

Applied Social Psychology

Applied Social Psychology

Edited by

Patricia-Luciana Runcan and Georgeta Rață

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Edited by Patricia-Luciana Runcan and Georgeta Rață

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FOREWORD

The book “Applied Social Psychology” represents a landmark for the inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach of social sciences. Authors, researchers and practitioners have joined through studies approached in the field of applicative research and formulated solutions and proposals to the problems approached.

The book has four chapters; it reflects the availability, the interest and the motivation of authors to contribute to the development of social sciences in general, and especially of applied psychology.

Chapter One, *Theoretical Approaches to Psychology*, offers the frame for today’s orientations in psychology, from the failure of ethics in the social domain, socialization through values, the critics of violence until modern stereotypes regarding librarians and readers. The values and the manner in which these ideas are expressed in interpersonal relations represent the expression of our being. A “failure” of value operationalization in human behavior represents the reflection of contact breach with the subjectivity and the world.

Chapter Two, *Social Psychology*, unites unique themes from the eventful school life; the students’ attitudes through career; social representations of intelligence among students; empiric studies in the classroom; the role of media in social relations of teenagers and their personal development; the agents’ role in the students’ communication and socialization and some characteristics of interpersonal communication in cultural context. The themes mentioned have a strong practical and intercultural character.

Chapter Three, *Recent Debates in Interpersonal Communication*, presents a collection of practical studies: intelligent communication; new media; internet addiction; the use of learning strategies in countries that speak English and in other countries; sociologic aspects of public communication in Croatia and interpersonal communication. Communication as field of theoretical and applicative research also represents an exhaustible theme for researches. In essence, we as human beings express communication in all its forms.

Chapter Four, *Mental Health Issues*, leads us to an extremely sensible area and which is hard to be defined at the border between normal and pathologic. In this area, counselors develop their activity, together with

theologians, psychotherapists, social workers and any other person with the necessary dedication and training in order to work with human sufferance. Physical and mental illness underlines once again our vulnerability and puts to the trial our personal limits and of the human kind through modalities of perception and understanding of the illness. The mentalities impact in psychology, the postpartum depression, bipolar disorders, Alzheimer, schizophrenia and disorders of sexual dynamics represent the frame in which authors chose their research themes. The last chapter, through the subjects presented shows the starting point and the final point of every person, illness being the dark side, but also the specific one for every social period

In conclusion, the book offers a large frame of interest themes for researchers, for teachers, students and practitioners. Without a desire for exhaustiveness, to offer unique solutions for the problems approached, most of the papers offer and indicate practice intervention direction, and in their turn, starting points for the realization of new research studies, for authors and for other researchers.

Loredana-Ileana VÎȘCU

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CHAPTER ONE

**THEORETICAL APPROACHES
TO PSYCHOLOGY**

PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF SOCIAL
RESPONSE TO AUSTERITY MEASURES
IN 2010 ROMANIA:
A BRIEF INCURSION INTO THE ANATOMY
OF A HISTORICALLY CONFIGURED MENTALITY
ADRIAN PĂCURAR AND LIA-LUCIA EPURE

Introduction

This chapter is about some social and especially *psychological* characteristics of Romanian society—characteristics that were important and very disturbing from different points of view—during the austerity measures imposed by the government in 2010. The main purpose of our chapter is to draw a general conceptual frame through which, at least to our belief, the particularity of a very low level of reaction from the population regarding the very tough austerity measures imposed by the Romanian authorities during that crisis can be understood. It is very important to mention the fact that the present chapter does not claim to be an exhaustive sociological, psychological and historical study. All we intend to show is the main set of features regarding the Romanian people's general cultural mentality in times of historical crisis. We are disclosing the possible causes for this type of mentality, but not from the perspective of a classic empirical sociological approach. Instead, we prefer to capitalize the resources of a long tradition of a well-defined mentality, one, as we will see, which is very specific for the Romanian people. For this reason we are using only a minimal and general set of references.

Our chapter starts by considering that, among other possible causes, one of the main ones, for the given situation, was a set of historically inherited characteristics of the Romanian people. The goal of the chapter is to analyze some fundamental aspects of the issue. Firstly, the purpose is to understand, in terms of a general and historically configured mentality, why the situation had become, from our point of view, so peculiar, by which we mean the very low level of social response, with no apparent

reasonable explication or serious possible understanding. That peculiar situation determined, once again, a very singular figure for Romania among other European countries that also had to go through that deep economic and financial crisis. This was visible through a very low social response, in terms of opposition and protests, and a very low social and civic response regarding some possible plans and scenarios for recovery or for a different distribution of social costs that austerity measures had determined. Secondly, the goal was to disclose a possible general historical frame of action in order to improve the general capacities of social response and civic actions in the case of Romanian people in the future. Of course, nobody could ever claim that he or she has the fundamental key and understanding through which a general historical frame might be improved. However, we consider that some recommendations, in their most general sense, could indeed be formulated for Romania.

This chapter is about what we consider a fundamental element of the social general reality of contemporary Romania, disclosing the specificity of social response in a time of profound economic crisis.

Methods

Historical and contextual sociological and economic analysis

In this chapter we use a combined historical methodological frame by analyzing some sociological, demographic and economic parameters of the social structure of Romania during the beginning of the crisis in 2010, and also through a historical and hermeneutical approach. This latest method aims to disclose some historical structural characteristics of the Romanian people, characteristics that could ultimately, at least in theory, shed light on the specificity of social reaction to those extreme austerity measures taken by the government in 2010.

It is important to mention that our chapter also used a historical analysis by disclosing some fundamental elements regarding the mentality of the Romanian people, which occurred in the past and which were very important, especially during times of profound crisis. In addition to this, many significant authors have indicated a major historical delay in the case of Romania in comparison with the West (Boia 2012, 7–17). From our point of view, this aspect was crucial because it is relevant not only for the subject investigated but also because it could have a major impact on a wider conceptual frame through which the deep mentality of the Romanian people can be understood.

Regarding the methods used to develop this chapter it is also worth mentioning that we deliberately do not disclose some particular and contextual empirical elements from the 2010 Romanian economic crisis. On the contrary, our subsequent purpose is to use some well-documented elements of history regarding the *mentality* and *symbols* of Romanian people, elements which, at least from our point of view, could help us to properly understand the specificity of the social reaction or social response of Romanians during moments of profound historical crisis, regardless of specific content or causality. Regarding this issue we must underline the fact that it is relatively easy to uncover a sort of *historical continuity* about elements of mentality, even if these elements could be disclosed by different methods of investigation or through different tools of interpreting the historical and sociological context. We do not insist upon them in an extensive manner, at least not from the point of view of a possible methodological frame, but we consider that it was important to talk about this reality in this context.

The Historical Background of the 2010 Economic Crisis in terms of Mentality

From our point of view this section is of essential relevance to any study that intends to disclose some key element of Romanian mentality regarding the way in which Romanian people have reacted to different forms of crisis. It is also important to use it as a *correlative tool* in any methodological frame designed to uncover the Romanian general mentality regarding the social space and political leadership, but also regarding cultural values and symbolic bonds. In brief, without going into detail, the vast majority of researchers have underlined the fact that Romanian people have historically had a very specific way of integrating historical traumas and crisis. This has been extensively analyzed as *Miorița*, a deep national symbol and a popular landmark, considered to be a sort of point of guidance for any social researcher who wants to disclose the way in which Romanian people acted throughout history. This is not the place for an extensive coverage of this myth but we must indicate some key elements that are ultimately defining the Romanian way of understanding history and of reacting to it. In short, a passive attitude of Romanian people became visible through *Miorița*, by which Romanians encountered every historical challenge or crisis with contemplation and a strange acceptance of bad luck and failure. This general mentality was inherited and a serious cultural target, so to speak, for some major Romanian intellectuals who considered it as a sort of acceptance of

historical misfortune and, even worse, a capitulation and abandonment of the fight for better faith (Cioran 1996, 13–24). Some of them have spoken about a so-called “vegetable people” due to the lack of significant reactions from Romanian people during the time of major historical crises. In addition, they considered that the so-called Romanian “deficiencies” are not the result of history but, on the contrary, that Romanian history is the result of these deficiencies (Cioran 1993, 63). This general frame of mentality was present, of course, during the 2010 economic and financial crisis, even if its signs were not so visible from the beginning.

The Contextual Background of the 2010 Economic Crisis in terms of Mentality

Regarding the 2010 economic and financial crisis, in Romania there was nothing new in terms of the *essence* of that historically inherited mentality. The same passivity, with only a few and small exceptions, engulfed the entire civil society, or significant parts of it. Yet we have to admit that something additional was indeed present the whole time which Romanian society itself presented at that historical moment, being the very specific legacy of the communist era, an era that also left its marks on Romanian society.

The main ingredient of an already historically configured negative attitude was *fear*, one which the communist regime knew how to exploit to its own interest. Some authors suggest that this fear produced in the deep psychological structure of Romania, at the individual level, a veritable Stockholm syndrome (Vianu 2012, 152). This is maybe the most profound psychological element, one which the majority of Romanian people is not even aware of today after almost twenty-five years since the fall of communism, but which surely played a major role in the passive attitude of 2010. There are no significant major sociological studies on this particular aspect, but some commentators talked about it in the media during that period. In addition to this, as a general position, we can mention the very low rate of change of the old structures from the communist period to new ones, and many authors also indicated this. What seems to be very disturbing about this is the fact that these old structures managed to successfully put themselves safely on the other bank of history, so to speak. This is important as the higher educational system is a situation that further delays any serious attempt to integrate Romania into the Western set of values (Liiceanu 2010, 203). This also has a major negative impact and directly determined, from many points of view, the

very low level of social response and civil commitment of the Romanian society after 1989, not only at the moment of financial crisis in 2010.

Results

General considerations

The findings show that we can indeed speak, in the case of Romanian society, about a *historical* structural specificity regarding not only that type of social reaction from 2010 but also the general way in which Romanian society responded to different types of crisis from its historical past. This implies that a set of sociological and psychological parameters should be available as precious tools for social researchers.

Reactions of the society during the 2010 austerity measures

From a strictly empirical point of view, during the 2010 economic and financial crisis we consider that there are three essential elements defining that historical moment in terms of social reaction and civic response from Romanian people to the austerity measures imposed by the government.

Firstly, it is important to notice the presence of a very limited general reaction, in terms of street protests or social movements. At least in its incipient phase, at a time when in Europe there were massive social protests with millions of people on the streets, in Romania there was almost complete silence. It would be a completely separate task to develop sociological, economical or psychological investigations into this aspect. We select for our very short analysis only those elements from the Romanian history of mentality about which we have already talked. Thus, we remember in this context the passive attitude, a sort of complete acceptance of the historical faith and, at the same time, the efforts to adapt to the new conditions without any significant opposition to the government or any force that imposed those austerity measures.

Secondly, in some exceptional cases in which a social reaction appeared we saw a significant *delay* in comparison with the moment in which those austerity measures had started to produce massive, financially negative effects for large parts of the population.

Thirdly, even this delay looks, at a second deeper analysis, to be something artificial and inertial. Even more than this, there were some voices which considered this fact as something which had been staged by some obscure forces, but this, even if it were true, does not present a significant interest for us in the context of this very short general analysis.

What really matters is the *passivity* and *delay* in reactions from the society. The Romanian people seem, in that historical moment, to have done once again what they had always done so often in their historical past—the acceptance of a very harsh social and economic context together with the will to resist but not oppose those forces which imposed severe austerity measures for large segments of the Romanian population.

Discussion

In brief, we want to underline that even if the status of contemporary Romania is, in its official coordinates, one in which the country belongs to the Western nations due to its membership of the European Union, it seems that, at least in terms of civil society training, Romania has a lot to do in the future. Beyond this elementary and formal truth lies the necessity of a sort of structural reform regarding its mentality and deep social psychology. This could not be obtained easily and clearly, but if Romania wants to remain within the Western world then it should consider some medium- and long-term steps in order to change its general social attitudes about a vast range of elements. There are no universal solutions to this but if an already historically configured frame exists, it should start from here, in one way or another. In addition, a strong political will is needed along with the very determined influence of the West, in different cultural forms, in Romania's future education.

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SOCIALIZATION THROUGH VALUES: GOAL VALUES AND PERFORMANCE VALUES

DUMITRU BORȚUN

Socialization

The concept of socialization

In the sociological and socio-psychological literature, this concept has a double meaning—a hard and a soft one. In the hard meaning, “socialization” means the “transformation of an individual from an asocial being into a social being by instilling certain ways of thinking, feeling and behaving” (Chelcea & Iluț 2003, 332). This definition applies to children and adults in limited cases (nowadays, it is almost extinct).

In the soft meaning, “socialization” can be defined as re-socialization, hence as a process of inculcating certain ways of thinking, feeling and behaving *differently* from those interiorized by an individual. This is the case of individuals that transgress into a different culture by changing their affiliation group or of sudden social transformations that trigger the modification of norms and values that the individual must internalize, so as to evince a professional behaviour. In the former situation, socialization may define a group phenomenon while in the latter it is a mass phenomenon.

The fact that the process of socialization tackles both the psychic particularities of the individual and the psycho-social mechanism of the group or mass phenomena explains why the concept of “socialization” belongs to personal psychology, social psychology and sociology—it is a trans-disciplinary concept. Moreover, socialization aims at integrating the individual into a system of norms and values, social rules (which by definition are peripheral to the individual)¹ and at reinforcing the solidarity between the group members.

Classical studies dealing with the concept of socialization, initiated by Émile Durkheim (1973; 2009), have highlighted the processes through which an individual internalizes concepts and structures, and have

analyzed the effects of this interiorisation (internalization) on behaviour. One of the main objectives of these studies has been to offer a solution to the problem of permanence, throughout the generations, of the cultures and sub-cultures proper to certain groups, as well as the problem of the behaviour of individuals that have to abide by the same types of linguistic, cognitive, political or moral habits.

Although these studies have laid stress on a powerful dimension of continuity—for instance a great resemblance of political behaviour between children and their parents (Campbell et al. 1980)—they have neglected to account for the change of such behaviours.

In addition to this, the most renowned studies have tried to understand the way in which the value system held by the social class triggers the fate of the individual that internalizes this value system (for instance, the meaning of collective solidarity portrays the working class while individual accomplishment is more representative for the middle class).

A definition of “socialization” serves as the basis for these studies, implying:

- the priority of society over the individual
- the practice of constraint through an allegedly legitimate authority
- an objective defined by the social scale.

Furthermore, this definition substantiated a rudimentary theory of learning, understood as simple conditioning. The individual is thought to be a passive being whose behaviour is narrowed to the reproduction of already acquired schemes. A more supple concept might make a stand against this super-determinist vision which takes into account the relative autonomy of the individual, their capacity to adapt their acquired dispositions to their life situations and even modifying, if necessary, the internalized norms and values depending on the problems that they are compelled to solve. The dialecticized vision of socialization is represented in more recent theoretical approaches and even in empirical researches, some of which expressly deal with political socialization. The cleavage from the coarse sociologist determinism is increasingly obvious in the approach to socialization mechanisms.

Mechanisms and forms of socialization

One of the important approaches from the social communication perspective is the socio-linguistic approach of socialization undertaken by the British sociologist Basil Bernstein (1975; 1978). Bernstein states that

one of the most important events in twentieth-century scientific research is the convergence of the natural and social sciences in the study of linguistic aspects of communication. He observes, however, that few sociologists studied language as a social institution (according to the family and religion model). Except for some papers written by the American George Mead (1863–1931), a leading representative of the School of Chicago, in the studies on socialization we find no empirical research examining the role of speech as a process through which the child acquires a specific social identity.

Such considerations have been developed in American anthropology (Franz Boas and Edward Sapir) which reached the conclusion that for the individual “language is just a guide to social reality” (Sapir 2000). However, the tradition of American anthropology imposes the thesis that the fashions of speaking are determiners of social relations (Whorf). In other words, the link between language-culture-habitual thought is **not** mediated through the social structure. Bernstein pleads that, on the contrary, the fashions of speaking (the codes) depend on the form that social relations take. The social structure generates codes which transmit the culture and so constrain behaviour. Inherently, the changes in the social structure determine the formation and transformation of a culture through their effect on the fashions of speaking. Tested by its author in the research of the training processes (education), this hypothesis is very promising for the understanding of the socialization process (re-socialization) in Romania. Mainly since it can account for the diverse forms of socialization and identity construction, according to Bernstein, within the *same language* (as a general code) *specific codes* appear (fashions of speaking) that induce different types of reporting reality in speakers (to objects and other individuals).

How does the form of social relation determine these fashions of speaking? The speakers may choose what they say, the moment they say it, and the way they say it. The form of social relation regulates the speaker’s options both at the syntactic and lexical levels (for example an adult that speaks to a child). As the child learns to speak (and learns the codes of speaking), they learn the *requirements of their social structure* which become, through the consequences of the linguistic process, the substratum of their experience. Every time the child speaks or listens the social structure that they are part of is reinforced within them, and their social identity is modelled. By shaping their acts of speech, the social structure becomes the child’s psychological reality. Stabilized through time, the fashions of speaking will eventually come to play an important role in the adjustment of their intellectual, social and affective orientations.

Thus, the social structure becomes a *referential* that the future adult shall carry and perceive as “reality.”

Depending upon the probability of predicting the organizing elements of the fashions of speaking, Bernstein divides the fashions of speaking between *elaborate codes* (when the speaker selects from a vast range of alternatives and the probability is limited) and *restricted codes* (when the speaker selects from a small range of versions and the probability is increased); the codes included in the latter category appear in prisons, operative military units, groups of children and teenagers, etc. (Bernstein 1978, 53–105)

The greatest asset of Bernstein’s theoretical program is the separation from the sociologist reductionism as well as the avoidance of the “linguistic reduction.” He discovers the truth formulated by Helmut Von Humboldt in 1848: “In life, man understands the world following the image that the language offers him.” Thus, Bernstein explains the fact that certain individuals (groups) select *certain* values, internalize certain norms, rejecting others or just withstanding them. The great drawback of Bernstein’s theory is that it fails to convincingly account for change.²

Socialization through Values

The value crisis after 1989 also develops the *systematic ambiguity of value orientation*, which denotes the weak cognitive dimension of the attitudinal vector (for instance information regarding the market economy). Thus, in 1994 the dominant opinion trend was in favour of privatization (67% according to an IMAS study in March, and 58% to an IRSOP study in June). However, a large majority of the subjects that encouraged privatization rejected the consequences thereof (i.e. unemployment, social inequality, etc.). This “schizophrenia” of values has antecedents in the period prior to 1989 (characterized by a super-dimensioned sensitivity towards authority and propaganda). To perceive the world through clichés and stereotypes or received ideas, and especially to verbalize it by using verbal clichés borrowed from others, can be termed as “pseudo-thinking” (via Erich Fromm),³ but from a psycho-social point of view we are dealing with a mass phenomenon that we must identify, explain and, eventually, remodel.

The gap between the material practice and the educational practice of a collectivity leads to a peculiar configuration of values and affective emotions, and inherently of motivations and behaviours. This gap generates the mass formation of an “agglutinated personality” and, consequently, of

some incoherent social behaviour, which is more often than not antagonistic.

In this challenging context various essential questions are raised for the socialization instances: Which values will be conveyed through education? Is its transmission enough to establish the expected, anticipated social behaviors? What is the optimum ratio between the educational ideal of a society and the current status of its development?

To answer these questions it is worthwhile mentioning the theoretical distinction made by psychologist Pierre Janet and further developed by Jean Piaget (1967, 44 and foll.) between *values of finality*—*values of accomplishment*.

- *The goal (end) values* are shared by the individuals depending upon their conception of the world, being acquired through education (culture); they dictate “disinterested” behaviours
- *The performance values* shared by the individuals in terms of costs/gains criteria are enforced by coherent life conditions and dictate “interested” behaviours.⁴

The duality commented on by Piaget helps to explain a lot of social phenomena which are difficult to grasp, from the day-to-day behaviour of the common individual to the behaviours of large social groups:

- participation in revolutionary fighting (from the French Revolution in 1879 to the Romanian Revolution in 1989) of some “danglers” guided by no sacred beliefs
- performance of the consensus and exceptional solidarity in warfare or acts of God situations (performance values such as “comfort,” “health” and “our own life” are replaced by goal values such as “country,” “people,” “native land,” “future of the nation,” “freedom,” “independence,” “justice,” “dignity” etc.).

The replacement of performance values by goal (end) values eases the mobilization of a large number of people under a single commandment, encouraging collaboration and compassion, tolerance and mutual comprehension—inherently socializing and humanizing behaviours to the highest possible level at a given historical moment. At present, the situations in which performance values give up the leading place in favour of the goal values, as well as the psychic mechanisms through which an individual passes from one state into another, are the object of a very few studies. In “normal” conditions hegemony is held by performance values,

and the life situations in which the conflict between the two sets of values explicitly gains ground are *tragic situations*.⁵

For the majority of individuals, the goal values dwell somewhere in the “sky of tradition” (quoting Habermas) or shimmer in the “horizon of aspirations.” When they underpin the social organization they only *tacitly* participate in daily life, not being verbalized by all members of society in all life situations. Explicitly, they are invoked only in atypical situations, such as “discussions in principle,” debates organized by institutional entities, or interpersonal conflicts (when we appeal to “humaneness,” “justice,” “honour” or “truth”). If an individual sets their mind to permanently pursuing goal values that they tacitly share, they would either regret the chronic wastefulness of their actions or collide with the social psychology of their affiliation group.⁶

The use of the distinction between performance values and goal values is compulsory for those who want to set up a theory of educational communication, of educative practice, or of socialization in general. Such a theory would be useful for a possible re-shaping policy of mentalities as a mandatory dimension of transition. No policies—economic, social or educational—can elude this duality without risking bringing about inadvertences. A decision, a norm or a law becomes inoperative if it breaches the performance values recognized by a certain segment of the civil society,⁷ as it would be equally inoperative if it breaches the goal values inherited by the collectivity.⁸

In the re-socialization logistics of a larger community (such as a nation), the types of decision must adapt:

- the short-term decisions—to the performance values
- the long term decisions—to the goal values.

If the two prerequisites are not complied with, we reach the paradox of “forced welfare” (which means doing bad, not good).⁹

The divergent angle between the goal values and the performance values may be reduced either (a) by changing the moral ideal of the collectivity, or (b) through practical activities, of humanizing real life. In post-communist Romania we have been trying to adapt the goal values (with unimaginable consequences) through (a) while (b) is unachievable in this phase.

The first questions we should answer as analysts of Romanian transition are: In which of the two registers are we falling short? How large is the divergence angle? How can this angle be reduced (by changing mentalities or by economic development)?