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## **Traditional Culture in a New Interpretation: Processes of Cultural Awareness in a multicultural community**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to analyze the intergenerational transfer of cultural values into a multicultural community. The main research problem undertaken deals with the construction of meanings of a material cultural heritage of a region in a process of constructing a multicultural community, and the intercultural competence of the individuals. This can be the background for building open attitudes and innovative approaches in the social life of European Union citizens. The research was conducted in a multicultural community in north-eastern part of Poland. Youth 13-14 years old and their parents took part as well as teachers. The research sample was composed of 458 children, which is 75% of children of this age in the given region; 261 parents and teachers. Generally around 80% of teachers of the given 10 schools of the region took part in this investigation. I gathered opinions and declarations according to the cultural value of the material samples of culture of the region, during the process of gathering research data. Cultural value and its potentiality in the process of social communication was pointed out by gathering evaluations according to the usefulness of given elements of a material culture of the region in the current social reality in the opinion of youth, their parents and teachers. The research questionnaire was prepared on the background of symbolic interactionism and the analysis of the results is based on the assumptions of engaged ethnography. Gathered empirical material and the designed research group allow us to describe models of intergenerational transfer according to cultural identity of the family, its social status and the relation with school. Transfer of cultural value undergoes meaningful modification in the situation of extension of the social communication space by one more cultural agenda which is a school.*

**Key words:** *Cultural identity, Intergenerational message, Cultural symbols,*

It is common knowledge that upbringing is based on a cultural context and education is the effect of being aware of the fact that socializing processes cannot and should not take place separately from culture. To discuss this generally defined thesis one should specify the expression – culture. Taking into consideration the links between culture and education, one should start discussing the matter from having in mind the experience of a classical sociologist and repeat after him that culture should be interpreted as an indication of social life and the result of it. So as it is said it can be visible in the processes of social communication. It is an adhesive of a community and the basis for shaping one's cultural identity. Having stated the thesis concerning cultural operationalism in pedagogy like this, it is obvious that given aspects should be discussed.

In the field of pedagogy it would be interesting to think about the construction of the process in which culture is being transmitted from generation to generation. These are the so-called – widely understood integrating processes of social communication and the other perspective – cultural identity. Culture is influenced by societies which decide about its shape, content and changes taking place in its field and as it is so, it can be perceptible when observing identities' behaviour in a society.

Culture is also a system which is ideologically controlled. In a social reality we use the expressions such as: developed culture, primitive cultures, high civilised and civilisation neglected ones. Such ideologically controlled definitions of culture have in the past (and sometimes even now) resulted in specific social and educational policies. Social Policy, repeatedly resulted in the enforcement of cultural assimilation processes of the identities who were considered as the representatives of the culture civilisation and neglected other identities. The rule discussing cultures' balance not concerning their organisation and civilisation basis is the achievement of 20th century anthropology. Culture should have its descriptive and not evaluative sense as a rule.

But culture is a rapidly changeable system together with its changing civilising reality and one of the problems when analysing the links between culture and upbringing is undoubtedly the problem of description and the introduction of the changes in it. The process happens on the basis of intergenerational transmission where descending generation moderates it, and the next generation understands it from the social context perspective. The description and explanation means appointing new meanings to objects and behaviours from one generation's perspective and is related to its social reality. It is also reflected from two generational attitudes towards ideological culture perspectives e.g. ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. Introducing any cultural changes in such a perspective will be the function of changeable social reality and awareness of cultural heritage.

Distributive understanding of culture alerts us that it expresses our activities and strengthens social groups, societies and nations. It is expressed in specific collectiveness and is described as a form of cultural identity ( Dyczewski, 2003 ). Since in this perspective, unlike anthropological culture perspective, culture is located in time and space and concerns social collectiveness. It does not exist as it is so outside any social group.

So, when talking about culture, we always bear in mind the culture of any specific group. On one hand it is inherited, and on the other one it is the effect of human activity – the effect of human Communications from presence. According to Wolfgang Brezinka in his "Upbringing and Pedagogics in the Era of Cultural Changes": It is common knowledge and it was proved scientifically, that people are cultural and social beings, conditioned by history and traditions. Their existence depends on what they inherited and on their collective welfare. (Brezinka, 2005 ). Such claim seems obvious and undisputable if present generation's language, knowledge, civilising capability are taken into consideration. But one must be aware of the fact that from Brezinka's perspective, present social order and personal orientation in the world of identities is the function of this process. It is an obvious fact that educators should help children in understanding traditions and personal acceptance of them. But the aim, which seems to be obvious, is

not a convulsive adherence to what is traditional but Rather resignation and improvement of the elements which are not up-to-date any longer. So this is the beginning of a dispute based on heritage and traditions.

In general, cultural heritage consists of cultural values which are passed from generations to generations. Since in cultural transmission the deepest level is built on approachable values as an effect, almost all values which we inherit from previous generations potentially have the same importance. There are ones which are valued and needed the most and those we would like to abandon. Cultural heritage is described in the context of our disputes concerning the elements that constitute our cultural identity. It is evidently visible in the discussed cultural area."(Petrykowski, 2003) Stanisław Ossowski, the classic who analysed this issue, states that' cultural heritage are not only the material products of human activities ( objects, values, meanings ) but these are also predispositions to our approach to them which enable us to experience them. And only from the perspective of these psychical predispositions can the question of cultural heritage' shape be answered.'( Ossowski, 1968 )

Heritage is something that can be inherited. 'Heritage has the character of a one-way transmission- from a sender to an addressee. In every case the direction of heritage is chronologically ordered and younger generations inherit from the older ones. Cultural heritage s inherited via cultural contact and it decides about the heir. In this case, heritage has no addressees. '( Ossowski, 1968 ) Ossowski suggests some kind of differentiation between cultural heritage and creation. He also implies that material objects of culture are linked with cultural heritage and correlations of some psychic and muscle activities where they consist of masterpieces of art and everyday objects. The next issue of great importance discussed by Stanisław Ossowski is the so-called ' will to inherit'. It can be stated that unlike the biological heritage, the cultural one depends on the will of those who receive it. Their will also decides about the identities' cultural heritage that they want to obtain. One can inherit culture being aware of unaware of the fact and at the same time the awareness heritage can be wanted Or unwanted one.

Ossowski believes that cultural heritage, being simultaneously personal heritage of a stated group, consists of' a repertoire of examples representing each individual and the repertoire of examples that do not have any normative character.' ( Petrykowski, 2003 ) In every culture the people who deliver heritage are predecessors, mostly in a family. A family and its role in transmitting traditions and cultural heritage, is of great importance. According to J. Smolicz, heritage is this part of culture which is transmitted by the past, and the rest of it are innovations which come from the inside of a group (technical and scientific development inherited by this group) Or from other groups' cultural system sin the process of cultures' junctions. Smolicz believes that living generations can reshape and adjust heritage to their Leeds, and if the heritage does not fulfil the needs in full then they can introduce new, often imaginary, elements which in principal do not have to and generally do not change the term tradition.

Jerzy Szacki created a type of a necessary settlement because of the ambiguous meaning of the term and its popularity of usage in social studies. According to him, the term tradition is used ' to describe and explain the recurrence of some activity structures and the examples of thinking in more or less the same way by a few generations for a longer period of time, both in singular societies ( possessing their own territory and the people

of the same genetic roots) in groups possessing legal identity and in the regions which cover a few territorially separate societies, creating a unit if they possess common culture and the same traditions in some way.' ( Szacki, 1999 ) Thanks to Jerzy Szacki's analysis we can isolate three aspects of tradition understood in terms of cultural heritage: heritance as it is so, which can be described as the active one, when one generation passes to another one the possession of a stated unit. The second one is the heritage transmission, which can be described as objective because it is connected with the displacement of attention taking into consideration its possession and what can be transmitted. And the third term is the attitude to the past and its heritage in a group context, which can be described as a subjective one, because in the foreground some generation's attitude to the past and their will to inherit it or not is placed.

Józef Burszta is also interested in this issue and he writes that 'tradition consists of any past heritage, material and non-material one, existing in the past or in any stated moment of our life Or recalled from the past to life because of its valued origins and that is why selectively passed to next generations.' (Burszta, 2005)

Summing up the dispute about cultural heritage and traditions, it would be a good idea to present Stanisław Ossowski's opinion that 'Everything which can be attributed by the expression a cultural value has it, only because it reflects people's personalities that understand it in one way or another.' ( Ossowski, 1968 ) This shows that the power of tradition or cultural heritage is not based on any, the so-called, objective values, but on the people whose dynamic attitude to the past makes cultural heritage being verified all the time. Such assumption of the problem shows that while discussing the issue of intergenerational transmission of culture, while it is varied, the topic concerning education would be limited to the analysis of cultural heritage and traditions Rather than the process of their transmission. The aim seems to be the construction of somebody's awareness, their motivation, their sources and context in which tradition is created and understanding of their attitude to decisions from cultural heritage perspective rather than student's cultural activity and not their artistic one.

Ethnography, history, political science would be the sources of their cultural education. And culture education would be the function of cultural education. Both of them are strongly connected with each other and it seems they cannot exist without one another. While the first one make us aware of the issues concerning cultural identity, the other one provides an individual with competences and constructs a system of signs and symbols used by this individual to communicate their cultural identity. From the point of view of upbringing and education it is not a trifling problem nowadays. The intensive process of globalisation is the reason why children and youth are in a constant contact with a variety of cultural patterns. There is a need to prepare them to participation in a kind of intercultural communication and providing them with cultural knowledge based on the evolution of their own cultural heritage, but from the processes of social communication perspective of other cultural communities.

In today's world it is not enough to be aware of the fact that culture consists of many varieties. Anthropological knowledge, which is the fundamental issue in shaping our attitudes concerning tolerance and openness to various traditions and multicultural societies is what is needed.

Traditional societies are usually observed as the ones which suffer from lack of entropy or very weak one. They are sometimes described as communities lacking history. They are not ahistorical, but very difficult to define by it. Modern societies are based on history and it is their development's vehicle. At the same time they easily accept cultural antagonisms ( on the original level – in the system of cultural values ). This is the mechanism of development understood as the process of social evolution (civilisation ), but it also provokes social conflicts and political clashes. It represents democracy, emancipation, reduction of cruelty, but it also brings about long-lasting ambivalence. And it (as the feature of present societies' culture) creates great problems for educators. It opens the door to ethical and aesthetic education of young generations. Normally verified elements of tradition are very difficult to be replaced with. The faster our technologically-materialistic sphere changes, the more necessary are the elements of it. They provide us with continuity in a changing world. They protect individuals and groups from alienation and link generations.

This mechanism provides us with the sense of being rooted and naturalised, but also with the sense of a good relationship and that is the foundation for constructing cultural identity. We usually refer to the culture understood and classified stereotypically, which we are able to love and learn about via recognising adequate ways of activities and experiences. Limitation (in an educational process to tradition, becomes 'normative orientation points and is the basis to creating any life activities and psychic health' (Gennep, 2006 ). The care of their own normative orientation points, and their transmission to next generation is profitable for every society. Tradition awareness, understanding rituals in constructing young generations' system of axiological orientation is undoubtedly in such a case.

In the second half of the 20th century we return to 'cultural geography' and local revitalisation meaning identity's description in present and the source process of cultural values was observed in social studies. Post-modern understanding of modern culture describes it via such terms as: individualism, fragmentation, hybridism or flickering and uncleanness (Burszta, 2004 ) and in return modern culture and cultural identity analysis are drifting in the direction of critical analysis only.

They are difficult to objectify in a form of constructive models of transmission in reconstructing tradition. From the point of view of pedagogy it causes great ambiguity as upbringing and educational processes should be able to appeal to living tradition, common ideal and life patterns ( Brezinka, 2005 ). In this scheme localism seems to be not only the adequate tool for analysing cultural transmission in 20th century but also for working on the awareness of cultural influence on the individual's identification. It allows us to understand complicated identification processes on the borderland and describes (from inside) the condition of the people living there and the mosaic of social problems occurring. In such conditions localism is sometimes identified with the individual's cultural identity and its community awareness. This social awareness and individuality creating cultural identity is in a large part the function of history understanding and its interpretations. In 19th century social aspects of middle-eastern Europe were analysed mostly on the basis of geopolitics of this part of the continent which was the effect of social situation, unbelievable dynamism in national processes and strong national movements.

Nowadays, now and here, it seems to be more effective to discuss cultural and identifiable aspects of a region rather than the nation. Because cultural identity, mostly on the bordering line of states and cultures is rather the result of Exchange and various influences multiplication of traditions, than perfect national culture canon. That is why two terms are important in this dispute. The first one is localism and the other one is regionalism, which according to modern anthropology is attributed to by historical meanings, visible from the perspective of preserved local material and mental culture. While localism is usually understood as some kind of autonomy and subject to specific local communities in economic, social and cultural meaning, it is very important to stress that it always occurs in a wider –regional context. This situates local activity in the system of historical meanings and senses of a region. Stanisław Ossowski, the classic of this issue, defines a region as a kind of ideological country, situated somewhere between private one (localism) and the wider category of a nation. ( Ossowski, 1984 ) And according to Krzysztof Kwaśniewski, regionalism is mainly a type of social movement, whose ideology is to care about, and critical development of socio-cultural heritage of any region, to participate in fulfilment of target of a greater community ( nation, state ) not losing their own identity as it is inseparable and specific. In other words Kwaśniewski understands regionalism as a type of socio-regional awareness. ( Kwaśniewski, 1984 )

If we look at the definition of regionalism from European perspective in Fuchs's, dictionary it is interpreted mostly as a term describing movement whose aim is to realise regional problems in their political, social and cultural aspects. The effect is supposed to be the creation of regional capital, their cultural self-government and creation of a regional cultural self-identity. Regionalism is sometimes understood as a set of original and specific material and spiritual values – expressed via artefacts, customs and rituals. They are expressed in social identity, in individuals' and communities' views and attitudes and activities that respond to them. Then regionalism as a term responds to historical categories and its development as an idea. So the category of a modern regionalism can be mentioned. The idea of regionalism embedded in modern culture.

When analysing cultural material heritage we can discover that it is a kind of memory record not only about its transmission and cultural influences, but also about multigenerational experiences of the people creating its forms in specified natural and social conditions. To analyse heritage identity we need to decipher the 'transmissions', 'cultural influences,' and also 'multigenerational experiences' and 'natural conditions' they are accompanied by. All of them constitute specific identity and their specific attitudes towards their material surroundings.

Podlasie is a very interesting area for the analysis of cultural education. It is peculiar because of its political and cultural character. It is the area of western and eastern Slavs, who inhabited it in 14-18 centuries in large numbers. They were travelling from the south-eastern direction, the so-called Volyn settlement, north-eastern, Grodno settlement and from the east, Volkovysk settlement. And from the west there came Masovian settlement. As a result Podlasie is diversified in religious context, which on many occasions decides about ethnic identity of its inhabitants. ( Pawluczuk, 2008 ) It is also a border area where the dynamism of borders changes and political affiliation is very high.

In consequence there occurs a diversity and richness of cultural influences, as well as specific interpretations of its material cultural heritage.

According to Marshall Sahlins, material culture is based on the exchange inside the system of symbolic meanings (Dant, 2007). Properties are the source of a constant and visible system of meanings, via which culture is realised in a series of differences between time, place, activity, social placement, inclusion and exclusion. In common understanding a symbol does not represent any unequivocal meaning. Janusz Gajda describes a symbol as a ‘ visual sign with a subsystem of replacing signs being a substitute of a specific object or an abstract meaning or event inducing particular psychic states and emotional imaginations or experiences connected with this object.’ (Gajda, 2003 ). Those using this symbol recognise it, because it functions in a specified convention and its visual form. A particular material object is also a symbol because it is loaded with values. That is why a problem of cultural heritage is included in a question: Do values exist as they are so and they are long- lasting, or do people create them taking into account their needs, likings and if they change depending on time and circumstances? Cultural heritage selection processes in traditional culture have been connected with a limited possibility of transmitting them. Kazimierz Dobrowolski states that ‘its essence rested on the fact that from cultural heritage, which belonged to a particular generation, some products were disappearing and were not transmitted to next generations, and the others remained stable being more or less permanent. What is more, new products created by the same community or borrowed from others have been entering the heritage. They have had different intensity ,rhythm and reasons in individual periods of regional history’ ( Dobrowolski, 1966 ).

On the basis of the assumptions concerning the construction of cultural heritage of a borderline in a situation of multicultural and long lasting process identities’ profiles of a surveyed group in Podlasie were established. The communities which are members of a LAG were chosen. Via different actions and initiatives concerning economy, culture and education, the issue of cultural heritage identity was established in a public discourse and at the same time it entered the area of intergenerational transmission. The first table shows lower-secondary children’s cultural identity in the form of profiles, presented as a result of a survey.

Identification profiles inform about a type of cultural identity that appeals to the individual as a member of a cultural group. The construction of an identification profile is based on collecting data of the individuals surveyed. They were supposed to specify their identity according to the traditional identities areas. In this case these were: global, European, confession, national and regional identities. After the analysis of the identifications, profiles can be constructed.

**Table 1. Children's Cultural Identities**

Children's Identity Profile	Quantity	%
lack of Euro global identification	136	30,9%
Balanced	93	21,1%
confession-national	49	11,1%
confession-regional	36	8,2%
Confession	34	7,7%
National	19	4,3%
lack of regional identity	19	4,3%
Regional	14	3,2%
national-regional	14	3,2%
lack of national identity	9	2,0%
lack of confession identity	6	1,4%
Others	11	2,5%

It can be seen in the table that the most common profile's type represented is characterised by the lack of identity factor e.g. the lack of euro-global identity or the lack of national, regional or confession ones. It means that the people surveyed describe their identity via negative categories. While describing themselves or their cultural identity they are prone to decide who they are not rather than who they are.

It seems characteristic to the borderland that building up their cultural identity is connected with composing two main identities (in the surveyed opinion) cultural areas. The description of their own cultural identity based only on the identification with one cultural area does not seem to be the main one in the situation of living on the borderland. 'A balanced' profile means that a person surveyed notices each cultural sphere as the same one in his/her identification. This type of profile also informs us about the fact that either a person surveyed has a high cultural identity, or it may also mean the so-called 'correct' opinion. A person surveyed might be thinking about the correct answers while filling in the questionnaire rather than about his/her emotional identification with the suggested spheres.

Identity profiles confrontation occurring in parents and children's generations proves the thesis that 'individual' cultural identities adjust to generation's social reality. The nation-confession profile seems to be quite important in this aspect. In parents' generation it does not seem to be of a real statistic value, but in children's one its intensity is over 10 (the highest value is 50). In a children's group this profile is proportionally adequate to 11.1% of them, while in parents' case it is only 1.54%.

Parents and children's generations share their confession-regional identities and they declare the importance of regional and confession culture in constructing their individual cultural identity in accordance. The intensity of this profile in parents and children's generations is almost the same.

In the era of globalisation cultural identity is an existential challenge. Cultural changes in their attributive sense have influenced transmission process. Cultural identity is no longer inherited and it becomes a kind of individuals' project settled in different cultural spheres.

How to prepare children and the youth to the realisation of such projects and what the role of tradition or heritage is becomes a real challenge for pedagogy.

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