

## THE ROLE OF FAMILY SOCIALIZING IN BUILDING GENDER IDENTITY

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### Abstract

*Socialization is an interactive communication process that requires individual development and social influences, thus highlighting personal reception and interpretation of social messages, as well as the intensity and content dynamic of these social influences. In this context, family socialization represents the main model of the of gender interactions, of defining gender identity composition and gender expectations. Gender socialization within the family setting is very important because it internalizes the gender rules and ideologies, assimilating gender content from the two significant figures : Mom and Dad. This content is a fundamental cornerstone for building gender identity. The research aims to identify the views of students from the Veterinary Medicine University of Bucharest regarding the role of family socialization in the construction of gender identity. The research results confirm a trend of perception for most students towards the innovative socializing model, based on equality in the distribution of tasks within the family. However, there are differences between the genders in terms of perception and comprehension of the role of women and men. Thus, it appears that some of the students believe that the woman carries most of the household domestic tasks, while some students assigned the traditional role of financial support for the entire family to the men.*

**Key words:** family socializing, gender identity, innovative socializing model

### INTRODUCTION

**Socialization** is the "transmission-assimilation process of psychosocial attitudes, values, concepts or specific behavior patterns of a group or a community in a person's formation, adaptation and social integration" (Zamfir and Vlăsceanu, 1993) [4]. Social mechanisms consist mainly of socialization among statuses and learning predetermined roles. In traditional families, the **mother's role** was primarily encompassed in the **emotional / expressive education sphere** (which meets the need of affection to the child); the **father's role** is, specifically, in the **instrumental dimension** (in guiding the child towards the social world, outside the family) (Mihailescu, 2003) [3]. Family socialization is the main model of gender interactions, of defining the composition of gender identity and gender expectations (Grunberg, 2002) [1]. **Gender identity** embodies the acceptance of personal identity as male or female based on assuming biological sex but also of cultural

identity in masculinity or femininity terms (Miroiu, 2003) [2]. By socializing, the individual appropriates what the family and subsequently, society expects from this (gender) form of behavior. The principle of equality between men and women enforces acceptance and highlights differences between them both and the various roles they play in society.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest on a research sample group of 375 respondents. The data collection timeframe was June 1st to July 31st, 2014. The research group comprises 162 female students and 213 male students, with a representative distribution over all the faculties and their components (Agriculture, Zoology, Veterinary Medicine, Horticulture, Biotechnology and Management). *Romanian family is based on a traditional*

model of socialization that is passed on from generation to generation. In this context **the research hypothesis** is as follows: young people have integrated elements of the modern social model, thus modifying traditional social behavior.

The items in the questionnaire with which we want to verify the research hypothesis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire content

| Items  |
|--|
| In your opinion, what is key to having a good marriage?  |
| Who does the daily shopping in your household?   |
| Who decides on how money for daily expenses is being spent, in your household?                 |
| Who decides how money is being invested, for major purchases (tv, car, etc) in your household? |
| Who usually does the following activities in your household...                                 |
| What is your marital status?   |
| Would you live with your spouse before marriage?   |
| Who should be in charge of .... within the family?   |
| Communication between yourself and other family members is...                                  |
| How satisfied are you about the quality of communication within your family?                   |
| How do you react to failure in your everyday life?   |

Processing and interpretation of questionnaire data and findings was done with the Statistical Package for the Social Program IBM SPSS 10.0 Sciences. In this program the following methods were applied: *Descriptive Statistic – Frequencies*; *Descriptive Statistic – Crosstabs*; *Bivariate Correlation*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1.SINGLE VARIATION STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATABASE

Respondents showed that in order to have a happy marriage partners must "trust each other" (80.53 %), "love each other" (80.00 %), "to support one another" (79, 2%), "be faithful"( 78.13 %), "have a home of their own" (66.93 %), "be sexually compatible" (56.53 %). Less significant are the following : "a small age gap between them" (22.93 %), "having the same education level" (24.00 %), "having money" (27.20 %). The partnership developed in a marriage is based on mutual valuing each other through trust, love, support, loyalty and only then, home ownership. We note the passing from the marital rational criteria type (money, property) to the psychological and relational, empathetic type (Table 2).

Table 2. The frequency of responses to the statement "In your opinion, what is important for a marriage to be successful ?"

|                                    | Very important (%) | Important (%) | Unimportant (%) | Unimportant at all (%) | DK/DA (%) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------|
| having a place of their own        | 66.93              | 26.67         | 4.00            | 1.60                   | 0.80      |
| having good living conditions      | 48.53              | 47.20         | 2.67            | 0.80                   | 0.80      |
| having money                       | 27.20              | 60.27         | 10.93           | 0.80                   | 0.80      |
| having the same level of education | 24.00              | 45.33         | 27.73           | 1.60                   | 1.33      |
| supporting each other              | 79.20              | 18.93         | 1.07            | 0.27                   | 0.53      |
| being faithful                     | 78.13              | 20.00         | 1.33            | 0.27                   | 0.27      |
| loving each other                  | 80.00              | 18.13         | 1.07            | 0.53                   | 0.27      |
| sexual compatibility               | 56.53              | 35.20         | 6.13            | 0.27                   | 1.87      |
| trusting one another               | 80.53              | 17.07         | 1.87            | 0.27                   | 0.27      |
| being of similar age               | 22.93              | 37.07         | 36.27           | 2.67                   | 1.07      |

Source : own SPSS processing

To have a happy marriage female students regard partners "having the same education" (+9.27 %), less on (+ 5.81 %) "having a home of their own" , "having money" (+ 5.70 %) and only a few considering "a small age gap between them" significant (+ 4.52 %).

Respondents residing in rural areas consider "having money" (+3.40%) highly more relevant than those respondents in urban areas and then on, "having a home of their own " (3.02%). "Having the same education " is more valued in urban than in rural areas (+ 3.49 %) as well as "trust each other" (+1.66%). Respondents from rural areas values the rational, financial aspects, while those in urban areas cherish the educational and symbolic values.

**Daily shopping** is made by both partners in 58.93 % of families, only by females in 29.33 % of them , while 7.73 % of those who make daily purchases are male. Female students appreciate that their families everyday purchases are made by both partners equally 60.25 %, but also that females do daily shopping to a greater extent within the families than the view of male students(+7.72 %).

The decision on spending **money for everyday necessities** belongs to both partners equally (76.80 %), only to females (13.6 %) and only to males (7.2 %).

Decisions on **important family expenses** are

taken by both partners equally (76% ), just the males (14.67 %) or just the females (6.93 %). Female students say that important decisions are taken by both partners in a higher proportion (+9.06 %), while male students respond that males take important decisions to a greater extent of (+ 9,46%).

We notice that except the cases in which both partners take important or daily decisions together (about 76 %), decisions on daily shopping are taken mostly by females, while important spending decisions are taken by the males.

Housework and domestic activities in the families from which respondents come from are strictly distributed by gender : if the women are mostly "in charge" of the washing /ironing clothes (82.13%), preparing / cooking the food (73,87%), cleaning up the house (70.67%), washing the dishes (64.80%), daily care of the child / children (43.73%), household care (31.47%), the men have specific designated tasks also, such as fixing / repair work on the household installations and facilities (plumbing, electric appliances, etc.) in an average of 80.27 %. The activities both women and men alike do are: daily care of the child / children ( 41.33 %) and household care (43.13 %) ( Table 3).

The vast majority of respondents cohabit (57.07%), or are single (38.13%). The number of married, divorced or widowed is reduced. The relational model accepted by students during their studies period is cohabitation. The percentage of male students living as a couple is high (5.59 %), while the percentage of married female students is higher than married male students (+ 2.62 %).

Table 3. Frequency of responses to the question "Who often does the following activities in your household ?"

|   | More often the woman (%) | More often the man (%) | Man and woman equally (%) | Hiring someone (%) | Not the case (%) | DK/DA (%) |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------|
| takes care of the housekeeping                          | 31.47                    | 20.00                  | 34.13                     | 1.87               | 11.47            | 1.07      |
| fixes household appliances (plumbing, electrical, etc.) | 2.93                     | 80.27                  | 6.93                      | 7.47               | 1.60             | 0.80      |
| food preparation  | 73.87                    | 3.73                   | 21.33                     | 0.53               | 0.53             | 0.00      |
| housecleaning   | 70.67                    | 3.20                   | 24.27                     | 1.33               | 0.53             | 0.00      |
| doing the laundry                                       | 82.13                    | 2.93                   | 13.60                     | 0.80               | 0.00             | 0.53      |
| washing the dishes                                      | 64.80                    | 5.33                   | 28.53                     | 0.53               | 0.80             | 0.00      |
| daily care for the children                             | 43.73                    | 2.13                   | 41.33                     | 1.87               | 9.87             | 1.07      |

Source : own SPSS processing

Respondents from urban areas adopt cohabitation to a greater extent (+8.08 %), while those in rural areas are mostly single (+7.95 %).

55,20 % of the respondents agree with living together before marriage, 21.33 % answered that they were not married, while only 7.73 % do not wish to live together before marriage (Table 4).

Table 4. The frequency of responses to the question "Would you live with your husband / wife before marriage ?"

|                    | (%)   |
|--------------------|-------|
| Yes                | 55.20 |
| No                 | 7.73  |
| Never been married | 21.33 |
| DK/DA              | 15.74 |

Source : own SPSS processing

Male students approve of living together before marriage to a larger degree (2.63%) than female students. Respondents in urban areas also mostly prefer living with their future spouse before marriage (4.92 %), while rural respondents frown upon living with their husband/wife before marriage(+1.28 %).

**Care and moral support** between spouses should be equally provided (87.47 %), they should also **manage the family income** together (83.20 %), equally on dealing with **childcare** (78.67 %), as well as **looking after the elderly** (77.60 %).

But household and domestic chores should be handled by both parents equally (63.20%) or more by the mother (33.07 %), while gaining revenue and providing for the family can be the responsibility of both parents equally (68.80%) or more the father's concern (28.80 %) (Table 5).

Opinions of respondents indicate a greater adherence to the democratic, innovative family model, in carrying out the basic functions, but also a reminiscence of the rooted traditional model of dividing and distributing family roles.

Table 5. Perception on gender roles

| Who in the family should be in charge of ... | Mostly the mother (%) | Mostly the father (%) | Both parents equally (%) | Other (%) | DK/DA |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-------|
| 1. raising children?                         | 19.47                 | 1.87                  | 78.67                    | 0.00      | 0.00  |
| 2. earning an income?                        | 2.13                  | 28.80                 | 68.80                    | 0.27      | 0.00  |
| 3. housekeeping?                             | 33.07                 | 3.73                  | 63.20                    | 0.00      | 0.00  |
| 4. taking care of the elderly?               | 13.60                 | 1.87                  | 77.60                    | 5.87      | 1.07  |
| 5. moral support?                            | 7.20                  | 4.80                  | 87.47                    | 0.53      | 0.00  |
| 6. managing the family finances?             | 6.13                  | 10.40                 | 83.20                    | 0.27      | 0.00  |

Source : own SPSS processing

In gender formation a primordial role is played by the family educational factor. The educational factors leading to the formation of gender identity as a boy are: discipline (81.33 %), freedom of choice (40.80 %), order (31.20 %). In the family education of girls, the key aspects are: discipline (45.60 %), diligence (48.27%) and obedience (36.80%). If discipline is valued in the education of both genders, freedom of choice and order is more of an imperative for boys, while as for girls, diligence and obedience become paramount (Table 6).

Table 6. The frequency of responses to the question "What are the most important things in the education of boys / girls?"

|                      | For boys (%) |       |       | For girls (%) |       |       |
|----------------------|--------------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
|                      | YES          | NO    | DK/DA | YES           | NO    | DK/DA |
| 1. discipline        | 81.33        | 18.13 | 0.53  | 45.60         | 54.40 | 0.00  |
| 2. diligence         | 26.40        | 73.33 | 0.27  | 48.27         | 51.73 | 0.00  |
| 3. obedience         | 20.27        | 79.73 | 0.00  | 36.80         | 63.20 | 0.00  |
| 4. freedom of choice | 40.80        | 59.20 | 0.00  | 36.00         | 64.00 | 0.00  |
| 5. order             | 31.20        | 68.80 | 0.00  | 32.00         | 68.00 | 0.00  |

Source : own SPSS processing

Respondents appreciate communication between family members as very good (54.40 %), good (34.67%) and satisfactory ( 8.27 %). A small percentage of only 2.13% consider family communication as unsatisfactory and in need of improvement (Table 7).

Table 7. The perception on family communication

| Communication between yourself and other family members is... | %     |
|---|-------|
| Very good   | 54.40 |
| Good  | 34.67 |
| Satisfactory  | 8.27  |
| Unsatisfactory  | 2.13  |
| DK/DA   | 0.53  |

Source : own SPSS processing

Among the family members that are very satisfied with communication within the family are those that have it with their mother (61.07 %), then their father (47.47 %). Of those who have siblings, very satisfied are those getting along well with their sister (21.33 %) and those with their brother (17.60 %) of respondents (Table 8).

Table 8. Satisfaction levels on communication with family members

|         | Very satisfied (%) | Satisfied (%) | Less satisfied (%) | Unsatisfied (%) | Not the case (%) | DK/DA (%) |
|---------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------|
| Mother  | 61.07              | 32.00         | 4.27               | 1.60            | 0.27             | 0.80      |
| Father  | 47.47              | 33.07         | 8.27               | 4.00            | 5.87             | 1.33      |
| Sister  | 21.33              | 16.00         | 2.93               | 1.60            | 56.80            | 1.33      |
| Brother | 17.60              | 13.07         | 5.87               | 2.67            | 57.87            | 2.93      |
| Others  | 2.13               | 2.67          | 0.00               | 0.00            | 1.07             | 94.13     |

Source : own SPSS processing

In case of failure, respondents say they react through calming down on their own (42.13 %), depression (25.60 %), irritation (25.07 %), determination (15.73 %), indifference (10.13 %), anger (6.93 %), hopelessness (3.20 %), disdain (2.40 %) ( Table 9).

Table 9. The frequency of responses to the question "How do you deal with failure in your daily life ?"

|               | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|---------------|---------|--------|
| Indifference  | 10.13   | 89.87  |
| Calming down  | 42.13   | 57.87  |
| Annoyance     | 25.07   | 74.93  |
| Fury          | 6.93    | 93.07  |
| Despair       | 3.20    | 96.89  |
| Depression    | 25.60   | 74.40  |
| Determination | 15.73   | 84.27  |
| Other ...     | 2.40    | 97.60  |

Source : own SPSS processing

## 2.VARIABLES ASSOCIATION EVALUATION REGARDING FAMILY SOCIALIZATION

### Gender analysis

The analysis of the variables on family socialization through their correlation with respondents' gender emphasizes the following:

- there is a statistically significant association between gender and the person doing the daily family shopping (  $\chi^2 = 6.242$ ,  $p = 0.044$ ) - *though most students say that both partners participate in daily shopping, female students believe this activity is especially by the women;*
- there is a statistically important association between gender and the deciding factor on major family expenses  $\chi^2 = 7.046$ ,  $p = .030$ )
- *both female students and male students assign this role to both partners, but the difference lays that this concept is higher among female students, while more male students consider this role as belonging to the man;*
- there is a statistically relevant association between gender and household caregiver functions (  $\chi^2 = 7.833$ ,  $p = .020$ ) - *even though about a third of the students assign this role to both partners, there is a clear trend of female students to consider the role as attributed mainly women;*
- there is a statistically relevant association between gender and the person doing the dishes (  $\chi^2 = 9.480$ ,  $p = .009$ ) and also a very weak, direct correlation (coef. 0.160,  $p <$

0.002) of notable characteristics - *there is a distinctive form distribution of this role family, female students tend to attribute this role to mostly women, while male students assign it to both partners;*

- there is a statistically significant association between gender and the persons who consider that they're in charge of children education within the family (  $\chi^2 = 14.347$  ,  $p = .001$  ) and a very weak correlation, reversed, but notable ( coef.  $-0.197$  ,  $p < 0.001$  ) - *both female and male students assign this role to both partners, but the difference comes from the fact that male students consider this role more often a woman's field of functions;*

- there is a statistically considerable association between gender and the person who is views as responsible for ensuring the family income (  $\chi^2 = 14.794$  ,  $p = .001$  ) and a weak correlation , reversed, but notable (coef .  $-0.201$  ,  $p < 0.001$  ) - *both female students and male students assign the role to both parents, but male students consider that this role belongs to the father to a greater extent;*

- we observe associations and correlations between gender and responses to failure, as indifference (  $\chi^2 = 8.453$  ,  $p = .004$  ; a very poor correlation, reversed coef. of  $= -.150$  ,  $p < 0.004$  ) and as depression (  $\chi^2 = 10.442$  ,  $p = .001$  ), along with a very poor correlation , direct coef . of  $= .167$  ,  $p < 0.001$  ) - *we notice that female students react to failure more often in the form of depression, while male students react to a greater extent than women with indifference.*

#### **Analysis based on resistance**

Analysis of the variables on family socialization through their correlation with the residence fortitude of respondents, emphasizes the following:

- generally there are no statistically important differences between respondents, which underlines the uniformity in behavior among young people, with their integration into the specific social environment of student life;

- there is a significant correlation showcased, statistically weak and reversed, in terms of role responsibilities, in considering that raising children must be done by both parents equally;

- There is an association between the

residence sphere and communication within the family, especially with the mother - the association between variables is statistically significant (at a significance level below 0.05), and the correlations are very weak, intense and relevant - *in rural areas, communication in the family and especially with the mother is much better than in the life of urban youth.*

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

As prior noted, there are no major differences between respondents, thus falling within the assumption of social integration of youth in their current environment, that of student life. Statistically significant results however are:

- gender and the person making the daily family shopping runs - *although most students say that both partners participate in daily shopping, female students believe that this activity is mostly reserved for women;*

- gender and important family purchases - *both male students as well as female students assign this role to both partners, but the difference is that this equal division perception is higher among female students, while many male students consider this the role the man;*

- gender and household caregiving - *although about a third of the students assigned this role both partners, there is an obvious tendency of female students to believe that this role has been particularly reserved for women;*

- gender and the person doing the dishes - *there is a different distribution of this role in the family, the female students tend to attribute this place especially towards women, while male students attribute it to both partners;*

- gender and the person considered as the main educational figure for children in the family - *both male and female students assign this role to both partners, but the difference lays in male students' belief that this is mostly the role of women;*

- gender and the person who is considered responsible for ensuring the family income - *most of the female and male students evenly assign the role to both parents, but students consider to a greater degree that this role has*

*to be assumed by the father figure;*

- gender and reactions to failure, both in the form of indifference or depression - *we observed that female students usually react to failure by feeling depressed, while male students react to a greater extent than women through indifference.*

- the residence field and family communication, especially with the mother - *we notice that especially in rural areas, communication with family members, and with the mother in particular is way better than in the urban environment and background.*

***The initial hypothesis on which we built our research was that young people have integrated elements of the modern social model, inadvertently modifying traditional social behavior.***

***Statistical results confirm the tendency of most students to adhere to the social innovative model, based on equality in distributing family tasks.***

***All this considered, there are still differences between gender when it comes to the perception of the role of man and woman. Thus, on one hand we notice a part of the female students that considers women in charge of domestic chores and housekeeping as well as raising children, while the man is responsible for financial support and providing for the family.***

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