PEQUENOS E GRANDES DIAS

OS RITUAIS NA CONSTRUÇÃO DA FAMÍLIA CONTEMPORÂNEA

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Abstract

Raised by recent sociological theorization on deinstitutionalization, individualization and risk, this thesis addresses the question of what constructs contemporary family rather than what makes it a ‘ephemeral’, ‘fluid’ and ‘fragile’ reality. In a ‘fragmented’ landscape of families endowed with ‘uncertainty’ and ‘instability’, guided by a limited time, fast-paced, smaller, reshaped by the processes of privatization, sentimentalization and democratization, aspiring to autonomy and devaluing continuity before *hic et nunc* experiences, how to capture, nowadays, the family? Among several possible starting points, and inspired by the work of David Morgan (1996; 1999), we recognize in ‘family practices’, specifically in ‘family rituals’ a powerful theoretical and conceptual tool working for sociological imagination and able to capture the flow, fluidity and meaning of contemporary family, simultaneously constructed by the observer and actors themselves.

To portray and understand, inside and on its diversity, the place of family rituals in the construction of contemporary family is the overall aim of our study. Specific and complementary, further research objectives consist in inventory and characterize family rituals, and unveil hidden relationships with family structures and dynamics, social contexts and gender dynamics behind it. From a methodological point of view, a qualitative, intensive and in-depth research was undertaken aiming to capture experiences and meanings related with multidimensional practices and representations of family rituals, here perceived as interactive and meaningful processes, both located in culture, history and personal biography. Using the episodic qualitative interview (Flick, 1997) contextualized narratives of men and women living in diverse family contexts and in a particular stage of the family course life, the one of families with small children, were gathered and subjected to an in-depth analysis.

Anchored on the theoretical and empirical discussion of collected data, explored using qualitative content analysis techniques, one must conclude on, first, the power of family rituals to capture the polychromatic texture of family life; second, its acknowledgment as places of contemporary *inside* and *outside* family construction, both physical, relational and symbolic places. By the end, it’s in a complex *puzzle*, which main pieces are time, space and emotion, one must seek for the answer on what gives the ‘special’ meaning to family rituals.

Keywords: Family, Family Rituals; Deinstitutionalization; Everyday-Life; Social Construction of Reality.