



Cultural Integration, Identity And Conflict. A Study In Argentina on Immigrants From Europe And Neighboring Countries In The Light Of The Theory of The Three Dimensional Spiral of Sense

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ABSTRACT

The research carried out belongs to the field of Social, Intercultural and Developmental National Psychology. The first study allowed for the analysis of the relationship between Cultural conflict, Identity and Anomy in descendants of European immigrants. The second research work was carried out on individuals from three Latin-American countries. They cover the last three decades. Based on different, though complementary axes, the studies emphasize some common features related to behaviors and attitudes associated to Status Inconsistency and Anomia. The method applied was quantitative-qualitative. The results contradict some core issues of the cultural conflict theory and invites rethinking in the light of the aforementioned theory.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Integration – Cultural conflict – Anomy – Identity – New Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

In the frame of Social, Intercultural and National Development Psychology (Aparicio, 2015 c), the present study comprises elements from psycho-social theories. We attempted to develop a "pre-test" for some hypotheses proposed by P. Heintz (1970), as well as some others related to the topic (especially Thomas' and Znaniecki's, 1918).

With first-hand data, the research analyzes the relationship existing between marginal environments/ identity crisis/ cultural conflict/ anomy, and the psychosocial-associated responses they arise, which constitute an important issue in developing in the light of the sui generis theory by Dr. Aparicio: The Three Dimensional Spiral of Sense.

The empirical referent comprises two core studies and several derived ones in a three- decade period, which give indications of change and resulting conflict, along with the transformation in levels of social apathy and unconformity, together with a weakening of self-identity, always an important problem both from the psychosocial point of view and from its social referent.

Based on different, though complementary axes, the study emphasizes some common features augmented in the case of Argentina. Anomy, "rootlessness" and identity are only three of the many variables which appeared in the process.

The issue was approached from two different perspectives: structural-institutional and individual, including both macro and micro analysis.

From the structural-institutional point of view, underdeveloped environments widen the gap between goals and institutionalized resources, giving way to anomic behavior and deviations. In times of deep crisis, such situation exceeds the limits of the individual and becomes a collective syndrome.

Regarding the individual, connotations of this crisis (frustration, crime, suicide, drug addiction, lack of identity, uncertain projects,...) become more and more evident in our studies.

Group or national identity and cultural integration: From the perspective of the identity and according to Heintz (1970), it is worth mentioning that "...identity always makes reference to the whole of society...and this reference secures a relative permanence of the self image (...). Group or national identity relates, in turn, to cultural integration". Thus, cultural integration influences personal identity. Therefore, when levels of integration are low, as in the case of immigrants, some

contradictions arise in the self image, which generate internal psychological conflicts and influence such identity. In fact, communication with a new culture is sometimes the cause for hopeless, amoral, marginal or discriminatory behavior among individuals (Germani, 1971). The immigrant's social personality tends to "crack down" in such environment until he manages to become a part of the new culture.

The consequences of such situation are that these immigrants' descendants do not feel themselves as identified with national values or institutions as native Argentines do, and their levels of typical conflict are markedly higher.

The high percentage of immigrants and their descendants were a major influence in the issue, since they suffered (and still do) the consequences of little cultural integration in addition to, especially in previous decades, an inconsistent social shifting (high economic status, compared to ethnic and educational), which resulted in low psycho-sociological integration.

II. RESEARCHS, METHODS AND RESULTS

The theoretical frame will not be discussed here. We prefer to plunge into the findings from core research covering as many as thirty years, since they reveal persistent tendencies in relation with a weakened identity, not only among immigrants' descendants, but also among native Argentines from marginal areas.

We would also like to point out that extrapolating may not always constitute the most accurate technique, since reality often differs greatly from theory. The results from the research are an invitation to find out about reality in our own environment, recreating the theory based on the "here and now" of the cultural conflict in the light of Dr. Aparicio's theory, recently published (Aparicio 2015 c and d), a dynamic, nonlinear, systemic, sui generis theory in which social phenomena can only be understood from the 3 level interplay: macro social, meso institutional and micro.

1. First Core Research Work Introduction

It was done more than thirty years ago (1977). The span of time is long enough to expect certain changes in some of the societal conditions, which could influence the individuals and, in time, be reflected in psychosocial behavior.

The study deals with the relationship between a central sociological problem (sense of lacking roots, regarded from the combination of their position as immigrants' descendants,

social background and social mobility and other psychological and attitudinal variables (identity crisis, cultural conflict, anomy, apathy/unconformity, anxiety), the psychosocial aspect being considered as an effect of the central problem, rather than as a conditioning factor.

The axis of the problem is the cultural conflict associated to immigration and its impact at the psychosocial level, interpreted as a side effect of the immigrant's inadequacy syndrome or inconsistent status syndrome, with a higher financial level and a lower cultural, psychological and/or social level (Lanski, 1954; Jackson, 1962; Jackson & Curtis, 1972).

The hardcore of the problem may be signaled by what we dubbed "realization syndrome" or "adequacy", which would depend on belonging to a family of Argentine origin (at least from the great-grandparents' generation onwards) and their fast climbing of the social ladder (like the one which took place during the first decades of the Twentieth Century).

Working on the problem required gathering first hand inter-generation data, with no need for artificial aid.

In short, the analysis focuses on the effects of the cultural transplantation and social shifting on national identity displayed by immigrants' descendants (macro and micro levels).

1.2. Method

Statistics (Phi and Linkage analysis) and process (qualitative analysis) analyses were carried out, with 77 variables (base, personality, social-cultural and structural).

The sample: included 350 senior students from high school (152 male and 188 female). The sampling was stratified, aleatory and systematic.

Procedure: The work was carried out with the complete group in a classroom.

Instruments: A survey was carried out. Specific tests were also used (J. Pinillos' CEP, our version of Maudsley's Medical Questionnaire, "Cuestionario Desiderativo" –Arzeno et al.).

A semi-structured questionnaire revealed some negative reactions (revolutionary activism, unconformity) and status inconsistency.

1.3. Results

-Interesting co-relations appeared (Phi and Linkage Analysis) between Cultural "Rootlessness" (cultural conflict, observed mainly by immigrants' descendants, Identity and Anomy, with psychosocial and personality variables (Perception of Happiness, Fatalism/Activism, N-ach, Flexibility/Authoritarian Behavior, Optimism, Conformity, Pessimism, Control of emotions, Stress, Aggressiveness, Prejudices, Cultural Integration). The origin of these co-relations is a complex one.

-The statistics analysis showed a substantial difference between immigrants' and natives' descendants, the feeling of realization or integration being at a lower level among the former.

-This feeling, in addition to attitudinal differences, may account for the status inconsistency which affected aliens in a special way, and which can be seen in some common features of the group, such as relatively low social origins, level of schooling usually low, and high economic level.

-As a result, non-national groups suffered scarce cultural disintegration and low psycho-social integration, while native groups (both at higher and lower levels) always showed a more consistent status.

Immigrants' descendants (immigrants' grandchildren in the first study and great-grandchildren in the complementary

aforementioned study) belonging to lower social classes and with a higher anomy index reflected more psychological conflicts: they were less optimistic and more aggressive than descendants from native Argentineans.

Argentineans' descendants, on the contrary, were more self-satisfied and content with the social situation, showed lower anxiety levels, a lower need for growth and better family relationships. Coming from a "rooted" family seemed to cause a more optimistic view of the world around them.

-The explanation for such attitude will not be found in psychological or occasional factors only (as it is often argued), but taking into consideration further basic social factors.

1.4. Discussion

According to the existing theories on cultural conflict, these responses were associated to the fact that the families had undergone deep psychosocial and cultural changes due to the "geographical transplantation".

-Consequently, the increase of deviated behavior (especially crime) during the migratory affluence at the beginning of the century was another manifestation of social-cultural conflicts (Panettieri, 1966). The low-morale effect (Germani, 1971) should have been reflected in their children's socializing process (parents), indirectly reached their grandchildren and further –according to the latest research, their great-grandchildren, and even the following generation. The findings (Aparicio, 1977) take us back to the problem of cultural "rootlessness".

-To sum up: The strong influence of immigration on the nation's cultural integration appears to be a phenomenon lasting for over three generations, affecting young people's psychology and attitudes in their personal and collective identification.

2. Second Research Work

2.1. Introduction

This research deals with the problem of cultural identity (back to the scene in occasion of the 500th Anniversary of the Discovery of America) and anomy (individual and/or collective).

We worked again on the issue of "cultural transplantation" (cultural uprooting), which, according to the theory, will impact on personal and social integration, on identity and anomy (macro and micro levels in interaction). The sample comprised Chileans, Bolivians, and Argentineans living in poor neighborhoods in the province of Mendoza.

The survey made among Argentineans –many of whom descended from foreign parents and/or grandparents – provided some hints on the effects of "cultural transplantation", with no discrimination about nationalities at that point yet.

After that first observation, our objective was to confirm if this "rootlessness" in a large group of people was somehow responsible for low identity levels. Another objective was establishing whether the different ethnic groups or nationalities showed different characteristics (especially Bolivians and Chileans).

The global scenario changes since everyone lives in poor conditions, no one has experienced social mobility which could allow them to leave the neighborhood and, therefore, there is no status inconsistency (origin, education and employment), as in the above mentioned case. The matter is relevant in a society tending to become more inclusive and intercultural, a society in which everyone could have the same opportunities and everyone respects each other and each other's diversity. A kind of society which, for different causes, receives huge floods of immigrants due to political, racial or religious reasons.

2.2. Method

Statistical-descriptive analyses were carried out.

The sample: Works were carried out with three different groups: two of the largest foreign populations in Mendoza (Bolivians and Chileans, who suffered the "cultural transplantation"), and one group of Argentines living in the same marginal areas. The sampling was stratified from the first lists onwards.

The samples include 131 Chileans (1%), 36 Bolivians and 174 Argentines (National Institute for Statistics and Census).

Techniques: A semi-structured questionnaire was used and an interview carried out. Variables included a wide range of personalities and social backgrounds.

Procedure: The techniques were applied individually and at the subject's domicile.

2.3. Results

Anomy, weak identity and psychological variables were typical features present among the subjects in the research done in 1977, and which were dubbed under "maladjustment syndrome". These feelings were common in that context where immigrants' descendants still suffered the consequences of the cultural conflict arising from their ancestors' "land transplantation". Similar levels of conflict were now found among Argentines, Chileans and Bolivians, the latest showing deeper symptoms.

2.4. Conclusions

Some "negative evidence" about cultural conflict, weak identity and psycho-sociological anomy has been found, which challenges some of the theories on cultural conflict. In short:

it would not just or fundamentally be "cultural transplantation" (geographical mobility) the cause of the cultural conflict, low levels of integration and identity and high levels on anomia. In this case, there was cultural transplantation of 2 groups, but the behaviors and attitudes observed in the study differ very little from those of (native) Argentines living in those neighborhoods. This implies that such consequences present interweaving causes / conditions constituting a complex, nonlinear phenomenon in which individuals and contexts feedback to each other in a dynamic way (micro and macro levels). In our case, the social layer (low for everyone) gets balanced for the 3 groups and the psychosocial responses (apathy, resignation, fatalism, rejection to structures, almost lack of expectations, conformism,..) reach almost the same figures for the 3 groups. Anomy (comprising phenomenon, at the individual and collective levels), associated to integration and labile identity, appears at the same levels. The difference in the psychosocial responses of native Argentines and foreigners fades. Cultural transplantation is not, then, the main cause leading to deviant or anonymous responses in a broad sense, as suggested by from extended theories. Findings are important for a society in which geographical mobility's increase within contexts of globalization and discrimination, although in the debate what prevails is the idea of inclusion and respect for diversity.

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