofice transpuse la nivelul vieții familiale prin intermediul bioeticii creștine. Având în

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vedere finalitatea practic-axiologică, analiza subsistemelor familiale din perspectiva diverselor forme de manifestare a vieții de familie, în contextul societății moderne și postmoderne secularizate, vizăm conturarea unor strategii de politică socio-familială, pe termen lung, mediu și scurt ținând cont de realitatea concretă a construcției socio-afective, respectiv tehnico-voluntariste, cu valențe spiritual-religioase, a mediului familial în ansamblu.

Cuvinte cheie: identitate religioasă; desecularizarea credinței; resacralizarea vieții familiale; rudenția spirituală; indecșii parentalității; indecșii religiozității.

1. Socio-cultural arguments and assumptions regarding the approach of the contemporary family issue

From a widely contextualized socio-cultural and anthropological perspective, with theological valence, in our research thesis about *the Effects of Secularization on Filiation and Parenting – Case Study, the City of Iasi* (Mihăilă 2015), we aimed at revealing some aspects of manifestation of modernism and postmodernism in the sphere of family life through the “theory of secularization” as well as the impacts of dysfunctional secularization phenomena of modern society on the family in the “globalized” contemporary society. Starting from the definition of “secularization” whose “inner tension” outlines the main phrases of the “thesis of secularization” (Tofan 2011, pp. 207-230), by combining the philosophical-theological plan (Taylor 2007) and the dimensions of the sociological plan (Shiner 1966) – “the decadence of religion”, “the mundanization of the religious”, “the desacralisation”, “the privatization of religion” or “the transposition of religious forms into secular mechanisms” (Tofan 2011, p. 210), we aim at approaching the debatable way of reporting ourselves to modernity and postmodernity. From the perspective of the socio-anthropological paradigms of knowing the *phenomenon of secularization*, we have in view the “Protestant ethic” (Weber 1993), “challenges of the otherness and the new interreligious dialogue” (Gavriliuță 1998), “the culture of recognition” (Carpinschi 2008), “the invisible religion” (Berger and Luckmann 1999) or “the civil religion” (Bellah). The sociological speech about the *effects of secularization* on the *modern family*, specifically the *filiation and parenting*, combines the perspective of sociology of religions (Bajzek and Milanesi 2006) and the systemic-functional guidelines (Durkheim 1892; Parsons 1992) correlated with the symbolic interactionism within family sociology (Thomas 1931; Mead 1934) by deploying values and principles of Christian morality and philosophical ethics transposed to the family life through Christian Bioethics (Engelhardt 2005, p. 45, 102-103).

The way in which modernity understands itself, as compared to the family environment, highlights the influences on defining and structuring the family system, on the family environment and the family educational climate, as well as on the functions society expects from the family. Mainly, the research is focused on highlighting the issues of the current family in the triad family-community-

society, from the perspective of philosophical ethics vs. Christian morality concretely specified in the principles of Christian bioethics, analysing in turn aspects regarding the typology of the couple, filiation and parenting.

From the perspective of nuanced knowledge, we had in view a quantitative-qualitative analysis both of the impact of applying the Christian morality on couple responsibility, and of the reproduction responsibility correlated with parental responsibility, results of the “psychological, social and cultural construction” during the family life cycle combining one’s personal capital and one’s socio-cultural-religious capital. We also identified the functional aspects as well as the dysfunctional socio-emotional and spiritual-religious ones from level of the subsystem couple, which could directly or indirectly have influenced the natural desire/willingness to have children and therefore the assuming of parenting correlated with the gradual empowerment of the child, depending on age and degree of maturity.

As symptoms of secularization, the emergence of “theological option”, under the form of religious pluralism, relativism and religious syncretism, finds a fertile ground in the domestic space, this being a place of manifestation for religiosity in which human rights, namely the right to private and family life, meet the “rights of God” (Bizău 2002, p.17). The application of Christian morality in family enables “unusual manifestation of religiosity” (Tofan 2011, p. 211), a spiritual rebirth and authentic civilization imposed by the need for religion to recognize itself in a “natural reality” (Tofan 2011, pp. 223-224) which allows a positive approach to “family crisis” through the possibility to access the spiritual-religious resources of the family or of the “ontological credits” (Bădescu 2014) with a view to “re-sacrilize” (Gavriliuță 2013, pp. 236-238) the social and family life.

The *background-hypothesis* of our study is based on the results of recent research carried out in the UK and the US, less in Romania, which highlights the impact of Christian religious behavior in general and of the *Christian Orthodox* particularly in modern and postmodern society (Georgescu 2014, p. 15). Coexistence and complementarity between the “elite”, elitist and philosophical Christianity revealed in “cultural symbolism” and “popular” Christianity to which “symbolic Christian religion” is assigned, represents a powerful cultural buffer of Christian-Orthodox religious origin for the “symptoms” or “marks” of the secularizing process in the current Romanian society.

The research hypotheses are based on the central idea of the role played by „kinship” or “spiritual parenting” in the dialectics of manifestation of secularization as a cultural and historical process assuring the Christian “faith conditions” (Taylor, 2007, *apud* Tofan 2011, p. 209). Therefore, the cultural-religious component of the intergenerational lineage can orient the strategies of secularization in either a negative or positive sense.

- a. *Kinship* or *parenting* in a broad sense, including “spiritual kinship” (Mihăilă 2015, pp. 15-24), through religious identification, acts as an

- axiologic filter carefully differentiating between the cultural-religious options at a family, personal and community level and ensuring the cultural and religious identity in general, as well as the Orthodox identity in particular;
- b. The Continuity of Kinship supported by the “genealogical memory” helps the “desecularization of faith” and the accumulation of Christian religious capital (“ontological credits”) that constitute the resources directed at obtaining stability, harmony, positivity inter- and intrafamily relations across generations (three or four generations in the case study on family cycle);
 - c. The “secularization-event” activates the “ontological credits” enhancing the resacralization phenomenon of family life manifested in the rehabilitation of the individual from Christian Orthodox point of view.

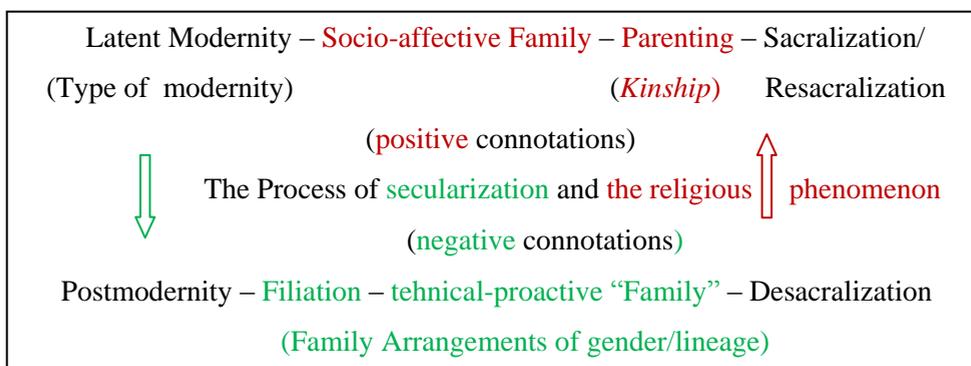


Fig. 1. The role of Kinship in the resacralization of the social and family life

Interpreting the phenomenon of secularization as a strategy orientating religious options and at the same time acting in a negative way on contemporary kinship, we obtain the following hypothetical situations:

- a. The decrease of *religious identification and religious references* in “genealogical memory” through the mechanisms of secularization and “ethical communicative subjectivity” or “poor” secularization (Tofan 2011, p. 214);
- b. The proliferation and orientation of religious identification and identity in a non-Christian way, non-Orthodox for the Romanian society – “strong” secularization – and thus the alteration of the religious references in the “genealogical memory”.

Conversely, the negative effects on „kinship” can be hypothetically overcome by means of the “secularization-event” whose positive connotations regarding the revival of Christian faith could be presented as follows:

- a. The identification and return to the Christian-Orthodox religious identity through the “desecularization of faith” and resacralization of the social family life with a positive impact on personal life;
- b. Revealing the favoring factors within the resacralization process – on the one hand, the spiritual symbolic heritage from the perspective of the Orthodox Christianity and on the other hand the impact of some positive or negative events (concrete life situations) which impose the necessity of religious identification in a Christian-Orthodox sense.

In this sense, we agree to the opinion according to which *parenting styles* are extremely important, as most specialised studies show, starting from the cognitive development of the child and continuing with their school success and social integration. Moreover, starting from the hypotheses formulated for example in some sociological theories – the “theory of habitus and homology fields” or “the theory of structure” – by Pierre Bourdieu or Anthony Giddens, Elizabeth Stănciulescu forwards the idea that “family educational processes” can produce “new cultural elements”. In this way, overcoming intergenerational transmission paradigms as well as the cultural and structural reproduction one, *family education* (including *the moral-religious point of view*) can be understood as a “mechanism” of “social change” (Stănciulescu 1997, pp. 216-217).

Consequently, the research falls rather within the sociological approach which especially addresses the family with teenagers and this is also because, as shown by family education sociologists, “educational strategies of families” with teens can be analyzed in terms of educational outcomes involving “internal relational issues” and “family relationship with the school” (Stănciulescu 1997, p. 58). Moreover, the possibility of using teenager students as a group of control could provide plausible explanations in the dynamics of implied pedagogy “typical of the family”, related to the “intentional dimension” of the explicit pedagogy typical of school environment.

2. The aim and objectives considered in the theoretical part and the practical part of our research entitled: *The Effects of secularization on filiation and parenting. Case study, the city of Iasi*

The theoretical part of the thesis is structured in two chapters: I. „Modernity, postmodernity and the «secularization thesis». Influences on the family life; II. „Family, marriage and kinship between the traditional paradigm and the modern one. Landmarks for defining kinship today”. The *objectives* considered and carried out in the theoretical part of the research have in view the following aspects:

1. Outline, describe and explain the social-legal and cultural-religious context of the sociological research in the field of population and family;

2. Define and analyze the implied phenomena of secularization, modernization and postmodernization given the socio-cultural and religious perspective on family life;
3. Define the Romanian socio-cultural context regarding the manifestation of modernity and (post)modernity in family life;
4. Outline the Christian bioethical perspective as a meeting point between philosophical ethics, social-human sciences and human rights – genetic engineering, reproductive ethics and parental responsibility;
5. Outline and highlight the main directions of research and working hypotheses in the field of family protection within the European context.
6. Identify the specific problematic areas of the contemporary family within the European context with examples, case presentation and comparative analyzes;
7. Identify and define *changes within family subsystems* in the context of “deprivatization” and “desacralization” of family environment – a source of inequality and social exclusion;
8. Identify, define and describe sociocultural aspects which structure the filiation-parenting dyad, more specifically analyze the ethical-legal and socio-cultural-religious levers concerning assuming parental responsibility and empowerment of the child;
9. Describe the manifestation of parenting and identify the difficulties typical of assuming parental responsibility as manifestations of some phenomena aimed at progressive disavowal, disengagement and “parental incompetence” reaching up to failure and irresponsibility.

The connection between *the theoretical part* and *the practical part* of the our *research* is made by the third chapter called: III. „Parenting – a social cultural and religious construct”. This chapter practically includes the detailed and deepened work hypotheses as they are correlated with the results of previous studies and results in the parenting field with referral and exemplifications within the current study which announces the applicative part of the research.

The practical part of the research is structured on two chapters as follows: IV. „Sociological research regarding the parental responsibility and the family transmittal of the religious values”; V. „Social juridical and cultural religious resources in the protection of the family and of the child. Results and conclusions”. The pursued and attained objectives in the practical part of the research have in view the following aspects:

1. To make the research project called “The Parental Responsibility and the Religious Values transmission through Family” as a premise for a real and efficient social protection of the family and of the child – sociological research performed within Iasi city – the analysis unit: parents from the school environment; a comparative analysis between two under-samples: mothers and fathers;

2. The systematic-functionalist approach of the family protection in the social juridical and cultural European context on three analysis directions: social policies in the population and family field, the normative and institutional framework, social economic measures at the demographic and family level;
3. The outlining of intervention strategies and directions of social action in the network – regarding the social protection and the social inclusion oriented towards the use of the spiritual-religious resources in the family assistance and the mediation of the tensions and conflicts at the communitarian level.

The operational objectives of the sociological investigation based on the questionnaire consist of the following:

1. To identify the “marks” or “symptoms” of the secularization in the community of Iasi city/analysis unit/parents (mothers/fathers) and children/pupils in the school environment regarding the theological knowledge (religious doctrine/religious tradition): the typology of the theological knowledge/sources of information/the knowledge level or degree; the relevance/the utility of the theological knowledge upon family/kinship life in general, upon the relationship parent (mother/father) – child/pupil in particular; the impact of the theological knowledge upon the daily practices in the family environment in general, upon the relationship parent (mother/father) – child/pupil in particular;
2. To identify the “marks” or “symptoms” of the secularization in the community of Iasi city/analysis unit/parents (mothers/fathers and children/pupils in the school environment regarding the ideological structure the undertaking of the Christian filiation/ the transmittal of the religious faith: to identify the Christian-religious conduct patterns and modalities to transmit the religious message from generation to generation; the role of the prayer in the transmittal of the religious message from generation to generation and the involvement degree in the development of the religious rituals;
3. To identify the “marks” or “symptoms” of the secularization in the community of Iasi city/analysis unit/parents (mothers/fathers) and children/pupils in the school environment regarding the ritual structure (the practice of the faith);
4. To identify the laicisation forms at the family/personal level;
5. To identify the types of spiritual-religious identity that is of non-Christian type;
6. To decide upon the weight of the factors which are related to the spiritual-symbolical inheritance in the process in order to make the family life sacred again and to de-secularize the faith at the personal level;
7. To identify the modalities to transmit the religious-symbolical capital from generation to generation from the perspective of the lineage rules: cognate – bi-linearity/ ambi-linearity or uni-linear – maternal linearity/paternal linearity;

8. To decide upon the weight and the typology of the factors related to events – positive or negative – in the family life which determine the process to make family life sacred again and to de-secularize the faith at the personal level.

3. Research methods, techniques and modalities. Triangulation or the analysis from several perspectives

Our research topic exceeds the unilateral meaning of the causal determinations from parents to children and falls within the social–human approaches which aim at “the mutual effects in the parent–children relationship” (Iluț 2005, pp. 21–22). At the theoretical methodological level, as it is shown by Petru Iluț, the psychosociologist from Cluj city ever since 1986, our approach falls within the current tendency from the family social anthropology – aiming at “the historical dimension” as well as at “the comparatively cultural one”, the tendency to outline “family theories that should be global at the same time but also with an advanced degree of accuracy” (Iluț 2005, p. 22). Certainly, this methodological claim is subsisted by “a fundamental tension” between “global and exact” exceeded by “the multi-level analysis” which can focus data from “the individual level (personal, n.n.), micro-contextual level – family and community and macro-social level”.

Without neglecting the structural-functionalist paradigm and the systemic analysis proposed by us in order to investigate especially the role and the functions of the modern family structures in the triad family–community–society, with the mutual inter-conditioning, the (post)modernism practically invites us to take into consideration the ethno-methodology centred on the theory of the symbolic interactivity. For this purpose, Petru Iluț tells us about “optimal strategies” in the family study, not only by “combining the methods: the multi-phased research and the case study”, but also by “the analysis from several perspectives” on the principle of the complementarity between “emic” and “ethic” (Iluț 2005, pp. 35–64) in the cultural anthropology.

The triangulation or “the analysis from several perspectives” as “a scientific reply” to the empirical approach of “the multitude of the viewpoints” or more complex, of “the view angles” is a method used especially in the family and kinship study. The arguments in favour of this research method – which we fully subscribe to – refer to the following aspects (Iluț 2005, p. 61):

- It allows and employs “a complexity of opinions, appreciations and interpretations”;
- It allows “the application of well-known methodological means with scientific value”;
- It allows the application of the method at several analysis levels: “micro-social”; for example, the perspective of the family members upon the own family; “mezzo-social” – the perspective of community institutions as school and Church are in our case; “macro-social” – the themes of the

family values from the perspective of the various instances such as the scientific, religious, juridical ones etc.

The sociological investigation *methods, techniques and procedures* which we have used within our sociological research are (Mihăilă, 2015, pp. 136-179) the theoretical/statistical *documentation*, the “fact” documentation; *the observation* on the field; *the psycho-social interview*, half structured; *the questionnaire*; *the discourse analysis*; *the conversation analysis*; the encounter and the discussion; the *focus group* achieved with the specialists. They are considered through the prism of the hierarchy of the sociological investigation techniques as well as the nature of the data offered by these ones –”the universe of the phenomena” related to the family life and to the kinship. Our attention has been focused on the investigation of “objective deeds or facts” which are related to the socio-family existence, as well as on the way in which they are reflected in “the people’s conscience”, having the quality of family members, namely “the opinions” of the subjects about “the phenomena and the processes” (Miftode, 2010, pp. 10-11) of the social moral religious conscience.

4. The results attained after the analysis of the field data in the practical part of the doctoral thesis called “The Parental Responsibility and the Religious Values transmission through Family”. The analysis of the data offered by the questionnaire

1. The social demographic data of the respondents;
2. The hierarchy of the answers related to “the parent quality”;
3. The responsibility of the reproduction associated to the Christian pattern;
4. The impact of the children’s birth upon the personal life in the family context;
5. The involvement degree of parents in their children’s school activity;
6. The specific of the moral educational relationship between parents and children;
7. The parental control modalities correlated with the segregation of the parents’ moral educational roles;
8. The relevance of the religious conduct upon the parenting manifestation;
9. The importance of the Christian pattern in the family, the spouses’ religion and the prayer in the family;
10. The children’s moral religious education and their involvement in the religious practices at the family level. The role of the culture and of the religious faith in developing the social responsibility in children;
11. The general hierarchy of the qualities that define “a good parent”;
12. The parents’ availability to find information about the adolescents’ education as well as about the problems of their own children ;
13. Indexes of the parental competences and indexes of the religious competences;
14. Indexes of the parental control;

15. Indexes of the religious conduct;

16. The combined analysis between the parenting indexes and the religious ones;

For our sample made up of around 200 respondents (100 mothers and 100 fathers), we came up to a series of interesting conclusions. Firstly we considered that *the parental control* might be made up of several variables:

- (ACOMPF) The index of the Training Accompaniment;
- (CONTSAN) The index of the Health Condition Control;
- (CONTPUN) The index of the Punitive Control;
- (CONTINDI) The index of the Indirect Control.

As we have seen in the previous analyses, there are certain differentiations according to the categories of the *interest variables*: gender, age, studies and income. Nevertheless, there is a major situation without significant differences. The CONTSAN index is relevant and it shows us the fact that parents are interested in the health condition of their own children regardless of their gender, age, studies or income. The same conclusions (Mihăilă 2015, pp. 187-188) are visible for the variables dedicated to religiosity: RELPERS, RELIGFAM but also RELIGCOP.

Also, it shows that RELIGFAM is inversely correlated with RELIGCOP but also with RELPERS, as they are all significant from a statistical point of view. In other words, the high values of *religiosity in the family* are not necessarily related to the high values of the *personal religion level* or to *the children's religiosity level*. It is thus confirmed that the personal level of religiosity may be lowered while the pattern of the religious family may have enhanced norms and values.

A significant result that concerns us refers to the fact that 82.3% of the parents consider that *the Christian pattern in the family* is important; 5.7% did not have the same opinion whereas 12 respondents could not appreciate whether the Christian pattern was important or not; 89.4% of the respondents answered that it is *important for parents to be religiously married*. Nevertheless it remains a worrying aspect! Less than half of the investigated subjects (48.9%) considered that it is important for the spouses to have the same religion; it remains an important weight held by the ones who do not emphasize this fact (30.5%). The appreciation of the *children's religiosity* is also in accordance with the secularization phenomena already mentioned in the theoretical part. In other words, children may be reluctant to „the indoctrination” induced by parents. Moreover, the religious level self-defined by parents does not correlate with the perceived level of the children's religiosity.

5. The combined analysis between the parenting indexes and the religious indexes

As you can see below, we have built a global index of undertaking parenting according to the following formula:

$$\text{PARENT(P)} = (\text{ACOMPF} + \text{CONTSAN} + \text{CONTPUN} + \text{CONTINDI}) / 4.$$

It is noticed that there are significant correlations between the global index of undertaking parenting (PARENT) and the index of the children's religiosity (RELIGCOP), as well as the index of the personal religiosity (RELPERS). In exchange, the correlation between the global index and the religious index of the family (RELIGFAM) is not significant. Since the correlation relations do not involve the causality, we have built a pattern of multiple regression in order to see the influence of the religious factors upon the parenting undertaking (PARENT being the dependant variable).

The religious factors have a significant influence of 44% from the variance of *the parenting index* which is explained by their variance. In conclusion, the remainder of the variance of 56% is due to the influence of other variables. The analysis by logistic regression did not bring other conclusive results if we left from the construction of a new category variable IP dummy with the values: 1. Emphasized parental control (for IP >0); 0. Moderate parental control (for IP <0). Such approaches may be useful in the context of research enlarged on representative samples.

In *conclusion*, the family and child protection in the contemporary society is a priority dictated first of all by the need to support the family in the effort of coping with the challenges in the *secularising and secularised world* by saving the cultural contents and traditional values transposed in the diversity of the manifestation shapes of modernity and postmodernity. In the tense *family-community-society triad* which maintains the vicious circle of problems and “family crises”, where shall we start from? We consider that we can start from the invigorating of “the affective conjugality” within *the religious marriage*, namely the Holy Secret of Matrimony, which should attract *the parent assumption* in a dynamic equilibrium between *maternity* and *paternity* and which should represent an essential resource for the development of the children's own identity as well as their self-respect to others; and which should also allow the taking over and the progressive undertaking of the responsibilities to the family first of all and certainly to the own social-professional becoming.

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