Parental education and socialisation of the child: internality, valorisation and self-positioning

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1. Positing the problem
In an individual's first years of life, parental education constitutes an essential determining factor in development and self-construction. The content communicated by the parents on primary socialisation appears to the child to be the components of an "only world possible" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The social world's reality is perceived by the child as the reality of the natural world, as an objectively valid truth. Although the child does not remain passive in socialisation, it does not choose its educational partners and, indeed, it is those partners that define the content to be passed on to the child. Primary socialisation leads to relatively irreversible forms of interiorisation, all the more so insofar as the child will be linked affectively to its partners and will build up its identity by identifying with them.

Socialising influences will, of course, depend on the cultural context in which individuals evolve. This explains why it seemed to us to be important to analyse the "sensitivities" characterising society in approaching the socialisation process. The pulsional economy has changed over the centuries, leading to the emergence of new values and to different conceptions of socialisation. Thus, in western societies, the individualist model of the person considerably influences practices and expectations in terms of socialisation (Vanandruel, 1991). This model valorises the individual's personal development to a greater extent than social conformity and submission to collective rules. Becoming a person, in western societies, means taking into account one's own interests and needs within an overall aim of fulfilment and happiness, and it also means showing oneself to be available to others, capable of listening. Socialising means personalising oneself - "On the social stage, the individual only truly seeks to adapt to his social milieu, to integrate insofar as he has the feeling that he can find achievement therein, not only through the satisfaction of his desires, but also thanks to the possibility of making an impact, transforming such and such an aspect of physical or social external reality in line with his own projects" (Tap, 1991, p. 53).

Qualities such as autonomy, independence, creativeness and authenticity are currently highly valorised and constitute essential educative objectives. Even if normative pressures and socialising influences remain strong, they appear less clearly and are more difficult to unmask. Self-esteem and internality would appear, to use Vanandruel's expression, to provide a rating for successful socialisation. The theoretical interest given to these two concepts is the mark of an individualistic (and thus quite relative) orientation. At the same time, study thereof is of interest as what the child interiorises or becomes will depend on the cultural values that are effective in its living environment (Bouissou, 1996).

From a historical point of view, the authors have observed a change in the socialisation process. The Renaissance period marked a turning point in that process of change, bringing with it an increasing interest in the human person, his sensitivity and behaviour. This change in sensitivity leads to a different pulsional economy: during socialisation, socially undesirable pulsional trends are repressed and the social nature of feelings (of shame, malaise, well-being, pleasure and displeasure) is forgotten, thus making these natural feelings seem to be the result of the "ego" expressing itself. We can draw a parallel with the notion of social utility (Beauvois, 1982): social adaptation thus appears to be a personal choice by very reason of the value currently attached to individual autonomy.

Internality, as an overestimation of the personal role in explaining psychological events (standing in opposition to externality), seems to us to illustrate strikingly the concept of autonomy. Internality's normative aspect can be explained by change in the socialisation process. As a social norm, internality answers to four criteria. On the one hand it is a socially shared belief: we can see that individuals belonging to dominant social groups are those who show strongest attachment to that norm (Dubois, 1987). On the other hand, the norm of internality is subject to a social learning process: the training arrangements take part quite significantly in its interiorisation and cognitive development cannot alone provide an explanation for that learning process (Dubois, 1988). Further, the norm of internality intervenes in evaluation and judgement practices: when individuals attempt to show themselves in a favourable light, they describe themselves as responsible for the events that arise in their lives; and in this case they effectively receive positive evaluations (Dubois & Le Poultier, 1991). Finally, the norm of internality is more open to interpretation in terms of social utility than in terms of truth: its integration will correspond to acceptance by the individual of certain socially dominant representations (Tostain, 1991).

In our view, apprenticeship of internality and self-valorisation, which are strong values in western society, are processes at work in the contemporary affective dynamic of socialisation. They are moreover essential to analyse, as the institution of the school is strongly attached to them: the child who succeeds in schooling will be both fulfilled, conscious of his personal worth and responsible for his acts. "Without wishing to state that the mode of attribution constitutes a criterion for evaluation on a par with using and mastering the French language, we believe that the internal - external dynamic cannot be dissociated from production or from the evaluation of the individual's schooling behaviour" (Deschamps *et al*, 1982, p. 150).

Another dimension concerning the child's personality is taken into account here. This concerns self-positioning, corresponding to the way the subject "situates himself in relation to others and the degree of community he feels in relation to them" (Meyer, 1989, p. 443).

Positioning refers back to self-other differentiation, to the distance the person establishes between himself and others. This is a dimension of personal and social identity. Identity implies both searching for and recognising one's worth and the need to assert oneself (Tap, 1980); it is built up in the comparison between the subject and others; the subject must resemble others while differentiating himself, allowing him to try out the feeling of his unicity, his originality (Tap, 1988).

In a psychosocial approach, we can consider that the building up of identity "is subjected to the particular conditions of the group to which one belongs, situated in a larger inter-group context" (Durand-Delvigne, 1992, p. 64). According to their social position, individuals define themselves specifically in relation to others, particularly in relation to the groups they belong to. Socially dominant individuals exercising power (social, economic or symbolic) present a "personal identity" rooted in their specific characteristics, thus expressing their singularity, their unicity. Socially privileged, adhering more than others to the dominant norms - individualist norms, in particular - they define themselves as singular individuals. Individuals occupying less privileged positions present rather a "positional identity" (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1988), anchored more in the social group, founded on characteristics defining the groups they belong to in a general manner.

While it is a cultural value in our western societies, the individualist model of the person has, however, a social differentiation function. It translates "the identity of dominant individuals and situates the members of dominated groups in a relationship of alterity. In group interdependence relationships, the dominated make what the dominant *are not* into a reality in a complementary fashion" (Durand-Delvigne, 1992, p. 64).

Self positioning, like internality or self valorisation, refer to the question of the subject's identity, which identity is socially constructed. All these "concepts explicitly invoke a theory of the subject or better, the problematic of a subject sketching out a theory of the subject" (Deschamps *et al*, 1982, p. 141).

In the psychosocial approach, identity is built up in the articulation between the individual and the collective group: it is seen to be the product of interaction between the personal and the social. Taking educative actions into account is of prime importance in this approach.

In parallel with change in the socialisation process, we can note a transformation in expectations in terms of socialisation and educative practices. However, parents' educative behaviour patterns are considerably influenced by their position in the social field. We have, in particular, noted that valorisation of autonomy, self-control and initiative are all the stronger in family practice insofar as the parents are socially and culturally privileged, thus adhering to dominant values (Kellerhals & Montandon, 1991). Adhesion to these different values according to the social groups to which one belongs is also accompanied by variable educative behaviour patterns, more or less encouraging the child's autonomy. All works dealing with family education recognise that democratic educative practices (imposing limits on the child while leaving him a share of initiative) are particularly characteristic of privileged social classes.

Our research tests the following general assumption: according to the orientation of parental educative practices, the child will show a more or less significant valorisation of itself, a more or less pronounced interiorisation of internality, and a personal or positional identity.

2. Methodology

To apprehend the influence of educative practices on internality, self valorisation and positioning, we chose to concentrate on the child's assumption of responsibility during familiar tasks and on how the parents urge the child on (Kiesler, 1971). Guingouain (1986) has indeed shown that commitment favours interiorisation by the child of the norm of internality. Further, we can surmise that educative practices aiming at making the child responsible encourage the development of autonomy and, through this, valorisation of self and construction of a personal identity.

The tool used was a questionnaire of twenty questions with three forms of response: educational practices involving low level commitment, medium level commitment and high level commitment. They are defined as follows: high level commitment educative practices where the parents grant responsibilities to the child while controlling and guiding him in those tasks. These educative practices are characterised by a balance between parental control and the child's freedom. On the contrary, low level commitment educative practices correspond to strong parental control and less investment from the child. Finally, where the child assumes a significant part of responsibilities without being guided by the parent, it is being availed of medium level commitment educative practices.

The questionnaire we devised was inspired by tools used by Lautrey (1980) and Guingouain (1986). It takes into account everyday and diverse family situations (household activities, trips out, personal hygiene and relations with the parents).

Multiple correspondence factorial analysis (MCFA) on the twenty items reveals a factor opposing high level commitment educative practices to medium level commitment educative practices. This involves a commitment factor for the child, from which we defined a factorial score (corresponding to the subjects' position on the axis) and which we used to analyse relations between parental education and the child's psychological dimensions.

To measure the child's internality, we chose the causal style of questionnaire used by Pierrehumbert *et al* (1987b). Twenty-four items each present proposals for a response (one

internal, the other external), in relation to which the subject can adhere more or less strongly. This allows four modalities to be defined: strongly external, moderately external, moderately internal and strongly internal responses. These questions evoke pleasant or unpleasant events in various areas of the child's life (school situations, relations with peers and with the parents). However, descriptive analyses showed low internal consistency of this questionnaire, leading us to retain only a sub-group of eight items. These items all evoke unpleasant events for the child and therefore allow for a negative internality score to be calculated.

Self-esteem was apprehended from the French language version (Pierrehumbert, 1987a) of Harter's scale (1982). Six areas were taken into account: school work, social and physical skills, physical appearance, behaviour and self-worth (understood as a general self-assessment). In total, thirty items were presented to the child, with four modes of response: very low, low, strong and very strong self-esteem.

Multiple correspondence factorial analyses made on each of the six dimensions of self-esteem allowed for definition of a factorial score for self valorisation (one score per dimension).

Self-positioning is defined indirectly in our study from children's responses to two questionnaires on internality and self-esteem. These two tools evoke for each item two opposed groups of children (either through their self-esteem, whether strong or weak or by causal explanations, internal or external). Having chosen the group they resemble, the subject has to specify whether he identifies strongly (in which case he will show a polarised position, with modalities 1 and 4) or whether he identifies more moderately (in which case he will show a more central, intermediate positioning, with modalities 2 and 3). Descriptive analyses carried out on internality and self-esteem items showed an opposition between polarised and intermediate responses enabling us to define factorial scores for self-positioning. We can note a strong correlation between the different scores for self-positioning, where each child tends to position itself in the same way on both scales, leading us to consider that self-positioning is truly a psychological variable, referring back to a dimension of personal identity.

To process our results, we thus retained factorial scores from the descriptive analyses (score for commitment, self valorisation and self-positioning), together with a negative internality score.

The population covered by our research comprised 200 parents and their children aged between 10 and 12. Information relating to the parents' professions and level of education allowed us to define a synthetic variable, presenting five modalities (highly underprivileged, underprivileged, intermediate, privileged and highly privileged socio-cultural identity).

The working hypothesis we suggest is as follows: children benefiting from committing parental educative practices provide more internal explanations of events arising in their lives, valorise themselves more and show a lower identification with the group to which they belong socially than children given low level commitment parental educative practices.

We shall also check whether the socio-cultural origin is an explanatory variable for parental educative choice.

Results

1. Commitment and social background
The parents' socio-cultural background explains significantly the child's commitment: parents adopt more committed educative practices insofar as they come from privileged socio-cultural backgrounds.

	V. underprivileged	Underprivileged	Intermediate	Privileged	V. privileged	degree of freedom	F value	proba.
Commitment (Dependent variable)	-0.80	-0.14	0.27	0.33	0.34	4 - 390	20.30	< 0.01

Table 1: Socio-cultural background and the child's commitment (univaried variance analysis)
(In the cells of the table, appear the means for each group)

Finer analysis of our results shows that parents from underprivileged social backgrounds seem to adopt educative practices that are both more subject to fluctuation and more contrasted than with privileged parents: indeed, in certain cases they leave their child considerable freedom without imposing limits on him and, conversely, in other instances, they show themselves to be highly coercive. In more privileged groups, on the other hand, parents are characterised by strong consistency in their educative action: they seem to seek a balance between their will to make the child assume responsibility and the need to maintain control.

2. Commitment and internality
Covariance analysis shows that the child's internality is largely explained by a strong level of commitment during parental educative practices. A child committed in his behaviour tends to interiorise more than another the norm of internality and explain events arising in his life from his personal characteristics.
Liberal practices are more conducive to interiorising social norms than more coercive practices (Beauvois, 1994). Hoffman (1983) noted similar results: inductive disciplinary techniques (that we can consider to be democratic) allow for a true appropriation of moral standards (these being apprehended by the child as personal requirements), while more "punitive" techniques lead to an external morality, with the child respecting norms because they have been imposed on him by external constraints.
Democratic educative practices can be distinguished from authoritarian practices from an ideological point of view. They take part in a different way in ideological transmission. In an authoritarian educative system, parental power can be asserted as such, without justification from the parent. Thus, the child that bends to constraints does not necessarily adhere to that power's ideological foundations, does not necessarily interiorise the norms of its educative partners. Conversely, a more flexible system is often accompanied by a liberal justification of power: it relies on making the child assume responsibility, direct reference to freedom of action, leading it to commit itself in its acts, to accept the pressure it is subjected to and to interiorise justifications relating thereto. In this orientation, commitment is an intermediate process between educative action (considered as an exercise of power) and interiorisation by the child of social norms. Liberal education thus appears to play an effective role in transmitting social norms. (It would even be awesomely powerful if it further induced interiorisation of adults standards rather than leading it to construct its own standards and values).

We insist, however, on remaining prudent as to the interpretation of our results. Indeed, it would be rash to generalise the relation observed between learning internality and the child being brought to assume responsibility. Our questionnaire's internal consistency is weak, which encourages us to bring into question the concept of internality. This is indeed a complex matter. While its particularly normative appearance in certain social spheres (school and social practices of evaluation) no longer needs to be demonstrated, it is no doubt less meaningful in other fields (for example, in the child's relations with its peers). The norm of internality should be apprehended according to the fields in which it is operative.

3. Commitment and self valorisation

Making the child assume responsibility during educative practices seems to play no role in evaluation of its skills. However, it favours general self appreciation and personal value (degree of freedom: 2-208; T = 1.7; p. = 0.07). This fits in with the observation made by Kellerhals *et al* (1992, p. 330): general self evaluation "is clearly related to the educative style adopted by the parents, and more particularly to the degree of autonomy and support enjoyed by the child". For these authors, valorisation of skills or "self-efficacy" will depend on the child's real experiences, on its failures and successes, while self-worth would seem above all to be built up through the regard of others, and particularly, at that age, of the parents. Thus, educative practices making the child responsible - based on values of autonomy, personalisation and self achievement - tend to encourage the child to build up a valorised image of itself.

Another dimension of educative practices should no doubt be to take into consideration in studying self valorisation the support from which the child benefits, the affective dimension to educative action. A large number of studies (Verquerre, 1989; Schaeffer *et al*, 1959; Champney, 1941) identified two orthogonal dimensions to describe educative behaviour patterns: "control" (concerning the sharing of responsibilities and parental influence that can be attached to the "partnership" dimension described by Beauvois in 1994) and "affectiveness" (concerning the parents' investment in the child's well-being, their availability). Managing affective relationships between parents and the child is no doubt a determining factor in self-esteem, making up the affective dimension to identity (Bouissou & Tap, 1995; Tap, 1988).

4. Commitment and self positioning

As far as self positioning is concerned, the influence of educative practices is remarkable. The child will identify all the more with the group and thus position itself more at the poles of scales insofar as it is the recipient of educative practices that are not inducive to assuming responsibility. On the other hand, the child made responsible during educative tasks will show a lower level of identification with the group and position itself at the centre of the scales.

	cognitive skill	social skill	physical skill	physical appearance	behaviour	self-worth	internality
Commitment (independent variable)	0.16	0.14	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.15	0.09
T value (1-208)	3.6	3.2	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.1	2.6
proba.	< 0.01	< 0.01	0.03	0.02	< 0.01	< 0.01	< 0.01

Table 2: Positioning on self-esteem scales in relation to the child's commitment (univaried linear regressions)

(In the cells concerning commitment, appear the means for each group)

Family education, through more or less responsibility inducing educative practices, influences the child's identity building. Educative practices inducive to autonomy (characteristics of privileged social groups) encourage a personal identity oriented towards a singularisation of the subject, distanced from belonging to a group and group type characteristics. Conversely, less responsibility inducive, fluctuating and contrasted educative practices (adopted by a majority of underprivileged social groups) lead the child to forge a more undifferentiated, positional identity, anchored more on a collective definition of self.

In a psychosocial approach attempting to explain the influence of social dynamics on identity building, individuals' linguistic practices provide a contribution to explaining matters. A form of social structure (an educative context) will determine the appearance of such and such a linguistic code, and the latter will, in return, express and reinforce that structure. Further, peoples' linguistic practices will be differentiated according to how they perceive themselves, concurrently with playing a role in self definition. Socially dominant groups are characterised by elaborate language (Espéret, 1975), insisting on the singularity of their members. The latter "think of themselves and speak to each other as a collection of individuals each defined as a whole, as a collection of acting wills, subjects of action and history" (Bisseret, 1974, 247-248). Conversely, socially dominated individuals are conceived of and see themselves as forming part of a whole. "While the dominated define themselves by belonging to a collective group, this collective group is not a collective subject (Us in relation to Me), but rather a collective object" (Durand-Delvigne, 1992, p. 66). Using of the impersonal French "*on*" (one) prevails over using the more personal "*nous*" (we).

In parallel with these differentiated linguistic practices, we can observe specific family functional patterns: social interactions within the family group will, in one case, be drawn up from persons perceived as such, whose intentions and motivations are taken into account; in the other case, they will be based rather on the status of the members and on the rules governing relations between these statuses (Moreau, 1989; Espéret, 1975). Various types of parental control can be highlighted; these are accompanied by the values and qualities that the parents seek to have the child acquire. The "imperative" mode is characterised by using strong power, only allowing the child open rebellion, submission or retreat. A control mode "founded on positional invocations" stresses the child's belonging to the community and does little to encourage autonomy; it does, however, facilitate the construction of a collective conscience. A control mode "founded on personal invocations" underlines the person's qualities and insists on its autonomy.

The way the family is run, family social interactions, techniques relating to influence and the child's personality profile valorised by the parents (Kellerhals & Montandon, 1991) are so many components that interact and take part in forming the child's identity. These dimensions of family education need to be gone into in greater depth in order better to understand the construction of the child's identity in terms of self positioning.

Conclusion

The three elements of the child's personality (self valorisation, internality and self positioning) prove to relate to parental educative practices.

Strong personal value, strong internality and a personal identity are the corollary of practices to make the child assume responsibility and act autonomously.

Given the importance, for schools, of notions of responsibility and personal fulfilment, these elements no doubt constitute assets for satisfactory integration of the child in the school.

Deepening our study may be considered in order better to define the influence of family education on the three dimensions evoked here. On the family side, we could seek to go more deeply into the affective dimension of educative practices.

The notion of internality relies on a complex approach, more complex than our own, taking different dimensions into consideration (the areas of life brought up in the items, the distinction between behaviour patterns and reinforcements and the "stability - variability" of the proposed causal factor).

As for self positioning, taken up indirectly in this study, we are considering how to make it operational in a later study. From a "who am I?" type trial, we could distinguish between responses according to whether they refer to the person indicated in his or her individuality - idiosyncratic responses - or whether they mention the subject's social integration and include a reference to others - positional responses (Deschamps *et al*, 1982).

Articulated study of internality, self valorisation and positioning seem to us to be quite relevant as they are dimensions to identity that are socially constructed, socially valorised and in interaction. They refer to a theory of the subject - in agreement with the individualistic model socially valorised in western societies - whereby the individual is, finally, only what he makes of himself. Feeling responsible for one's acts surely requires defining oneself as a responsible, autonomous, singular person conscious of one's personal value. "The individual becomes a subject when we can attribute to him the cause and thus the responsibility for his acts, otherwise he remains dependent on his physical and social environment" (Deschamps *et al*, 1982, p. 52).

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Abstract:

Contemporary western society is characterised by an individualist model of the person. Conceptions of socialisation insist more on self expression and development than on the individual's submission to social requirements. Values of individual responsibility and self-realisation direct educative actions. We analysed the influence of parental education on internality and self-esteem in the child; we took special interest in the parents bringing the child to become responsible (commitment). Two hundred parents (from contrasting social backgrounds) answered a questionnaire on internality and a question on self-esteem. According to their social background, the parents adopt more or less responsibility inducing educative practices. Bringing the child to accept responsibility in daily life encourages the learning of internality. However, family education has little influence on self-esteem. We also analysed how the subjects "positioned" themselves, i.e. how they situate themselves on scales proposed, with some positioning themselves preferably in the centre of the scales while others see themselves rather on the extremes. We noted a correlation between positioning of the parents and that of the children.

Key words: Socialisation - Parental educative practices - Commitment - Internality - Self-esteem - Positioning.