

Cultural Symbiosis in Society Relationship: Philosophy and Psychological Perspectives

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Abstract:

In this article I want to share the idea of relationship symbiosis and its effects on the future of marriage and breakdowns in couples. Symbiosis is the connection two people find between them at the beginning of relationships that cause initial attraction and the decision making process to marry or cohabitate. Culture plays a significant role in symbiosis along with development issues from the type of parental style experienced in early childhood.

Keyword: Relationships, Philosophy, Psychological, Cultural Perspective, Society

Introduction

In order to understand symbiosis we have to know what that actually means! It is a term which describes the needs and desires being met by one party to another. For example, if a girl grows up where her parents who are over nurturing, they do her thinking for her and make all the decisions, she may as an adult seek out men who are controlling and demanding - as this supplies the need for her to continue to not think for herself and have her decisions made for her. The man may have had highly critical parents where he learned that control of others is the purpose of relationships and so looks for the girl who is needy, easy to control and allows him to do her thinking for her. This couple will have symbiosis in that structure and will be happy with the role they are playing psychologically. This form of symbiosis is a dominant subdominant arrangement. However to have complete symbiosis there must be many factors of complimentary needs and wants matching in order for a new couple to decide to marry.

In relationship research it has been found that couples with similar backgrounds, social status and proximity tend to be attracted to each other and form long term relationships (1. Festinger 1950). However today much of that research may have to be revisited as diversification in relationships is now becoming more likely, particularly with inter-racial marriages, as people travel more and have more opportunities to meet men and women from different cultures. Here symbiosis maybe the determining factor in the relationships continuance.

The most quoted research is now also over 30 years ago and subjects were often unmarried American college students not exactly representative of the population as a whole and today statistically dubious. For example the work of Zajonc 1971, Dion 1972, Griffit & Veitch 1974, Bossard, 1931 and Hedier 1958, while much of this research into relationship factors are still relevant today for many they lack the insight into cultural changes of a global society. The single most obvious criticism is that past research focused often on a couple in isolation from other players in the relationship such as mother in laws, friends and ex partners, especially with a divorce rate globally of nearly 37%.

According to enrichment journal on the divorce rate in America:

- The divorce rate in America for first marriage is 41%
- The divorce rate in America for second marriage is 60%
- The divorce rate in America for third marriage is 73%

Discussion

A. Language, the Code of Culture

The combination of the author's exploration of foreign language and culture and the circumstances of his personal life have tectonically collided, pushing forth a new mountain range into consciousness. As these mountain peaks have punctured awareness, musings on psyche, patience, and not-knowing in correlation to language have emerged, in regards to syntax specifically.

Take the fruits of two differing branches of humanity's language tree and compare the syntax. In English, the basic sentence structure is ordered as subject - verb - object. This could easily subconsciously imply not only a more strong subject-object duality, but by placing the verb first, an action is being performed on an object in a hierarchical manner. In Japanese, the basic order is subject - object - verb. In this way, the object takes temporal import, changing the relationship's implications. All three parts of the sentence seem to share a mutual responsibility as opposed to a hierarchy. Imagine what this simple difference, given isolate time to create culture, could do to the independent philosophies of each group. Briefly browsing the topics immediately exposes the very real differences in regards to economic philosophies, science's relation to nature in regards to harmony and unity versus conquering, etc.

The syntactical order also controls the sequence of the revelation of information to the speaker. Patience is surely affected. One's mind must allow specifics to open into the broad in Japanese, whereas in English the emphasis lies on the subject as it acts upon an object, revealing information outwardly from a centered perspective, from broad to specific. In Japanese the subject of the sentence is often omitted entirely. Again, this defocusing of the self has a potential affect upon the ego of the speaker. Language seems to be the code by which the cultural operating system of our minds runs, thereby coloring the window through which we peer out into reality.

B. Cultural Perception - Influence In Future Generations

Our perception of the world around us and our personal relationships with objects, people, and nature, can be highly affected by our culture. Sadly there is a percentage of Americans who believe they have no culture (myself formerly included). On the contrary, we all have a culture, and an identity that defines who we are and the choices we make as human beings. One's culture can also be intersected with the cultures of race, gender, disability, occupational groups, and social-class. As you can see the word culture is rather complicated, making the average person less likely to recognize its influence.

There are two levels of function when it comes to culture, the explicit, and the implicit. Explicit culture refers to cultural expressions, such as Holidays, food, clothing, artifacts, objects, rituals, music and symbols. While implicit culture refers to the values, philosophies and the underlying meaning of these symbols within the cultural context. Although these levels of culture are set in terms they are not limited or frozen in time, they are actually ever changing and evolving as time goes on. Cultural context is an inherited aspect of our lives, that reminds us of our past and represents a model for us to live by. Yet as times change and societies evolve, it is acceptable to adapt your cultural rituals and values to the everchanging social and economical needs you encounter.

Americans tend to take their culture for granted, as we have with the environment. Looking past the need to create an ecologically sustainable world, and onto the day to day grind of our busy lives, Americans have thrown in the towel for the environment and now rely on convenience. The constant push for globalization has us all stuck like a deer in headlights, waiting for the impact of the next big thing. It is sometimes difficult to decipher where we stand when pulled between the need for environmental changes and technology. Unfortunately, this is the society most of us have survived in thus far, and it is now up to us to return to our cultural beliefs, and begin to create our ecological sustainability as a society. Let's get back to the natural enjoyment of the seasons and the days, and away from society's concerns about Microsoft's newest program for your Laptop. The future of our world relies on our ability to take the environment into perspective.

How does culture influence our future generations? Our choices as Teacher's and Parents are affected by the culture in which we exist. Some of these areas that are affected include child-rearing goals such as: discipline technique, level of independence, sleeping patterns, family responsibility, and emotional development. Our expectations for our children stem from the underlying expectations of our culture. As a teacher it is important to consider learning about the different cultural blends in the classroom, yet at the same time it is important not make assumptions based on this knowledge.

What is Cultural and Linguistic Discontinuity? This is when children and their families feel alienated from school, for one reason or another. It could be that they just moved from

one school to the next, from one state to another, recently immigrated, or possibly gained a disability that affects their daily routines at school. Leaving a familiar place and starting anew in an unfamiliar place can be overwhelming. Confusion, cultural disconnection, and displacement are common feelings when it comes to Cultural and Linguistic Discontinuity. Not knowing the language you are being taught in, the school routines and regulations, and having separate cultural views than your peers and elders, makes transition very difficult. Children who are suffering from this may be misinterpreted by their peers and educators who don't identify with their culture, causing further disconnect.

As a child my family moved us all over the place, from state to state, house to house, I was even born in Germany. Thanks to the United States Army and my Fathers will to serve, we moved at least every year. Although it was difficult for me to adjust I would'nt say I suffered from Linguistic Discontinuity but culturally I was a mess. The culture shock set in within a few days no matter where we moved to. The shock of needing to adjust and make new friends again truly began to wear on me. Although I never recognized these differences as cultural, I noticed them none the less. By the time we moved to Santa Rosa when I was 9 yrs old, I was ready to settle down and stay here. I wanted to find a place where we could just be a family, differences or not. Aware of my cultural differences or not I wanted to be accepted and find diversity all in one town. Santa Rosa was my place. Needless to say, I am still here.

Most children are unaware of their own or others' cultures, due to the obscure descriptions and abstract view. Most cultural differences go unnoticed and are labeled by young children as simple differences, non-cultural, although culture shapes a child's expectations of the world at a very young age. Children fortunately can adapt to the demands of cultural differences to allow for their ability to grow socially. A child's perception of culture differs severely from an adults perception of culture. Children often develop healthier play routines with those children from the same cultural norms. All too often children of the same culture will bind together forming a clique, not allowing children of other cultures to play in their clique. This is a coping mechanism for those children whose culture is not the average or majority in the classroom. Although this is an acceptable way to handle the potential alienation

caused by being different, it can also hurt other children and pull away the stitching of a diverse and accepting classroom.

Due to the possibility that most children are unaware of their cultural differences, finding out how children learn, think and feel about these differences has proven to be difficult. There are many ways to elicit information from children, one in particular I appreciated was showing photographs of different daily routines performed by people of various cultures. Showing differences in tools, objects, food, clothing, and relationship, yet at the same time helping the children to see that people of other cultures do the same things we do just in different ways. Using this type of hands on curriculum is very important to me, first because I personally learn more efficiently in this manner and secondly, because I also love Photography. Asking questions, posing different thought schemas for children and allowing them to explore these new cultural aspects will help them open up, feeling more attuned and understanding to the differences.

How can we as educators learn more about our children and their reactions to culture? The absolute sure bet way to gain knowledge about their reactions to culture is observation. We can observe their play, their art, their reactions to other children and new experiences. We can ask questions that open up a range of thinking for the child that may not have been available till now. We can set up events, such as dances, musical arrangements or even just an opportunity to dress up and hold some of the objects associated with the culture in question, may help bridge the gap. Just know that keeping our children focused on the cultural influences we have embedded in our own homes and history, can be an enriching subject for young minds to comprehend. It all relies on the approach of Parents and Teacher's and the persistence of our pursuit to cultural clarity in the classroom and at home.

C. Mysteries of the Modern Relationship

There are mysteries associated with having and holding a relationship in today's modern, post turn of the century world. While some of the tried and true closely held beliefs still apply, some the more modern mainstream trends have come into play with regard as to

what is acceptable and what is not when it comes to those you care about. Many of the never-before-thought-of issues that apply to any relationship include age differences, what part of the country - or even what country - you are from, various social settings and your individual ideas of what respect means to you will influence your relationships.

Man vs. Woman

Gender roles have evolved, so to speak. What may have been perfectly acceptable for your parents and grandparents may not hold true for you. The idea that a woman should be barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen at all times is now considered to be decidedly un-PC. While more and more women are becoming independent from their traditional gender roles as the leading child rearing member of the household, men have become more involved in being the "soccer dad." There is certainly a much larger grey area when it comes to who should do what in the relationship.

Ages

Typically, as with gender roles, your parents are probably pretty close in age. More and more couples are experiencing greater age gaps than ever before. While to some of the more conservative members of our society still hold to the "old" ways, those of a more liberal frame of mind may say that age doesn't matter. Deciding who is too young or too old is very much an individual decision today.

Cultural Gaps

With our ability to travel greater distances in shorter amounts of time, fewer couples are actually from the same home town any more. This can lead to some couples having a "culture clash." While it might seem exciting and new in the "honeymoon" phase of a relationship, it can also cause some duress later on. One person may be from the Northeastern US while their significant other may be from the Southwest. This may not seem like a big issue to some but to others it is a problem. Just like somebody being from a different country,

different regions of the US have their own way of doing things, not only in behavior but in speech, dress, eating habits and philosophy to name a few.

Social Settings

This can make or break any loving relationship, mainly because of the breakaway from traditional gender roles. Your parents probably don't both act the same in a social setting as when they are alone and traditionally that was acceptable. Being introverted in public is no longer considered to be socially acceptable. Being extroverted has taken over as being the pro forma, PC way to go. Just because you may get along quite well with your sweetie in private doesn't mean things will go so well at public gatherings. Best advice: Deal with it! If you think he or she is going to be life of party like they are in private and they turn out to be a little shyer than you originally thought, the world is not coming to an end. While being reserved is decidedly un-PC, so is being the attention hound. A little latitude in either direction goes a long way.

Communication

If you haven't figured this one yet chances are your communication skills suck. Talking to your beloved about any issue you might have the first chance you get is paramount to any healthy relationship. If your significant other doesn't know there is a problem they can't fix it. Too many times, not saying anything until you can't stand it anymore only leads to a full blown argument. By not saying anything while it still in the only-slightly-annoying stage will inevitably lead to you letting the wound fester and you end up building resentment over the issue. Shame on you! Talk!

Respect

Everybody *should* know what respect truly means. If you are in doubt then think of it this way. Would you enjoy being treated like that? If your answer is decidedly *NO*, then some level of disrespect has probably occurred. While this may be intentional to some level, you have to consider whether or not is a result of having poor communication skills. Being respectful

shows that you are mature enough to be sensitive to others. Being self-aware is a major step towards being respectful. Respect will normally be automatic if you take a second to think about how your comments and actions will affect others. More specifically those you care about.

Affection

While there is certainly such a thing as not showing enough affection, there is also showing too much. Affection comes in many different forms besides the physical format. Mental or intellectual affection is just as important, if not more so, than physical affection. Communication, respect and the proper amount of physical affection - opinions do vary with physical amounts - are the keys to a healthy relationship. You can really mess this one up if you are not careful. Some may say that you shouldn't have to actually think about and that it should come naturally. If you find yourself falling into this category then you probably have some self-awareness issues that need to be addressed. Being aware of your affection level shows that you actually care.

How to Argue

Rule number one in any argument: Never attack your loved one with less than desirable language. Name calling gets you nowhere and will only escalate the argument. Believe it or not, arguing is healthy. No two people can agree on everything all the time. The key to a successful argument is to stay calm and present your case in an intelligent, logical manner. Think of how lawyers argue a case in court. You probably will never see an attorney worth his weight in salt that raises his voice or uses profanity to try to make his point, you shouldn't either.

You probably argue because you have a problem with somebody's actions or statements - which is fine. You are probably angry - which is fine but being angry in argument is the wrong choice. Step away from the situation until you have calmed down and you can actually think logically. Being mad is okay, being angry isn't. Know the difference. Last rule about arguments: never argue an opinion. Opinions are just that, opinions. There is no sense in arguing over them

and you will probably only leave feeling unfulfilled or down-right dumb. You just wasted time that you will never get back.

If you think you have the perfect relationship, you might want to review it some. Too many people think everything is hunky dory until suddenly it isn't. Yes, relationships do take work, no matter who you are. If you think you that your relationship should be perfect all the time and that it won't take any effort on your part, you might find out that you are not indeed omnipotent just plain ignorant and wrong. Didn't your parents ever tell you that nothing is free and if it isn't worth fighting for that you shouldn't want it in the first place?

D. Symbiosis

If then we accept that in the beginning of the relationship symbiosis is evident and both parties are happy with the arrangement, how does it go wrong? From counselling couples and individuals some common patterns emerge. First that people change over time, particularly women, who may have needed a dependent situation in their early years, but as education and maturity play their role, the woman becomes more self confident than in the past, starts demanding to be heard, that her opinion counts now. The husband often sees this rebellion against the symbiosis as damaging the marriage as he is still very happy to be the dominant decision maker. Once the husband loses control of the once sub dominant wife he turns to seek the satisfaction for his dominance to a third party, looking for a young girl he can dominate again.

Leaving the marriage in an unbalanced symbiosis as now both parties needs is not being met. For example, the wife needing more independence of thought while he is seeking to re-establish the symbiosis that existed before and suited his need for control. The inevitable outcome of such an unbalance is often divorce, however many woman claim that they stay in unhappy marriages for the sake of the children or their own personal security. Having found the

need for independence of thought does not mean independence economically! Here a woman may try to find new outlets for their feelings through the children or outside interests. Although we are using only one example it is the most common one seen amongst married couples. A second area of symbiosis is the person's life view. Your life view is how you see the world, for example, as dangerous, wondrous or futile.

This life position again can be symbiotic in the beginning with a shared vision of the world. Experience over time may change this for example like becoming vegetarian for animal welfare reasons and the partner continuing to want to eat meat. This shift of a general view of life and the world can have profound effects particularly with mixed cultural marriages. A Muslim married to a Christian could become a fiery relationship after the passion of the initial attraction wears off! Diversity is now a much more common arrangement in marriages than in the past and a challenge to modern counsellors trying to settle the couple's fundamental differences in life views, especially as the counsellor will have their life view too.

E. Change to Symbiosis

What are the positive aspects of the change in symbiosis to a couple? Here couples need to make a readjustment to their long term arrangements. First to accept that people can change and that new needs can be found, even a sense of purpose in living. If the partners can adapt to the change and be more accepting many marriages could be revitalised into a new symbiosis for both. For example, if the dominant husband accepts his wife can think for herself now, he can be proud of her maturation and encourage her to take more risks in what she decides for herself. He could become more democratic in the marriage by agreeing to talk more before decisions are reached that both feel is good and not just one. Of course in many marriages these roles are reversed. Secondly, a lack of symbiosis is one of the main causes of many trivial arguments that then catastrophes into major arguments about the relationship itself.

Many clients say that once the symbiosis has changed so has the intimacy of the relationship and sex is usually the first casualty of the new positions. There are many reasons that the symbiosis can change, loss of work, economic slowdowns, caring of elderly relatives all

can put a strain on the dynamics of a relationship. In our example if our dominant man lost his job and was unemployable for some reason, then the wife may start to worry that the dependable man she relied on is now depressed and in doing so becomes less certain, less dominate and less sure of the future. Here the symbiosis is affected not by the internal arrangement but by external elements that are out of their control.

Symbiosis can be affected by third parties, such as the mother in law, who may influence her daughter or son to take certain stands in the marriage and sway the carefully managed symbiosis into a crisis point. In some cultures such as China, the men are heavily influenced by their mothers after marriage, particularly in the man wanted a mother replacement in his wife (very common). This can lead to the three way symbiosis where accommodation is being allowed for in three peoples needs. The Chinese husband often defers to his mothers power and leaves the wife feeling powerless.

F. Traditional, Custom, Culture in Symbiosis

People often misunderstand the words, traditional, custom and culture in terms of right and wrong behaviour and standards of conduct. Tradition is something we have always done but have often forgotten its original purpose and continue the practices with a - we have always done it this way - attitude. Custom is the preferred way of carrying out daily life that is acceptable to the majority of a class of people. For example greetings and offering to pay for a meal with the intention of knowing the offer will be refused. Culture however is very different as it constantly changes according to the pressures of modern living, economics and now technology. An iPhone is as much part of a modern culture as high speed trains. The change in culture puts a strain on tradition and custom as they are not always compatible.

In symbiosis the generation gap between traditions followed and customs played out can be in direct competition with the changing culture. Here arguments between parents, young married couples and single adults can differ greatly in their symbiotic needs. Symbiosis may be sought traditionally in marriage according to the parent's idea of the correct way and

needs of the future care for themselves even to the point of practically selling their daughter for money disguised as a traditional custom. Young couples struggling to find a place in a harsh economic climate may decide to cohabit as a way to avoid tradition and fall into line with a more modern cultural approach to economic realities. Therefore the symbiosis between the generations is not maintained and even governments try to enact legislation to enforce traditional values with tax incentives and penalties. (2. Myler 2011).

Conclusion

You can see from our overview of symbiosis that many factors can interfere with and damage the original symbiosis of a marriage that starts out as a balanced happy arrangement only to fall into discord later in life according to the changes to that symbiosis. Symbiosis is then the cornerstone of a successful marriage or a future divorce. Symbiosis can only be maintained through constant vigilance to changing times and the growth of the individual's personality, skills and change in their life views.

If you are going to have a long term relationship then both parties need to understand change happens and embrace that change positively. While most couples in psychotherapy can when given insight make positive changes to their outlook and life view many of course cannot and look for a third party to bring back the symbiosis to their psychological well-being either through affairs or divorce with remarriage to a partner that offers that symbiosis they wanted from the old partner.

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