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Antonio Iannaccone, Giuseppina Marsico (2007)

# La famiglia va a scuola. Discorsi e rituali di un incontro

Roma: Carocci, ISBN: 978-88-7466-492-4

Pages: 199

Price: € 19,50

Reviewed by Luca Tateo,  
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The book is structured as a fascinating novel where the events are told us in form of a bachtinian dialog between multiple voices, teachers, families, school institution, researchers (Bachtin, 1981; Ligorio & Hermans, 2005). The book focuses on the idea that the process of Self construction in adolescents is a critical issue going on in a boundary line between school and family. Authors introduce the concept of *educational Self* (p. 24) as a specific form of Self emerging from the individual experiences of the education context. Such concept, even if not fully developed in this book, sounds laden with scientific interests for further studies.

In the first chapter, Mr. Antonio Iannaccone shows how different research trends in Educational and Social Psychology converge towards a contextual model of the psycho-social processes taking place in school. He presents the theoretical framework in which the authors situate their analysis of the relationship between family and school and its change throughout the last two decades. The main idea is that the macro level – educational ideologies – the meso level (rituals, discourses and roles) and the classroom micro level constitute the school cultural field (Lewin, 1935) which is the interpretative framework of students' success or failure.

In chapter 2 Mrs Giuseppina Marsico outlines the second subject which is part of the «*social architecture of such encounter*» (p. 29) between school and family. Different research approaches in Psychology consider family as a social system of relationships of love, care, power, conflict and interdependence (Brofenbrenner, 1979; Bateson, 1973). As a social and cultural system, the family provides an interpretative paradigm for the construction of meaning (Reiss, 1981).

Chapters 3 and 4 contain – authors state – the account of encounters between different and often conflicting cultures. First, is described the relationship between school and family cultures and the struggle for the ownership of the meaning making processes (Wenger, 1998) with respect to the critical problem of youth education. Secondly, is taken into account the opposition between young and adults that often leads to a generation gap. The main and amazing finding of this research is that young people that are the main subjects of educational processes are often dumb witnesses of a dialog taking place above their heads. Adults – teachers and parents – seem to address students only by summoning them in case of school failure but never by questioning them about their points of view with respect to a topic which is strictly related to their own future. This phenomenon raises many question about the way Italian society conceives education.

The third kind of encounter is between researchers, teachers and families: a relationship which often generates psychological tension. This is partly due to the teachers' sense of being evaluated by the researcher and by the family perception of privacy threat to family inner dynamics.

With respect to this issues, this work has a strong point of interest in the integration of observation's powers, with respect to the topic of school contexts, and methodological approach. The first has been reached by situating the observation on the cultural boundary line between school family and research positions: the «ceremony» of the school report cards delivery. The book is very useful both for researchers and education experts since it contains a large amount of transcripts, allowing reader to verify authors analyses and reflect upon phenomena. Nevertheless, some points could be expanded, such as the analyses presented in chapter 3, that raise many interesting research issue but lack of

deepening. The choice of an ethnographic methodological approach, integrating video-audio recorded observations, interviews and field notes provides a rich set of data and help researchers to plunge in the context they are observing. This allows to establish a collaborative and constructive relationship with teachers, students and parents. The positive effect of this methodological choice is confirmed for instance by the very low sample death rate, 22 families – over 25 asked to participate – accepted.

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Antonio Iannaccone is full professor of Psychology at the University of Salerno. He is coordinator of the GRIS, Research Group on Social Interaction and his main research interest is social psychology of education and development.

Giuseppina Marsico is PhD at the University of Salerno. Her research topics are psycho-social risk factors, cultural psychology and social interaction in educational contexts.