

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS: SOCIALIZATION ASPECTS OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT TODAY

RELAÇÕES PESSOAIS E CONDIÇÕES ESTRUTURAIS INSTITUCIONAIS: ASPECTOS DE SOCIALIZAÇÃO DO DESENVOLVIMENTO DA IDENTIDADE HOJE

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Abstract: This study explores the development of identity and socialization processes in Western societies, beginning within familial settings and extending to educational institutions, which significantly shape individuals' trajectories. Drawing from sociological and educational theories, including those by Veith (2004), Beck (1983) and Habermas (1976) the research examines the transformative dynamics of school socialization, highlighting the interplay of institutional norms, role expectations, and individual agency. Methodologically, the analysis integrates structural and subject-centered approaches, emphasizing historical contexts and theoretical shifts from deterministic to individualization paradigms. Key findings underscore the increasing focus on self-socialization and the challenges posed by societal pluralization, digitalization, and weakened normative frameworks. Empirical studies illustrate how evolving cultural and technological landscapes influence individual development, reshaping traditional norms and fostering autonomous action. The research critiques purely subject-centered perspectives by recognizing the enduring impact of structural determinants on life courses, advocating for nuanced evaluations of individualization and social frameworks. It calls for further empirical investigation into the interaction of these factors in diverse biographical contexts, emphasizing the need for educational systems to balance knowledge dissemination with emotional and therapeutic support for students. These insights contribute to contemporary debates on identity formation and the recalibration of socialization research in light of modern challenges.

Keywords: Identity development. Socialization. Individualization. Educational systems. Structural determinants.

Resumo: Este estudo explora o desenvolvimento da identidade e os processos de socialização nas sociedades ocidentais, iniciados no ambiente familiar e ampliados pelas instituições educacionais, que moldam significativamente as trajetórias individuais. Com base em teorias sociológicas e educacionais, incluindo as de Veith (2004), Beck (1983) e Habermas (1976), a pesquisa analisa as dinâmicas transformadoras da socialização escolar, destacando a interação entre normas institucionais, expectativas de papéis e agência individual. Metodologicamente, a análise integra abordagens estruturais e centradas no sujeito, enfatizando os contextos históricos e as mudanças teóricas de paradigmas deterministas para a individualização. Os principais resultados apontam para um foco crescente na autossocialização e nos desafios impostos pela pluralização societal, digitalização e enfraquecimento dos marcos normativos. Estudos empíricos ilustram como os cenários culturais e tecnológicos em transformação influenciam o desenvolvimento individual, reformulando normas tradicionais e promovendo a ação autônoma. A pesquisa critica perspectivas exclusivamente centradas no sujeito, reconhecendo o impacto persistente dos determinantes estruturais nas trajetórias de vida e defendendo avaliações mais detalhadas sobre a individualização e os quadros sociais. Ressalta-se a necessidade de investigações empíricas adicionais sobre a interação desses fatores em contextos biográficos diversos, enfatizando o papel dos sistemas educacionais em equilibrar a disseminação de conhecimento com suporte emocional e terapêutico para os estudantes. Essas análises contribuem para os debates contemporâneos sobre formação de identidade e a recalibração da pesquisa em socialização diante dos desafios modernos.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento de identidade. Socialização. Individualização. Sistemas educacionais. Determinantes estruturais.

INTRODUCTION

In Western civilization, identity development and socialization of individuals usually begin in a narrowly defined primary reference system – the family – and then quickly lead to institutionally established educational institutions (from around the age of three). After the preschool phase of attending a nursery or kindergarten, the most potent extra-familial socialization instance usually awaits school. In a prominent publication by Rutter, Maugham, Mortimer, and Houston from 1980, pupils spend around 15,000 hours in the classroom by the time they reach their highest level of education. From a sociological perspective, the school thus represents a relevant part of the “education and training system, which performs specific tasks alongside other social subsystems within a functionally differentiated society” (Herzog, 2009, p. 155). The interests of political, economic, and professional subsystems influence the dynamics of teaching and learning.

If we disregard the increasingly complex acquisition of knowledge and skills taught at school, we become aware of the driving forces and forms of identity development *during school socialization*. The child in the first grade learns a new rhythm of life outside the family and a hitherto unknown canon of rules with authorities responsible for its mediation practice. Personal nuanced relationships with teachers gradually give way to an assumed role behavior. The establishment and internalization of a student role occur in the interplay of actions and reactions and the dynamic field of possible self-observation and observation by others. In addition, “role play” is subject to various metamorphoses, which can be expressed in maturity and social participation at the end of the school career. The fact that fragility and vulnerability lurk along the way because individual development is based on encountering norms and evaluation systems has led to calls for a third pillar of the school system. It not only has to impart *knowledge* and *social norms* (democratic virtues) but also has the responsibility for a prophylactic-therapeutic dimension to recognize and, if necessary, intercept crisis-like developments of young people during their school-based socialization. Oevermann (1996, p. 149) expresses this as follows:

In pedagogical practice, the therapeutic dimension [...] does not refer to a manifest but rather to a potential pathogenic development that lies dormant as a possibility in the socialization process that has not yet been completed and can be massively influenced in its further course by pedagogical action. Pedagogical action is, therefore, always a prophylactic action under the aspect of its objectively given therapeutic dimension with regard to its potential to set the course of pupils' biographies in the direction of psychosocial normality or pathology.

The fact that such an idea can take hold and represent a core claim within an updated professionalization debate in the education sector certainly also has to do with a “change in the theoretical self-image of socialized individuals” (Veith, 2004), as shown below.

The socialization theorist Veith used a timeline to systematize the cultural and social influences on the theorized self-descriptions of individuals. Along with this, the schools of thought that emerged prominently with the socialization discussion of their time become apparent. The following diagram illustrates the connections:

Table 1: Socialization practices and socialization theory thinking

Time	Problem	Socialization problem	Theories
1890–1918	Discipline	Social coercion – internal management	Durkheim, Freud
1918–1945	Control	Social control – learning	Mead, Watson, Leontjev, Critical Theory
1945–1960	Integration	Role conformity – normality	Parsons, Erikson
1960–1980	Autonomy	Social interaction – the ability to act	Piaget, Freire, Habermas
Since 1980	Reflection	System/environment – self-construction	Current discourse

Source: Veith (2004, p. 356).

Socialization theories do not emerge independently of social, economic, and ideological factors and discussion contexts. They also include generational situations and the biographical experiences of the theorists and school founders (Veith, 2004, p. 355). Thus, the classics of socialization theory were situated in an expanding dynamic of industrial society, which, with its “compelling and disciplining character,” aimed at the social norms to be internalized (Veith, 2004). With Freud, the pathogenic effects became psychologically visible and ultimately therapeutically treatable (Goffman (1973). Regarding socialization theory and compensation, the beginning of the 20th century focused on highlighting and strengthening “personal ego forces” (Veith, 2004, p. 358). For the period after the First World War, Veith (2004) marks a socially organized learning culture as a reaction to increasing social disintegration, controlled by a strict control practice. Scientifically, this process is reflected, for example, in Soviet theory formation, according to which personality formation essentially takes place according to a methodical-systematic control. The principles of control are derived from Marx’s basic thesis that social existence determines consciousness.

According to Veith (2004, p. 356), discourses that focus on the “normal-biographical development of identity,” as desired and promoted by open societies, herald a countermovement to state control. This impulse is prominently represented in Parsons’ socialization theory and in Erikson’s developmental psychology, “whereby the latter emphasizes the necessity of the mutual coordination of bio-psychological life interests and social orders of life” (Veith, 2004, p. 360). *Integrating* individual impulses and social norms thus emerges as both a challenging problem area and a solution approach.

According to Veith’s structural analysis, since the early 1960s and for approximately two decades, there have been evolutionary steps towards “interaction, participation and emancipation” (Veith, 2004, p. 356). This refers to the objectives of an increasingly open socialization, which are framed by social and institutional innovations. Rigid role assignments and expectations are in flux or are partially dissolved. The scope for interpreting individual – even explicitly non-conformist – actions is increasing (Veith, 2004,

362). This *autonomization process* cognitively captures the factual world, one's self, including assumed or internalized values, personal entanglements, and the life-world impulses of fellow human beings, and brings this mixed situation into a permanent communicative evaluation stream. Individual, previously valid value systems can be relativized or rejected in the light of universal principles and subjected to personal settings.¹

According to this analysis, the transformation of industrial society into an information and service complex has been occurring since the 1980s. In digitalization, new technologies are changing social life and the communicative structures between individuals, social groups, and institutions. "Individuals find themselves immersed in a systemically networked environment in which value orientations seem to float freely, and norms are present in the peculiar form of optional opportunities" (Veith, 2004, p. 363). As a result, normative ties seem less and less evocable via the integrative power of symbolic orders. This leads to generally assumed culture(s) in a defined geographical area being on the wane. For the individual subject, this offers the challenge and opportunity to *self-reflexively* shape their socialization based on "references to meaning that require interpretation" (Veith, 2004, p. 85 emphasis added by the author). The conclusion from this is:

Under conditions of increasingly reflexive socialization processes, individual development appears as a continuous process of self-construction, whereby the autonomy that arises in the process has a more stubborn effect, because the personal references to the world become more open and the forms of social integration as inclusion relationships become more unspecific, while at the same time the subjectivity of the individual is performatively increased (Veith, 2004, p. 364).

INDIVIDUALIZATION AS A NEW PARADIGM OF SOCIALIZATION RESEARCH

The large-scale phases of the socialization debate outlined above highlight the social and historical contexts from which individual positions and determining trends can be explained. To better understand the current discussion, it seems appropriate to look at the striking turning point that emerged at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, the dynamics of which continue to this day, and which are currently reflected in agency theory, for example.

¹ This would correspond to Lawrence Kohlberg's level of post-conventional morality. It is available to him as an empirical finding. A comparison with Rudolf Steiner's "ethical individualism" is certainly possible at the phenomenal level; however, Steiner justifies his concept in terms of epistemology and the history of consciousness (Steiner, 1973).

In German-speaking countries, it was, above all, Ulrich Beck (1983) who, with a new view of the potential of human biography, questioned the old class-specific conditions of socialization, which also lost their determining forces during social diversification and pluralization. As the agent of their biography, the individual successively takes the place of the structural determinants that reshape life courses. Habermas (1976) simultaneously places the socialization theory in an interdisciplinary context and expands the previous role theory in identity philosophy. This opens the existential space for autonomous action, constitutive of self-determined development. According to Habermas (1976), the goal here is “ego identity,” which represents the pinnacle of individual development. Autonomous action at this level means liberation from strict adherence to and compliance with norms. “The autonomous subject conquers the role constraint” (Bauer, 2004, p. 68). It leaves the passive bourgeois cosmos of complete social integration. It embarks on a journey of incalculable self-development, realized in constant interaction with the environment (cf. Bauer, 2004, p. 65).

The active subject is the new center of gravity around which the structural and socializing conditions are grouped. Regarding the lifeworld, this applies equally to young people and adolescents of the following ages. It also applies to all degrees of autonomy and restrictions thereof. It should be noted that the individual's activities in the various socialization instances (family, educational institutions, care facilities) determine development at an earlier stage (Veith, 2004, p. 365) and are explicitly stimulated.

In this respect, it seems pretty understandable if the primary modalities of personality development are no longer addressed from the perspective of progressive individualization *through socialization*. Still, instead, individual self-education is re-conceptualized as the subjective realization of situational and biographical opportunities – i.e., self-socialization.²

However, the shift in the discussion away from a structural deterministic approach and towards a subject-centered perspective has also attracted critics. As early as the 1970s, Ulrich Oevermann in 1976 and 1979 warned against ideologically excluding the negative impact of disadvantaged living conditions. In this context, Ulrich Bauer indicates that the “turn to the subject” is associated with a “clearly reduced consciousness” if the framework conditions of socialization are underestimated (Bauer, 2004, p. 83).³

2 On the concept of self-socialization, see Geulen and Zinnecker (2002).

3 For Luhmann (1997, p. 1025, emphasis added by the author), the concept of the subject fulfills an important function in the history of philosophy, namely “to justify the inclusion of *all* in society by appealing to the self-reference of *everyone* [...]. The abstract concept of the subject makes it possible to no longer derive the individuation of people from social class, religious affiliation, origin and family or other social reference points. Rather, the content of the concept is determined qua the respective reflexive self-determination of the subject”.

The aim here is to introduce nuances into the polarizing perspectives because neither the dynamics of individualization can be doubted – given the current state of research – nor can determinant structures be ignored. Revealing the extent to which both influencing factors are asserted in concrete life courses, i.e., on a case-specific basis, is currently a desideratum of empirical research.

SELF-EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ROLE IN A SUBJECT-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE

As mentioned above, classical role theory has a function for society and individuals to be socialized whereas Western nations have historically been concerned with establishing democratic norms and values. Talcott Parsons saw a catalyst for this development in an increasingly differentiated role system, which worked towards internalizing these values. However, with the hypothetical shift of biographical development into the possibility of self-socialization, the understanding of roles must also change. Lothar Krappmann (2010) has drawn attention to this. His sociological dimensions of identity formation also contain an interactionist role theory, intended to incorporate the trend toward flexible self-formation beyond the rigid norms described above. His concept of “balancing identity” (Krappmann, 2010, p. 70) points to the fact that personality formation cannot be defined. Krappmann (2010) developed his theorem based on Erving Goffman’s conceptualization. He distinguishes between two phenomenally given aspects of identity that can be assigned to every individual: personal and social identity.

The former extends over time as a biographical structure of uniqueness: each person has specific events, intentions, actions, and abilities that are unmistakably concrete. These can, therefore, be addressed personally. Social identity differs from this and is seen by Goffman as a construct that results from current interaction processes. It is important to note that both identities are ascriptions of the social environment, i.e., they differ from the ego identity, which is only accessible to self-observation,⁴ of which they exert considerable influence. Krappmann (2010) adopts this differentiation in his role model and fruitfully problematizes the expectations that are usually placed on roles. In terms of social identity, this means that the norms of all role systems *can be* considered in fundamental interactions with no chance of fulfilling them all. Translated into life-world terms, this means that all expectations that can be addressed to a doctor qua role, for example, can never be fulfilled by her without eliminating her individual being. Concerning Goffman (1973), Krappmann now emphasizes that the social environment overlooks this non-fulfillment by assuming and maintaining a pseudo-normality for the

4 Krappmann (2010, p. 137) developed the concept of ego identity following Goffman.

individual.⁵ As an individual is always the bearer of different roles at different times, this thesis also applies to all role levels simultaneously.

The situation differs from personal identity. At the biographical-temporal level, we can only speak of the coherence of a life story from a sufficient distance and by ignoring contradictory details. A coherent personal identity is hypothesized by the social environment and reflexively by the individual. But even if the uniqueness of personal existence could be maintained in totality in temporal continuity, it would suddenly collide with the requirements of social identity, which are fed by fulfilling role expectations. A lived total identification with “uniqueness” would disconnect the individual from shared values and symbol systems and inevitably lead to isolation. This is the complementary pole to the symbiosis with social role expectations that are demanded but cannot be realized.

EGO IDENTITY AS AN ACT OF IDENTITY BALANCE

Considering the differentiation between social and personal identity, the question arises as to what consequences arise for the individual from this socio-psychologically describable constellation. Since Goffman’s (1973) analyses, interaction processes per se have been regarded as the decisive medium of the forming subject. Today, even the earliest bonding experiences can be interpreted as interaction processes. They are already present in prenatal form, meaning during pregnancy, and qualitatively prepare for embodied existence. In later life, the relevance of interaction processes becomes even more apparent. The person observing and shaping their socialization will have multiple impressions of the contradictory aspects of their social and personal identities. This raises the question of how these relate to the intention of self-determination and whether and how they can be controlled.

Lothar Krappmann (2010) has developed a theory of ego identity that seeks to integrate the contradictory aspects of social and personal identity – which initially arise from the third-person perspective. The medium of mediation is a dynamic concept of “ego identity,” which is created, changed, and transformed into various forms of action.

Krappmann (2010, p. 133) sees the initial form of activity in role distance, which ensures “that the individual can even behave in a reflective and interpretive manner towards norms”. By rising above the requirements of role expectations – which means varying, relativizing, or even negating them – the individual positions themselves with themselves. Krappmann (2010, p. 138) interprets this as evidence of a particular point of reference that creates a sovereign distance from any norm: “Without recourse to an

5 For the term “phantom normalcy,” see Krappmann (2010, p. 71). By phantom normalcy, we mean that the expectations of the role are seen as fulfilled, even though it is recognized that this is completely impossible.

ego identity to be established, the individual lacks the point of reference from which he or she can resist or modify the demands of a role. Role distance is a correlate of the effort to establish ego identity". Factors influencing an individual's ability to distance themselves from everyday roles and norms, or societal expectations, include the "rigidity of norms and repression of society" (Krappmann, 2010, p. 138), and their capacity, shaped during socialization, to individually adjust existing role norms.⁶ The same applies to the norm systems of institutions and their role-bearers.

Krappmann sees *ambiguity tolerance* as another form of activity that is essential for the formation of an ego identity. It arises logically from the dynamics of interaction processes, which are fundamental to any negotiation process. Interactions are the medium for encountering and exchanging differing expectations, interpretations, and role assumptions or distancing. The absence of agreement can be seen as the standard case, while the coincidence of all opinions must instead be interpreted as a crisis of stagnation. However, these differing perspectives place burdens on the individual actors involved. They can be explained by a twofold "responsibility": the preservation of one's ego identity and the scope for developing the other's ego identity with initially identifiable incongruent role definitions.

For the sake of interaction, which alone can satisfy his needs, the individual must also attach importance to his partners being able to develop their ego identity. This means, however, that the individual must be interested precisely in articulating the incongruence of expectations and needs due to the necessary incongruence of ego identities (Krappmann, 2010, p. 151).

Krappmann (2010, p. 155) uses the term "tolerance of ambiguity" to describe the ability to recognize the tensions of different perspectives to maintain interactions and ego identities. It is, therefore, not primarily a matter of tolerating and balancing out the other points of view, but of an experiential understanding of individually determined differences.

The dynamically conceived ego identity finally finds its activity center in the "identity balance." This refers to the movement that the individual spends to present the antagonistic poles of their social and personal identity in a way appropriate to the situation. The conflicting demands from the perspective of the Third World provide the

⁶ The relativization of role expectations – i.e., role distance – can express a developing ego identity; it then manifests itself in the mode of *reflection*, which considers the social reference and thus remains socially oriented. Krappmann (2010, p. 150) sees *empathy* as the psychological basis for social reference. If empathy and reflection are lacking, the role distance exercised can be the marker of an egoistic positioning.

driving force for this activity.⁷ Ego-identity results from the balancing act or tightrope walk of facing up to these divergent challenges in that the individual

[...] can hold on to his particular individuality precisely by exploiting the identity norms of others and in the medium of shared symbol systems. The individual accepts expectations and at the same time rejects them, in each case with regard to other divergent expectations that also demand recognition. [...] It shows how it strives to gain and maintain ego-identity. The particularity of the individual, his individuality, derives from the way in which he balances (Krappmann, 2010, p. 79).

Following on from the above postmodern discussions about the “turn to the subject” and the thesis of self-socialization, Hermann Veith (2010) proposes expanding Krappmann’s theory of identity. It is currently observable that the condition for participation in interaction processes is shifting from role definition via role distance to role creation, which is represented performatively. Among other things, this has to do with the increase in cultural offers of meaning that are spread by the media and the effects of migration.⁸ Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to view the status of the balancing ego identity as a constant psychological crisis management of the individual.

SOCIALIZATION AND IDENTITY AS A PROCESS OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

At the micro-sociological level of the encounter between two individuals, the significance of the interactions for the presentation of identity can be read. The effect of the exchanged ego presentations, in turn, impacts time on the self-images, which develop biographically and are differentiated by the social context and the specific topic. Socialization must, therefore, be understood as the emergence of a transforming identity. Ulrich Oevermann has described such a signature of the crisis-like the formation of the subject, and included it in his “structural socialization theory.”⁹ This will be outlined below.

Concerning the developing person, it is clear that significant experiences are repeatedly made while growing up, which have their origin in the physical sphere and, at the same time, are closely linked to the experience of the caregivers. Living through these experiences can ultimately lead to a change in self-relationships and the relationship to the environment, thus opening a new scope for action. However,

7 Cf. on the concept of balancing identity (Krappmann, 2010, p. 70–84).

8 Cf. Veith, 2010, p. 197.

9 See Oevermann, 2016, p. 43–114.

expanded fields of action can only be opened if the individual detaches themselves from previously familiar and supporting structures. This gradual detachment is accompanied by the opportunity to take steps towards identity formation. Insofar as these crisis-like experiences are inextricably linked to the development of everyone, i.e., they affect the physical and emotional ontogenesis, we can speak of “ontogenetic detachment crises” (Wagner, 2004, p. 368). Although different schools of psychology conceptualize these phenomena differently, the meaningfulness of detachment processes during human development is not at issue, i.e., there is a broad consensus on this abstract fact. Oevermann (2016) now defines detachment crises from a psychoanalytical perspective: Pregnancy/birth, detachment from the early symbiotic mother-child relationship, the oedipal crisis, the latency period (school, middle childhood), and adolescence (Wagner, 2004). Since the individual cannot decide about the detachment crises, but because they inevitably arise from endogenetic dynamics, they belong to the type of traumatization crisis.¹⁰ The individual cannot choose to escape the requirements of gradual detachment processes. This is because such an attempt would affect the consequences of failing to emancipate oneself. For this reason, the socialization instances do not seek avoidance strategies to escape the crises but strengthen the psychological prerequisites for coping with what is coming.

In this analysis, Oevermann (2016) plans a triad of conditional factors for coping with detachment crises; in his view, the first two factors mentioned here are closely linked to the primary experiences of ontogenesis and form the basis for lasting psychological dispositions. These are a) *beliefs*, b) *faith*, and c) *knowledge*.

Beliefs, understood here, are habitus formations deeply rooted in biographical experience. They emerge from the symbiotic circle of forms, i.e., closely linked to the first early childhood attachment structures, such as those resulting from the mother-child dyad. Later, it is the aspects of “intra-familial communitization” (Wagner, 2004, p. 31) and experiences with *peer groups that form convictions*:

All these successive moratoria, which are specific to the developmental stage, represent a free space for experimentation and provide protection. Those who have experienced enough of them without question and without problems will have imprinted corresponding convictions as life-historical sediments of these experiences, which they will only

¹⁰ Oevermann’s (2000) crisis typology distinguishes between three forms: 1) The traumatization crisis, which is triggered by “brute facts” such as birth, loss, illness, and a body positionality that restricts autonomy. 2) The decision-making crisis (everyday life decisions, own educational path, career choice, choice of partner, etc.). 3) The crisis of leisure: engaging in self-chosen challenges that do not rule out failure (negative variant) or lead to an ecstatic state – e.g., in the enjoyment of art (positive variant).

modify or even abandon in extreme crises of change in their later biography (Oevermann, 2000 *apud* Wagner, 2004).

Convictions manifest affective and cognitive patterns that initially result from primary relational experiences. They are close to the body and difficult for the conscious mind to grasp. This interpretation suggests that a successful symbiotic relationship, based on attachment theory, is characterized by secure attachment. If this is to be a pattern that can be reproduced as often as desired, it presupposes the deeply anchored biographical experience that one can rely on other people (Kißgen, 2009, p. 98).

While beliefs arise from attachment structures, *faith emerges* from the processes of detachment; it is a child of the crisis and represents an integral part of its resolution. Oevermann (2000) thus conceptualizes a functionally interpretable faith that can be interpreted in a narrowly religious and secular sense. After the successful symbiosis, the child gradually enters forms of emancipation. Attachment research shows that the more trusting the primary experiences were, the more successful the detachment (Faix, 2004, p. 278). However, the process is full of conflict, partly because the child builds up guilt when detaching from the protective sphere of the parents. Signs of these feelings of guilt can be seen in the sometimes clearly visible ambivalence in behavior, for example, in the almost simultaneous occurrence of rejecting and clinging behavior patterns. The child experiences guilt entanglement as the price of becoming independent, despite having previously enjoyed the paradoxical dynamic of symbiosis. It cannot be grasped rationally with its mental powers, nor can it be contained. It, therefore, demands a resolution by a third reconciling force. However, it is sought elsewhere because this seems impossible to find in this world with its irresolvable paradox of wanting to leave and keep the beloved simultaneously. The structure that comes into play here, according to Oevermann (2000 *apud* Wagner, 2001, p. 199), is the

[...] belief in a superior authority that could be described as the unsurpassable power of the spirit, so that loyalty to it, however, it may be interpreted in concrete terms, simultaneously provides a hope for reconciliation and probation. This belief is therefore the polar counterpart to conviction and is just as indispensable for crisis management as conviction.

This outlines an approach from the sociology of religion that understands the moments of crisis in ontogenesis as the source of a transformation. In doing so, the author thematizes *religio* – i.e., the reconnection to what is lost. It seems significant that Oevermann plans the concept of faith neutrally, i.e., undecided concerning a

content-related-religious or a secular-functional explication.¹¹ This means that the concrete interpretation of “spirit,” “power,” or “authority” remains on the part of the subject and is undoubtedly also shaped by the socialization instances that have arisen biographically.

After all, no crisis management is possible without a pool of knowledge that the individual can fall back on. Oevermann does not locate the concept of knowledge as belonging to the crisis event itself, like conviction and belief. Instead, he places it in the sphere of routine (Oevermann, 2000; Wagner, 2001). Knowledge arises from experience as “proven assertions” can be derived from it over time and establish themselves socially with the claim to general validity. In the event of a crisis, human subjects rely on such knowledge, or without access to proven routines, crisis management would fail because if everything that was once valid were to fall into crisis, the moment of despair would be reached. It should also be noted here that the ability to fall back on the sphere of knowledge and routine certainly depends on the individual’s level of development and is, therefore, age-related, among other things. From this perspective, it seems even more significant that adult caregivers provide children with “vicarious interpretations”¹² and thus transfer security. In proxy interpretations, knowledge appears that does not originate from the child’s own experience but is borrowed from other contexts and is available qua pedagogical authority.

Structural socialization theory presents the crises of detachment as ontogenetically indispensable because only the dialectical tension between symbiosis and emancipation can evoke the autonomy of the developing personality. The crises are of equal importance in their relevance for development; the dynamic of proving oneself, in which the individual is entangled, promotes the development of an autonomous ego. Oevermann (2000) attributes great importance to the primary relationship experiences of getting through crises. If these were permanently positive, they result in the conviction that crises can, in principle, be overcome. However, the structurally existing traumatizing part of identity crises calls for an authority from which further trust must be drawn.

AGAINST SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BARRIERS TO IDENTITY FORMATION: PAULO FREIRE’S PEDAGOGY OF AUTONOMY

The Brazilian reform pedagogue and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921–1997) owes his excellent reputation to the fact that he focused on the political and social obstacles to identity formation found in Latin America. The aim was always to promote awareness of

11 Following Max Weber, Oevermann’s (2000) approach to the sociology of religion refers to the *dynamics of probation that every life practice must face*. Biographically, the three types of crises represent a variable that cannot be eliminated. Probation is the individually designed mode of crisis management.

12 Cf. on the concept of “vicarious interpretation,” its derivation from the field of therapeutic professions, and its transformation into the sphere of pedagogical action (Oevermann, 1996b, p. 152).

these barriers and thus create the inner space for autonomization. In 1970, Freire published *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. This book is one of the more recent pedagogy classics and is one of the central works of critical educational science. Freire's theories also led to influential discussions in educational and psychosocial disciplines in European countries such as Germany (Herriger, 2006, p. 34). In *The pedagogy of the oppressed*, Freire (1970) emphasizes the difference between a banker and real education. It refers to the teaching method in these years as the "banker method."

Freire thus criticizes positivism and those followers of this concept who qualify human consciousness as passive and empty. Freire attempted to falsify this positivist philosophy with his method. In the "banker's method," education is reduced to an act of saving. In this way, the teacher deposits the students' heads, as in a piggy bank, to fill the student's heads "with the contents of his teaching." However, according to Freire, there is a problem with this concept. The content to be learned by the pupils is removed from reality. They, therefore, have no connection to their life experience.

For this reason, the banker's method makes students passive, does not contribute to developing critical consciousness, and, according to Freire (1970), even leads to reinforcing oppression. According to Hahn (2012 *apud* Casas, 2013), this humiliation of students comes from the fact that they often hear that they will amount to nothing and that they are incapable of learning anything, after which they are convinced of their supposed inability. In this context, Aliakbari and Faraji (2011, p. 78) emphasize that Freire (1970) metaphorically refers to the traditional view of education as an investment model. The students are metaphorically reduced to a bank account into which the educational content is "deposited." Aliakbari and Faraji (2011) emphasize that Freire thus planned an early critique of neoliberal, economically transformative education policy.

In contrast, educators are tasked with strengthening sociality by allowing young people to reflect on their societal position and act within it critically. According to Miethe (2016), Freire's conception of education is based on a broader understanding that relates not only to individual education but also to society. Miethe (2016, p. 4) briefly summarizes Freire's basic thesis with the sentence: "Education is never neutral."

The proponents of critical theory believe that the goals can only be achieved if the oppressed people emancipate themselves, which can then lead them to change their living conditions. In the process of emancipation, they must be supported institutionally and individually. Freire dedicated himself to specific social groups, such as people with disabilities, older adults, children, and people with literacy gaps (Casas, 2013, p. 22). To involve farmers in education (literacy), Freire (1970) recommended constructing themes and lessons that constructively address the living conditions of farmers to generate new perspectives and thus change. Freire's interest was in the learner's autonomy from an ethical point of view, which he tried to combine with a political concept (Funke, 2010,

p. 18-19). He believed that authoritarian political systems were based on the depoliticizing influence of mass education and should be challenged through radical educational reforms. His main concern was to use education to promote a critical consciousness that would enable people to question their circumstances and change them. Freire (2008, p. 55) states that a learner's autonomy is based, above all, on their uniqueness and on social, political, and cultural contexts embedded in acquiring knowledge (cf. Freire, 2008, p. 97).

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP, EGO IDENTITY, AND INSTITUTION

Institutions that deal with "clients" in the broadest sense,¹³ i.e., people who do not have complete autonomy for a foreseeable period or existentially, are undergoing fundamental change today. However, the pressure of institutional transformation does not arise from endogenous dynamics that would show a confrontation with their tasks and challenges or with their new conceptual developments. Instead, factors that were politically started and are economically conditioned can be identified. Suppose we include early childhood education and school education in the ensemble of institutions outlined above (e.g., clinical facilities, youth welfare homes, care facilities for people with assistance needs, etc.). In that case, a picture emerges of a profound change in the framework conditions for professions that promote the development of individuals of almost all age groups. The goal of transformation is defined in economic terms, while social mediation is communicated with concepts of institution-specific quality enhancement and assurance.

In the field of education today – dichotomously exaggerated – a context-bound, pedagogical, teaching, questioning rationality committed to the participants is opposed to a dominant, oppressive, transparent and profitable, economic-quantifiable rationality (see Meyer, 2017). Whereby the latter sees itself as universal, exclusive and general and is closely connected and entangled with neoliberal, profit-oriented developments. A profit-oriented rationality that is often accompanied by the prejudice that education workers [...] and basic educators do not care about the effectiveness of their work (Vater, 2020, p. 3).

¹³ The term "client" is used here in professional theory. It should not be confused with "customer" or "user," which are symmetrical exchange relationships. The concept of client presupposes a structural asymmetry, the reduction or elimination of which is worked on with the help of experts (members of the profession).

Jochen Krautz (2020) used two examples to illustrate the economization of the school education system. Under the keywords “autonomization” and “de-bureaucratization,” the individual school should see itself as an educational company that advertises itself on the “parents’ market.” Ongoing operations would then be sent into a long-term national competition with the control instrument of evaluation. (Krautz, 2020) For the field of psychosocial work, Gesa Köbberling and Vanessa Lux (2007, p. 67) ascribe to evaluation research the contradictory function of oscillating between the establishment of a “pressure to conform towards the economization of the social” and the “claim to practical reflection and quality development”. Yet the debate on professionalization since the 1990s has made case-by-case reflection on practice in schools, social work institutions, and youth welfare services ready for the future with considerable methodological effort.¹⁴

Overall, the transformations of institutionally bound client-centered work over the last twenty years have been initiated from outside and enforced mainly internationally. The education system includes the school sector, which was integrated into a competitive system that employs The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) comparative studies. In the university context, the restructuring of teaching and research and the modularization of degree courses were presented as a necessary reform. If we add to this the seemingly monstrous *reframing of pedagogical-institutional work* under the heading of “inclusion” and the current debate about the conceptual and organizational implementation of the “Federal Participation Act” project in Germany, the interference of the political sphere in science and culture becomes unmistakably clear.¹⁵ The basic concepts for the change strategies refer to the “turn to the subject” described above or to the agent of self-socialization; however, the ambiguity of the political agenda can only be spelled out when the economic calculation becomes visible. In the school sector, Jochen Krautz has indicated that the “self-directed learner” ideal is often used today (even in reform pedagogical contexts). The teacher is primarily responsible for the teaching process as an accompanying person who provides material at “learning counters” that can be worked on at will (Krautz, 2020).

The pupils now act as ‘self-responsible entrepreneurs of their learning success.’ For example, a school funded by the Würth Foundation, which relies entirely on self-directed learning, sees its goal as training ‘life

¹⁴ See, for example, Klaus Kraimer, 2012. For the clinical-pedagogical field, see Axel Foeller-Mancini, 2016.

¹⁵ Critically, see Uwe Becker’s (2015) programmatic book chapter “Politik von ganz oben: landung im dif-fusen”. Rudolf Steiner (1976) already warned against an inappropriate, politically mediated influence of the economic sphere on spiritual life in the context of his movement for social threefolding.

entrepreneurs.' Learning is, therefore, seen as an 'investment for life.' Here, the reform pedagogical veneer allows the economic substructure to shine through: pupils are entrepreneurs of themselves, which is considered a classic subjectivization technique of neoliberalism (Krautz, 2020, p. 67).

The class group, in which joint learning in a cooperative atmosphere is at least a partial goal of teaching, is reduced to the logistical framework of atomized interests. This dissolves the fundamental pedagogical relationship, "linked to the common factual reference in a social relationship." (Krautz, 2020, p. 61). The consequences of the developing ego identity, which requires the medium of peer-oriented interactions in the school context, can hardly be foreseen yet. However, one thing can be predicted: the competitive relationships into which the actors in educational institutions are sent from a side that can be described as "endogenous economization" (Krautz, 2020, p. 69). One internalizes the socially created reality that the market only makes visible which achievements have been fed into it via individual or organizational effort. These market-specific profiles can be quantified and therefore evaluated. Rainer Mausfeld (2019, p. 37) calls this the meritocratic trait of neoliberalism:

The ideology of a meritocracy, in which a person's social status is determined by their individual achievements, is so deeply rooted in our culture that we no longer even recognize it as an ideology. Schools, universities, and the entire education sector serve to spread it and are organized on its basis. For those who do not belong to the socially fortunate in a society, it leads them to attribute the causes of their situation to themselves.

On this side of society, fear and shame-inducing feelings of failure can suppress the idea that conditions can be changed, for example, through a policy of fair distribution (Mausfeld, 2019).

But even where social commitment takes care of the needs of those people who are unable or barely able to lead an autonomous life, the economic bracket seems omnipresent.¹⁶ It is undoubtedly the case that institutionalized life support today has conceptually included the "subject orientation" described above and translated it into

¹⁶ Here, too – according to the files – it is a matter of instrumentalizing the dissolution of socialization described in socialization theory. The political agenda uses subject orientation and controls competition between institutions via evaluations and impact management with the aim of reducing costs and standardizing practice (Bethel, 2018).

an impressive differentiation of its offers and services. The distance to Goffman's (1973) "total institution"¹⁷ is also immense, as people spend long periods there and thus must internalize the institution's canon of rules.¹⁸

Promoting self-determination and autonomy is a declared goal of these institutions and should ultimately be reflected in interaction practices. These values must not be played off against the norm of "care," as Andreas Fischer rightly emphasizes. This is because the initial situation is initially characterized by an asymmetrical relationship: The anthropological dependency of a person in need of support is contrasted with the scope for the action of the individual offering support. The asymmetrical component is potentially associated with the exercise of power, which could damage the relationship (Fischer, 1999, p. 208). If self-determination is now emphasized in the same (care) relationship, there is a risk of diminished responsibility on the caregiver's part. The person with assistance needs, this corresponds to the risk of excessive demands they hoped for autonomy, is still unstable (Fischer, 1999). Strengthening dialogical processes for the desired "participation as active involvement in decisions that affect the living conditions of individuals and social groups" (Klauß, 2018, p. 149) is indispensable.

However, it presents institutions with the challenge of evaluating the influence of activities that originate from the forms of self-determination¹⁹ on asymmetrical interaction practices. The shift to the "autonomy and self-determination" set of norms will latently reinforce the crisis mode of people with assistance needs, even with suitable "cushioning." This is because an experienced "care" already conceptually belongs to the perceptive attitude of routine while entering a dialog to articulate one's aspirations and wishes, which activates the mode of "decision crisis".

The *relational service* (Herrmannstorfer, 1999) of creating a dialogical space between a person in need of assistance and a caring institution means, under this condition, wanting to lead them out of the routinized care practice and to interpret and accompany the latently lurking crisis events. However, since acting outside of routinized practice also means acting outside of internalized standards, standardized outcome procedures cannot be used to interpret the expressive forms of people entering relatively new territory here. Externally visible modes of behavior, which are classified in a success or failure grid, are not very meaningful concerning the social and personal

17 Goffman (1973) uses the term "total institution" to describe social institutions whose "inmates" have lost their self-determination: The penal system, the military, psychiatry and asylums. Cf. also Maja Apelt, 2008.

18 For a critical view of the institution of retirement homes, see Heinzelmann, 2004.

19 By "forms of self-determination" I mean those expressive forms that point to self-exploration, reflective presentation of ego identity and decision-making and that can be introduced into the dialogical process. This will generally be a greater challenge for people with assistance needs.

identity of the person; this is because it must be assumed that previous self-representations can disintegrate and thus become subjectively threatening.

To paraphrase Krappmann (2010), the balancing ego identity in changing social conditions and expectations must learn to try itself out before it can articulate itself consistently. Repositioning in the familiar institutional environment affects the role structure and potentially evokes a symbiotic (wishing to return to the caring routine) or a distancing (crisis-like experimenting) attitude. It is almost impossible to determine what the inner world of affected people looks like using standardized surveys. A realistic evaluation of institutionally staged participation must be designed hermeneutically on a case-specific basis. However, “case-specific” does not mean that the sole focus is on the side of a person with assistance needs. Hermeneutic casuistry interprets the expressive forms of the *interaction processes on both sides*. This is because the institutions and their employees also contribute to their programmatic, social, and personal identities, which balance routine and crisis.

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