



A Review of the Relation between Families Stratum Differences and the Socialization of Children in “The Children of Heaven’s” Script

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important functions of the nuclear family concerning which most of the sociologists have sympathy is the generation of cultural social identity where a new-born as a biological creature is raised by his/her family as a person with a cultural social identity that is made of his/her own society’s social behaviours and cultural elements. One of the influential factors in this process is the social stratification of families. The performance of children is somehow affected by their family background, and their social class and conditions. Since the differences between different social classes have remained considerable, in this research, we tried to study the relation between families’ social stratification and the quality and form of children socialization in *The Children of Heaven* script by Majid Majidi who directed *The Children of Heaven* successful movie in 1990s based on it. Documentary and textual analysis methods were used for data seeking and data mining, respectively. The results of this research showed that the patterns of raising the children were closely correlated to the social stratification. If the complementary social institutions especially schools do not make a way to upgrade the quality of the socialization of the children belonging to lower social classes, the application of popular education methods in these classes will lead to the continuance of the reproduction of class structure and social stratification. In order to improve family life, internalize the equal distribution of roles in a family, and reducing the reoccurrence of gender discrimination, it is necessary that children are socialized without considering their gender and according to their special characteristics and intentions.

Keywords: The Children of Heaven, Social Stratification, Socialization

INTRODUCTION

To describe the inequalities between people and groups in human societies, sociologists have used the term “social stratification”. Based on their position in a stratified system, people and groups have different (unequal) access to the available wealth and rewards in their society, so, stratification could be defined as structured inequalities between different social strata [1]. One of the stratification systems is the classification system. Class is a large category of people who share the same economic resources and facilities that have a great influence on their life style. Wealth ownership along with occupation is the major pillars of class distinction [1]. The thoughts of Karl Marx and Max Weber are the foundation of most sociological analyses concerning class and stratification. Marx believes that class is a group of people who have the same relation with the means of production that are the tools by which they earn their lives. Therefore, in modern industrial societies there are two major classes: Those who are the owners of the modern means of production (capitalists) and the worker class or proletariat who earn their lives by selling their work to capitalists [1]. Max Weber considers the two elements of party and status as influential in social stratification. In his belief, since parties in modern societies are the key aspects of power, they could affect social stratification independent of class and status. Also, the signs and images of status such as house, residence, clothes, speech, and occupation help others form the social status of a person in their minds [1].

One of the reasons behind the difference between families' fates is the occupational status of the breadwinner which makes a family highly dependent on the income level of this parent [2]. The father's occupation determines the residence or in other words social class, friends and relatives [3], and is one of the critical determining factors of a person's luck and his/her material welfare. That's why sociologists consider occupation as an indicator of social class.

This research aimed to study the relation between families Stratum differences and the socialization of children in "The Children of Heaven" script by Majid Majidi, considering the fact that exploring artistic works in the genre of realism which is an artistic reflection of realities in a society could be a shortcut for sociological researches.

Some researches relative to the subject of this paper are mentioned below:

The Myth of the Deprived Child by Herbert Ginsburg [4]:

In this article, the author has analyzed the viewpoints of Basil Berenstein based on his words that at least in England, parents belonging to the lower and middle classes use different methods for educating their children that leads to the emergence of different patterns concerning language and thoughts. Then he has reviewed the relation between the social class, language, and speech from different angles and explored the viewpoints of other researchers about this.

In her book, *Sociology of Family*, pages 179 to 187, Shahla Ezazi has quoted the views of researchers about the relation between the socialization of children and family conditions. Taking a special consideration for James Coleman's researches, she has referred to one of his researches titled "The Equality of Opportunities" that was carried out in 1960s in American schools and confirmed the theory of the effect of social class on the performance of students. She has also referred to Melvin Kohen and Pearlman and Kohen's researches in 1960s that showed that although the independence and the blooming of the children's individuality matters for middle-class parents, the children belonging to this class should help their parents in house chores, rarely have the opportunity to make decisions independently, and have to adapt themselves to their parent's rules that are based on educational principles that encourage obedience and discipline.

Text

"The Children of Heaven" script by Majid [5] who directed a movie with the same name based on the same script in 1995 that won several awards in domestic and international festivals is about the lives of two children in a poor family living in one of the districts in the south of Tehran. The story goes like this: A nine-year-old boy called Ali loses the shoes of his eight-year-old sister, Zahra, after he picks them up at the shoemaker shop, and since his sister has no other shoes and they know that their father couldn't afford another pair of shoes for the girl, they decide to share Ali's sneakers. Such shared use of the sneakers creates so many problems for both of them such as Ali being late for school every day and a sequence of stresses for both. To compensate for his fault and to put an end to their misfortune, Ali determines to put an end to his and his sister's troubles by taking part in a match where the reward for the third position is a pair of sneakers.

Assuming a realistic look, the script writer explores the issues concerning the lives of children belonging to the above-mentioned class, and exhibits the difference between the thoughts and culture of different social classes. The effect of class distinction on the form and quality of children socialization is a point to ponder about in this script.

Socialization is the name sociologists have given to the process whereby new members of a society learn to adapt themselves to their society and accept its rules and culture. The process is actually comprised of the ways to adapt oneself to the behavioral patterns of the roles that are necessary for a society and are expected by that society so that one could reconstruct himself/herself steadily during the time [6].

According to sociologists, socialization often occurs in two stages: initial socialization and secondary socialization. In the initial stage that covers the childhood, family is the main agent of children socialization. The second stage that covers post-childhood period to adulthood, other agents such as schools, organizations, media, and working environment assume part of the families' responsibilities in the process of socialization. The family displayed in "The Children of Heaven" script is typical of an immigrant worker family who has immigrated from a village or a small town to a large city for a living. The breadwinner is usually a simple industrial worker or a construction one, and has absolute power within his family. The residence of such a family is lowly and sometimes several families live in one place [7].

Since the parents' values and the way they educate their children differ based on the social class and different cultures [8] the parents in the above-mentioned family who have to face numerous problems such as low income, low provisions, and the low conditions of their residence naturally consider their children as a potential source for raising the conditions of their family, though the quality and the goal of socialization is generally determined by the society. This is because the social status of each occupation affects the level of social awareness and educational methods of its occupants [3]. In worker families where the adaption of the breadwinner to his/her working environment has caused him/her to highly value obedience to instructions, he/she expects his/her children to be obedient, as a result. This way the application of educational methods that

value obedience and are a reflection of working conditions on the family life will be transferred from fathers to their children as an individual value. Therefore, such fathers consider their own past as a pattern for the future of their children and cannot imagine a future for them that is different from this past, so, in the first place, they socialize their children based on their gender and traditional gender roles instead of providing their children with the freedom of choosing their future social role.

Ali and Zahra, the children of the aforementioned family, are raised in complete accordance with their gender roles, and during this process they are led by negative and positive reinforcements, that is, some of their behaviors are encouraged and rewarded and some other punished and discouraged.

- Sequence 2, page 13: Ali takes Zahra's shoes from the shoemaker.
- Sequence 3, page 14: Ali buys some bread from the bakery.
- Sequence 7, page 17: Ali's mother asks him for a hand to pack up the rug.
- Sequence 11, page 21: Ali's father expected him to help his mother and blames him for not doing that.
- Sequence 28, page 32: The children present their father with what they have done; Ali: "I bought both bread and vegetables"; here, the father appreciates the behavior of his children by promising to reward them.
- Sequence 40, page 41: At night, Ali takes some soup to a neighbor's house.
- Sequence 50, page 48: Ali's father takes Ali with him to the mosque.
- Sequence 51, page 49: Ali's father takes Ali with him for working uptown.
- Sequence 7, page 18: Zahra lulls children to sleep.
- The same sequence: Zahra's mother asks her to peel the potatoes.
- Sequence 12, page 22: Zahra collects the children's diapers hanging on the rope.
- The same sequence: Zahra's mother asks her to pour some tea for her father.
- The same sequence: father: "The tea Zahra pours tastes differently"; Zahra is encouraged.
- Sequence 27, page 30: Zahra is washing the dishes besides the pool.
- Sequence 28, page 32: Mother: "my daughter did all the housework".
- The same sequence: Zahra: "I peeled the potatoes, cleaned the vegetables, and swept the room".
- Sequence 39, page 40: Zahra takes the neighbor's bowl.
- Sequence 40, page 41: Zahra walks across the room and entertains the child she has in her arms.
- Sequence 51, page 49: Zahra helps her mother wind some knitting into a ball.
- Sequence 75, page 66: Zahra is washing a pot.
- Sequence 79, page 72: Sitting near the pool faucet, Zahra is washing a baby bottle.

Having the children assume these roles shows that the family tries to raise the daughter and son in a way that they could take on their roles of wife-mother and husband-breadwinner in the future, respectively. From this point of view, a girl should be smooth, kind, interested in cooking, housekeeping, and taking care of children, but a boy should be strong, stable and interested in the life outdoors. This pattern determines the outlines of the future lives of such boys and girls.

Another point to ponder about in the process of children socialization in such families is that through the attitude they assume, the parents internalize the foundational principles of their cultural patterns in which moral concepts and religious teachings are of special concern in the mental and thinking regime of their children consciously and systematically. In sequence 12, page 23, the father educates her daughter on how to keep trust and emphasizes on it: father: "didn't you bring the lump sugars?" Zahra, wondering and pointing out to a mass of lump sugars in front of her father: "too much lump sugar!" Her father emphasized with a sweet accent: "These are for the mosque; these are people in our trust".

-Appreciation of helping the elders and cooperating with them: Sequence 28, page 32: The father appreciates his children's labor at home – their cooperation in housekeeping – and promises to reward them.

-Affection for mankind especially the elderly: Sequence 40, page 41: Mother to Ali: "take this bowl of soup to Mrs. Kokab".

-Having regard for religious affairs: Sequence 50, page 48: The father takes Ali with him to the mosque and asks him to pair the shoes and hand out tea cups to the present crowd.

Also, repeated talks of not affording to pay for the house rent by the mother and father, and recurring complaints of the landlord in the presence of the two children makes them recognize and fulfill their duties with more care than ever, lead and guide themselves, and regulate their realistic expectations based on the knowledge

they have of the limitation of available opportunities concerning the society. In other words, they try more to solve their own problems and issues, and do not add up to their parents' problems by appealing to them when any problem or issue comes up. Based on what was just mentioned, the reflection of the socialization methods the family uses could be seen in the acts of the two children especially in sequence 12, page 22, where after Zahra's shoes are lost, Zahra and Ali, knowing about the economic status of their family, try to conceal the problem and share Ali's sneakers.

-Sequence 73, page 65: To solve the problem of sharing one pair of shoes with his sister, Ali decides to take part in a running match where the reward for the winner of the third position is a pair of sneakers.

-Sequence 76, page 67: explains Ali's attempts to win the third position in the running match.

In other sequences of the script, the writer compares the living conditions of Ali and Zahra with the children of the same age belonging to other social classes by displaying the living conditions of these children.

-Sequence 52, page 49: Ali goes with his father for gardening in one of the districts in Tehran's uptown. They ring the bell of a magnificent and luxurious house where a boy and an old man live. The boy invites Ali to playing, and Ali, seeing the old man insisting and with the permission of his father, joins the boy. "Ali is inspired by the environment and the boy's playthings and entertainment: swing, slide, ball, and other playthings by the swing. It is as if Ali is looking at a small amusement park." narrates the writer. While Ali has to help his father and adapt himself to the rules of his parents, the other boy's parents have provided him with playthings and entertainment so that he could develop his intellectual potentials in interaction with the environment around him.

-Sequence 76, page 67: is a narration of how the running match was held. The writer displays the effect of conditions concerning the social class of the family on the children: "Some families could be seen taking photos with their children; others are helping their children wearing their sneakers, and yet some others are giving some sweet or fruit to their children. A boy's mother is shooting him with a handycam. All this turns the running match into a field for entertainment, and gaining social rank and status. That's why many of the children feel exhausted and short of breath from the very beginning of the match, but they never display any sign of losing." (Page 68). This is as when Ali wins the first position that all the participating children dream of, he considers himself as a loser and weeps

DISCUSSION

After birth, any human being is raised in accordance with his/her own specific cultural and social environment. Since access to social, cultural and economic facilities is not the same for different social classes, lower class families could not provide their children with the facilities of basic care, education, and employment. Under such conditions, if the complementary institutions especially schools that are considered as the secondary agents of children socialization cannot develop the cognitive and intellectual skills in children and refine and correct the views, norms, and values of the children belonging to the lower classes of society, the popular form of family education in these classes will further establish the current social constitution, because the popular and common type of education will perpetually recreate specific stratum or class-based behaviors which will in turn recreate the social class structure and social stratification routines and further establish them from generation to generation.

Another point to reflect upon is that limiting children in pre-structured gender-based molds is ignoring the different desires they may have, and if attention that is given to nurturing the qualities and specific desires of children free of their gender is not reinforced through the society and does not become a part of established principles of families in socialization, this will lead to the recreation of gender-based roles and the continuance of gender discrimination.

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