

PSYCHOGENEALOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PHENOMENON OF VIOLENCE IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK

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Abstract

Psychogenealogy, the science of the unconscious transmission from one generation to another of the unsaid (Schutzenberger, 2016, p. 17), began to gain greater visibility in the field of social assistance, as a result of the need for a deeper knowledge of the problems individual social, of their origin and manifestation to facilitate the intervention process. Although social work is on the border with other socio-human sciences, the intervention may require the reinterpretation of this border in order to understand the mental processes and the behaviors associated with them both for professionals and for the beneficiaries of social work. It is not proposed to violate the boundary of the field of psychology, but only a reconfiguration of working techniques in social assistance. The genosociogram, used by many social workers in interventions, can be enriched for the assistance field with elements regarding the contextualization of the origin of the social problems of the beneficiaries at an intergenerational and transgenerational level. This approach would support a comprehensive understanding of the risk factors regarding antisocial behaviors and their origin for a quality intervention but also a more complex collaboration in the interdisciplinary team. The invitation for the opening and deepening of these theories in social work could contribute on the one hand to the personal and professional development of social workers, and on the other hand, it would bring significant contributions in the intervention processes of the social work field. This approach is configured in the new trends of modern social assistance, focused on learning and social pedagogy, which requires the practice of professional skills of critical thinking and creativity.

Keywords: psychogenealogy in social assistance, recurrence of social problems, genosociogram, intergenerational, transgenerational, family novel.

Résumé

La psychogénéalogie, en tant que science de la transmission inconsciente d'une génération à l'autre du non-dit (Schutzenberger, 2016, p.17), a commencé à gagner en visibilité dans le domaine de travail sociale, en raison de la nécessité d'une connaissance plus approfondie de la problèmes sociaux individuels, de leur origine et de leur manifestation pour faciliter le processus d'intervention. Bien que le travail social soit à la frontière avec d'autres

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sciences socio-humaines, l'intervention peut nécessiter la réinterprétation de cette frontière afin de comprendre les processus mentaux et les comportements qui leur sont associés tant pour les professionnels que pour les bénéficiaires du travail social. Il n'est pas proposé de violer les limites du domaine de la psychologie, mais seulement une reconfiguration des techniques de travail dans l'assistance sociale. Le géosociogramme, utilisé par de nombreux travailleurs sociaux dans les interventions, peut être enrichi pour le domaine de l'assistance avec des éléments concernant la contextualisation de l'origine des problèmes sociaux des bénéficiaires au niveau intergénérationnel et transgénérationnel. Cette approche soutiendrait une compréhension globale des facteurs de risque concernant les comportements antisociaux et leur origine pour une intervention de qualité mais aussi une collaboration plus complexe au sein de l'équipe interdisciplinaire. L'invitation à l'ouverture et à l'approfondissement de ces théories en travail sociale pourrait contribuer d'une part au développement personnel et professionnel des travailleurs sociaux, et d'autre part apporterait des contributions significatives dans les processus d'intervention du domaine de l'assistance. Cette approche s'inscrit dans les nouvelles tendances de l'assistance sociale moderne, axée sur l'apprentissage et la pédagogie sociale, qui nécessitent la pratique de compétences professionnelles de pensée critique et de créativité.

Mots clés : psychogénéalogie en travail sociale, récurrence des problèmes sociaux, géosociogramme, intergénérationnel, transgénérationnel, roman familial.

Rezumat

Psihogenealogia, ca știință a transmiterii inconștiente de la o generație la alta a celor *ne-spuse* (Schutzenberger, 2016, p. 17), a început să capete o mai mare vizibilitate în domeniul asistenței sociale, ca urmare a necesității cunoașterii mai profunde a problemelor sociale individuale, a originii și manifestării acestora pentru facilitarea procesului de intervenție. Deși asistența socială se află la granița cu alte științe socio-umane, intervenția poate necesita reinterpretarea acestei granițe în scopul înțelegerii proceselor psihice și a comportamentelor asociate acestora atât pentru profesioniștii cât și pentru beneficiarii asistenței sociale. Nu se propune încălcarea graniței domeniului psihologiei, ci doar o reconfigurare a tehnicilor de lucru în asistența socială. Genosociograma, utilizată de altfel de mulți asistenți sociali în intervenții, poate fi îmbogățită pentru domeniul asistențial cu elemente privind contextualizarea originii problemelor sociale ale beneficiarilor la nivel intergenerațional și transgenerațional. Această abordare ar susține o înțelegere comprehensivă a factorilor de risc privind comportamentele antisociale dar și a originii acestora pentru o intervenție de calitate dar și o mai complexă colaborare în echipa interdisciplinară. Invitația pentru deschiderea și aprofundarea acestor teorii în asistență socială ar putea contribui pe de o parte la dezvoltarea personală și profesională a asistenților sociali, iar pe de altă parte ar aduce contribuții semnificative în procesele de intervenție ale domeniului asistențial. Aceasta abordare se configurează în noile tendințe ale asistenței sociale moderne, axate pe învățare și pedagogie socială, care necesită exersarea competențelor profesionale de gândire critică și creativitate.

Cuvinte cheie: psihogenealogia în asistența socială, recurența problemelor sociale, genosociograma, intergenerațional, transgenerațional, romanul familial.

Introduction

Intervention in the field of social work has recently enjoyed increased attention from professionals in accordance with socio-political and climatic

changes and dynamics. Concerns regarding working with the beneficiaries of the social work system have been justified by the new contexts that have emerged in the background of medical crises, wars, natural catastrophes, but also the evolution of technology. These world crises have produced disturbances at the level of all more or less developed societies, translated in particular by the loss of loved ones, jobs, and homes due to the pandemic, the economic crisis, armed conflicts, and natural disasters. Therefore, the approach of modern social work takes into account an eco-systemic concern of the beneficiaries, the emphasis being on the use of their resources intertwined with spatial-regional and community resources. Such an approach requires introspection and a deeper knowledge of the beneficiaries in order to accurately identify the origin of their problems.

Social work is on the border of other socio-human sciences, being influenced by ways and techniques of assessment and introspection to facilitate intervention.

Social work at the beginning of the 21st century enjoys good support from governments promoting social policies aimed at ensuring a good quality of life by respecting human dignity and equal opportunities. However, over time it has been proven that a part of social work beneficiaries cannot face the challenges of everyday life and cannot function independently, on their own, always needing assistance and support, thus demonstrating a recurrence of problematic situations. In this sense, the social workers noticed the importance of some changes in the assessment and deeper introspection, for a better knowledge of the origin of the beneficiaries' problems but also of the mechanisms of the recurrence of the problems.

1. Violence – a psycho-genealogical programming?

One would think that with the accelerated development of technology up to Artificial Intelligence, against the background of the multitude of rights and equality of people, violence would belong to the past, to less developed archaic societies, and only as an exception in the present. This phenomenon, however, transcends time and, paradoxically, takes on a multitude of forms anchored in a diversity of reasons, from daily stress to identity problems and mental disorders.

Theoretically, *violence* represents the manifestation of aggressive behavior through force, coercion, and violation of the other's rights. Violence is based on a relationship of power and control between the aggressor and the victim who is not at an advantage, being a weaker subject compared to the aggressor. These aggressive behaviors take the form of bad treatment, violence against partners or in the family, facts and actions in the sphere of crime, and deviant and delinquent behaviors (Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Daniță, 2009, pp. 8-10).

The theories of Farrington, Stattin, Gustavson and Magnusson attribute violence to an increased level of the male hormone called testosterone, which in turn is associated with the early onset of delinquent acts in childhood, which would predict later violent behavior. These theories reinforce the idea that violence is generally associated with the male sex (Turliuc, 2019, p. 7).

Some authors considered that there is a segregation between the *instrumental* and the *emotional* aspects of violence. The *instrumental* form aims to obtain results aimed at demonstrating the power or status of the aggressor and requires a certain awareness and planning of the aggressive action with a certain degree of danger (Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Danilă, 2009, p. 8-10) or a certain intention of predictability (Chelcea, 2021, p. 93-94). *Emotional* violence has only the intention to harm someone as well as to reduce the mental tension of the aggressor. This is closer to symbolic aggression, which aims to destroy the meanings associated with objects, and symbols of the possible victim.

The theories state that at the base of violent behavior lies aggression, considered a personality trait developed under the influence of some potential factors: childhood abuse, traumatic experiences, and aggressive situations in the past on others or on one's own person, as well as some personality traits determined by psychological factors -social or bio-genetic.

For aggression, there would be two perspectives: a positive one, which sees aggression as a survival ability, primitive, originating in the preservation of the species, and a negative perspective, that of learned behavior based on socio-cultural influences (Irimescu, Rădoi, Gașpar de Almeida Santos, 2019, p. 19; Turliuc, Karner Huțuleac, Danilă, 2009, p. 7).

Beyond the theories specific to the various fields that analyze violence and violent behavior, most of them claim that violence is a learned behavior as stated by the family systemic theory or the Bowenian theory - which was considered one of the most comprehensive approaches to human behavior and of human problems. Like other theories, this originates in the field of psychoanalysis, a controversial field and considered unconventional for scientific validation. Thus, the author found it useful to translate his ideas into conventional theories and paradigms. However, most research and theories regarding the understanding of the depth of human behavior originate in psychoanalysis, starting from the idea that „emotional disturbance develops in relation to others”, as demonstrated by the set of theories related to the understanding and deciphering of human behavior (Mitrofan, Vasile, 2007, pp. 115-117).

Theories regarding violence and aggressive behavior highlight the major implications of the contextual environment dominated by socializing instances in which each individual develops. Thus, a series of „risk factors associated with disruptive and delinquent behavior” attributed to the family and which can contribute to the formation of the child's delinquent behavior were identified: alcohol/drug consumption during pregnancy, teenage mother with unplanned pregnancy, depressive episodes, parents' antisocial behavior, poor communication, poverty, large family, marital problems, harsh disciplinary practices, mistreatment, neglect, watching violent media content, negative attitude towards education and school, repetition, and last but not least, the community and family residence from border neighborhoods. These theories, however, cannot explain delinquency situations in environments where there are no risk factors generally associated with poverty and social-family disorganization. For all other contexts,

criminological theories highlight a choice of individuals for delinquency through the three principles described by Cusson, in 2010. These principles refer to the obtaining of benefits, the satisfaction of revenge, and the lack of responsibility for existing norms. Attractive factors are associated with these principles, represented by the attractive criminal environment, the inconsistent sanctions regime, the existence of many challenging vulnerable targets, etc. (Mihaiu, 2021, pp. 91-93). Moreover, the same author states that violence as a crime is subscribed to the concept of criminality by the fact that in Romania, criminality refers to all acts that present social danger, acts committed with guilt, and sanctioned by the criminal system.

As a field, crime has focused on the analysis of criminogenic behavior, highlighting the criminogenic need in association with some stimulating risk factors. The intervention regarding criminogenic behavior emphasizes the reduction of these risk factors through rehabilitation with the aim of preventing and reducing the chances of recidivism. The model itself proposes an individualized assessment of these risk factors that contribute to the manifestation of criminogenic behavior. Experiments conducted on low-risk offenders compared to high-risk offenders have observed a very high percentage of high-risk offenders recidivism even when risk factors are reduced.

This highlights the fact that the criminogenic need of high-risk offenders raises the interest in knowing the covariates between the criminal past and the dynamic predictors of a future criminal. Therefore, the authors draw attention to two aspects: the first refers to the assessment and individualized intervention for each criminal suspected of being at risk of recidivism by identifying the important factors – „those that make the difference” before the provision of services and the second aspect refers to the preparation professional staff working with criminals, suitable for understanding the mechanisms of delinquent/criminal behavior but also for good predictability in reducing recidivism. It was also considered that the formulation of the final objective with reference to the reduction of recidivism is too general compared to the establishment as an objective of the reduction of the criminogenic need, i.e. of replacing stressors with inhibitory factors on a time value axis (Andrews, Bonta, Hoge, 1990).

These researches highlight the importance of knowing and understanding deviant and criminal human thinking and behavior with a view to an intervention that reduces the criminogenic need, respectively the relapse or recurrence of certain behaviors.

These theories are joined by those of social learning by A. Bandura and his collaborators, who state that aggressive behavioral responses are learned and not innate. Aggressive behavior is acquired if rewarded and imitated when modeled. The oldest psychological theory of aggression generating research is the frustration-aggression theory of Dollard and his collaborators from 1939, which starts from the assumption that there is a causal relationship between frustration and aggression. *Frustration* refers to blocking the achievement of a goal, which produces dissatisfaction, and rebellion, translated as frustration and aggression.

Frustration is not always directed at the source, which confirms the fact that the use of inhibitory factors can reduce the manifestation of aggressive or violent behavior (Turluc, Karner Huțuleac, Dănilă, 2009, p. 10; Chelcea, 2021, pp. 100-101).

These theories support the idea of different interpersonal behaviors but also of intrapsychic structures, as originating in family or socio-cultural contexts born from past relationships and transmitted from generation to generation, translated as transgenerational transmission (Mitrofan, Vasile, 2007, pp. 115-116).

1.1. Transgenerational and intergenerational transmission in psychogenealogy

Psychogenealogy as a field has its origins in Freud's controversial psychoanalysis. The inventor of this concept is Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger, who has the merit of having structured and developed the ideas of other precursors but also of some methodologies specific to the field (Mitrofan, Godeanu, Godeanu, 2010, p. 17). Although specific to the field of psychology, some of the working methodologies and techniques can be extrapolated and used in other socio-human fields. Thus, storytelling and genograms are already used in related fields where it is necessary to assess the *life history* of individuals.

Specific to psychogenealogy is the transgenerational and intergenerational transmission of history through a *family memory*.

Some authors describe the intergenerational transmission from one generation to another of the conscious elements of the psychic life of a family, represented by family and community myths and mythologies, rituals, and ceremonies, while for transgenerational transmission Freud's theories are called upon, theories that they support the unconscious transmission of the unsaid, of the secrets and ghosts of the unconscious psyche. This unexpressed unconscious is seen by Freud as „like a black hole that unites us with others”, with family, relatives, and society, being called by the author as a collective soul, by Jung, collective unconscious, and by Moreno co-unconscious (Schutzenberger, 2016, pp. 18-19). Thus, transgenerational transmission refers to the unconscious transmission of those previous experiences, objects, and situations as well as the phantasms derived from them that contribute to the construction of one's own life scenarios. According to Freud, phantasms represent the imaginary changes that each of us makes in relation to situations, objects, or people, thus building a family novel.

Freud's *family novel* specifically referred to the imaginary construction of the family through phantasms. This concept is also based on the family memory, specific to the history of the family group, of intergenerational ties and relationships that are subject to deviations and filters of the imagination and phantasms produced by traumas and unpleasant or misunderstood experiences at the time.

The same authors explain Freud's *family novel* for two situations, both correcting the phantasm of family life that some children live: one part refers to children in the social work system who benefit from permanent or temporary

foster care measures, which implies a break or interruption of relations with the family of origin and some of the children who do not identify with their parents and family. Thus, the *family novel* represents a reconstruction of what children imagine their family to be. Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger calls them *unbreakable children*, for which we use the term resilience today (Schutzenberger, 2016, pp. 213-214). Do not understand that this projection is always positive because the *family novel* expresses reality combined with secrets, relationships, and behaviors with family members, which can contribute to the formation of deviant or delinquent attitudes and behaviors. The transmission of the family unconscious can take place from a very early age, precisely because it is based on the primitive way of communication, represented by non-verbal language. Therefore, due to the types of relationships between children and family members, children can receive, through intergenerational and transgenerational transmission, landmarks regarding their family history as well as landmarks regarding the construction of their personal lives (Godeanu, Godeanu, 2021, pp. 154-173).

1.2. Myths and rituals in the construction of family memory

Psychogenealogy highlights, in the process of intergenerational and transgenerational transmission, the importance of knowing family myths and rituals for understanding the functioning or blocking mechanisms of the family. Family myths and rituals are associated with family memory and have the role of sanctifying the family.

The myth, in psychogenealogy, has several characteristics that define it. These refer to the fact that it is transmitted orally from one generation to another, like a story, has the value of beginning in a historical past of the ancestors of a family, and is associated with various rituals and ceremonies. Some authors emphasize that the family myth represents the beliefs of the family group and can function as rules or as a protective censorship in their transmission. At the same time, the myth can be a set of symbolic and valuable elements that give the family a sense of belonging. For family memory, the myth is important because it contains the life history of the ancestors who generated sex-role models or that generational dowry specific to each family and each individual, while rituals have the role of fixing traditions. In addition, rituals build a common identity history, of a mythical nature, which Neuburger, in 2006, affirmed would build a family's destiny. Mircea Eliade, in 1991, stated that the ritual represents a spiritual, religious ceremony through which symbolic messages are expressed, often of passing or overcoming situations of crisis or change.

It is important to observe the dynamics of the transmission of the mechanisms of the family unconscious from the perspective of these myths that place the family in a specific family context (Godeanu, Godeanu, 2021, pp. 161-168).

2. Argument regarding introspection and evaluation for intervention in social work on violence from the perspective of psychogenealogy

As presented in the introduction of this analysis, social work has identified the need for change and improvement in working with beneficiaries, giving way to the design of adapted good practice models, with the aim of reducing social risks and recurrence. These good practice models are based on a complex and multidimensional evaluation of the beneficiary. This assessment is centered on interactions, thoughts and feelings, culture and spirituality but also on environment and contexts. In this sense, evaluation tools aimed at describing problematic situations, identifying the strong points of client systems, but also at expressing thoughts and feelings as well as points of view are recommended. The set of assessment tools includes the social history, genogram, ecomap, maps of social networks, and group, and community contexts (Krogsrud Myley, O'Melia, Du Bois, 2006, pp. 297-316).

2.1. Narrative and memory in welfare recipient assessment and introspection

Modern constructivist social work theory advocates narrative or storytelling as a way of client evaluation and introspection. The stories reflect their life experiences as well as the representation of reality and the mentality built on them (Payne, 2011, pp. 194-195). Septimiu Chelcea describes some theories of authors involved in the study and analysis of social memory. Thus, Middleton, Edwards, and Billing, followers of social constructionism, argue that people's stories are based on a social memory. Social memory theories show that individual memory is supported and influenced by group memory through interaction and socialization. Collective memory is based on memories that over time can be retouched, reorganized, and supplemented. This type of memory refers to the individual and not to the group that is meant to maintain and transmit from one generation to another certain events or contextual situations specific to the group. Starting from these statements, Halbwachs and Bartlett develop the theory of memory structuring by culture and interests that confirm the loss and restructuring of some information around a significant element over time. Other theorists (Edward and Mercer) approach social memory as a social activity focused on speech constructed with other individuals. Thus, people can narrate not only personal experiences but also the experiences of others, and the language used can transform the mode and content of what we remember. Starting from the social memory specific to social psychology, the psychology of cognition is concerned with rationally justified and imprinted social behaviors (Chelcea, 2021, pp. 196-203). Theoretical concerns go further to analyze the transmission from one generation to another of these remembered events in social and family contexts. Psychogenealogy as a field, has in mind this type of analysis that would clarify some of the unknown human behaviors. Along with social psychology and cognitive psychology,

psychogenealogy adds to introspection in the evaluation of possible clients or beneficiaries of the welfare system.

2.2. Genogram and genosociogram

Along with the story or narrative, *the genogram*, also known as the family tree of a family, is the graphic representation of people and relationships within the family. Historically, the genogram was used to represent some dynasties, as a landmark in family constructions. As a scientific tool, it first appeared in the Palo Alto School of Family Therapy in the 1970s and was used for the first time in 1987 by M. Bowen in family therapies with the aim of establishing interpersonal and intrapsychic interactions within families. Being a tool used in clinical interventions, it was co-opted in the medical field through which relevant data was obtained regarding the chain of transmission or the risk of transmission of certain diseases (Godeanu, Godeanu, 2021, pp. 315-316).

Because *the genogram* is based on a systemic and multigenerational vision, it has been used in many fields involving individual and family assessment. Thus, we find in social work the use of the genogram as a tool to identify the main events and types of intra-family relationships. Beyond the administrative aspects that reflect legal and parentage relationships, the social worker can identify rituals, customs, and mechanisms specific to family dynamics. Moreover, the theories and methods of social work propose a *systemic approach* to working with individuals and the family. Several *systemic approaches* are proposed in working with clients and beneficiaries of social work: Bowen's intergenerational therapy of family systems which considers affective and emotional interactions as well as their projection within family relationships; structural family therapy, which analyzes the boundaries, interactions, and nature of intra-family relationships but also the nature of the boundaries between family subsystems; Strategic family therapy that addresses the problem within the family and aims to participate in solving it versus obtaining an understanding of the presented problem and at the same time pays special attention to the power relationship and how parents approach power within family relationships (Teater, 2020, pp. 24-27).

Godeanu and Godeanu state that the genogram is a sociometric representation (affective type), which gathers data about names, places, and main events of the family with reference to births, deaths, marriages, and others. In a genogram, we can trace the repetitions, symmetries, or exceptions that occur in the family space, on the two levels, maternal and paternal. In order to have a meaningful picture of the family history, it is proposed to use the genogram for at least three to seven generations. However, there is little chance of having evidence of significant information or events beyond the third generation. The genogram is made through the graphic representation of symbols that signify people and relationships in the family space, with the delimitation of generational levels (Godeanu, Godeanu, 2021, pp. 316-323).

In order to better understand the family picture, there was identified the need to complete the genogram with contextual elements related to cohabitation,

triangles, anniversary syndromes, dyads, etc. which led to the emergence of the genosociogram. In other words, the *genosociogram* is an enriched genogram that highlights a more complex assessment of the family space.

Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger developed and encouraged the use of the genosociogram in work and therapy with individuals and the family. Realizing the *genosociogram* requires a certain dexterity of the professional in obtaining data from the family memory, but also in correlating and interpreting the information. The author points out that psychogenealogy should not be used without a rigorous multidisciplinary study, because without in-depth knowledge it can cause great harm to the client (Schutzenberger, 2016, pp. 109-116).

By means of this tool, professionals can accurately identify the main family ideas and mechanisms originating from the secrets, customs, and significant events from the transgenerational as well as the intergenerational path. In this way, the intervention can be focused on deciphering the information and correlations so that they can then be *rewritten* in scenarios suitable for the family balance. This method of evaluation-introspection and intervention would be useful for the professionals of the assistance system in reducing the recurrence of social problems, within the family and the community, as well as a way of personal and professional development but also a way to exercise their professional role as an agent of change.

Conclusions

As it is argued in the introduction, a deeper concern is imposed on introspection in the evaluation of the beneficiary from the social assistance to identify the origin of the problem but also to reduce the recurrence. Psychogenealogy can provide some useful pointers in this regard, without transgressing the boundaries of the domain. Explanations regarding the functioning mechanisms of human memory can add to the enrichment of the tools used for assessment and intervention in social work.

The transgenerational approach presents the advantage of knowing the contents of the family unconscious, the mechanisms of their unconscious transmission within the family system as well as its dynamics.

There are still stories passed down from generation to generation, stories that can suffer dilution of meaning depending on the classification of information that would contribute to the image and status of the family. Therefore, obtaining truthful data regarding the transmission of information depends on the interviewer's training and experience as well as his ability to interpret them. That is why it is important that professionals give importance to the need for professional development for the evaluation and introspection of clients with the aim of reducing the recurrence of family problems inherited more or less along the family transgenerational route.

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Biodata

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