



Chapter III

Digital Media and Socialization

Mario Morcellini, University "La Sapienza," Rome, Italy

Abstract

The chapter reflects about the idea of crisis making evident that, in the case of communication, it doesn't mean a reduction of importance, but on the contrary increasing and growth. The actual communication fortune is in fact built on what seems a lack in our societies that is the vaporization and loss of social capital. In front of the modern individualism, the social system moves people to search other functions able to balance it: communication is certainly one of the functions. It doesn't help only individuals to get through the crisis, but it also promotes the increase of relations in the social system. The communication covers up the decline of traditional institutions (school, family, and religion) configuring a chance. Digital media, more than any other medium, becomes an expression of new social and cultural conditions.

Introduction

In order to understand the action of communication on individuals and on society, both as an industrial force and as a narrative and poetic force, it is important to look beyond the syntax of communication and to start from a reflection on the sociocultural framework of the passage to “late-modernity,” which is often identified as a “crisis” from which to interpret the new meaning of communication with regard to the process of the construction of the self.

In the modern condition, the passage to modernity hinges on three elements of modification: the social actors, the institutions, and the liquid substitute of the media.

With regard to the first, the change solicited by communication relates to three dimensions:

1. **To the sphere of the self** and to the construction and redefinition, therefore, of the subjective identity of the social actors by means of the stimulation of an *interior revolution*: self-reflection. It is as though communication helps the individual to prepare for new visions of the world and for different styles of life which, in the long term, reflect on social relations and on the narration of the scenarios of life.
2. **To relationships**, whereby with a double key of interpretation communication is both a *symbolic gesture* to measure and improve oneself with regard to others, and also *passion*, in that modern man, overwhelmed by contextual crises, looks for a sense to life and for orientation in dealings with others.
3. **To action**, since communication helps both to multiply the exchanges between individuals and to react to states of crisis.

As far as the institutions are concerned, we intend to emphasize the semantic and sociocultural transformations undergone by the school, the family, and at work in the passage to the modern; that is to say, everything which in the past was defined as a source of stability, equilibrium, and social and personal certainty.

Many sociologists use the term *crisis* to describe this transformation, a term which is today a part of the history of any society (starting from the premodern world). However, the present state of sociocultural transition presents different characteristics in that rather than a crisis of sector or of a social subsystem, it regards all those institutions which, in past societies, organised time in society (religion, school, the family, work). In this scenario the crisis regards socialization in particular; that is, those processes which allow for the reproduction of values, of collective orientation and, therefore, of that cultural orientation which is the basis of subjective action.

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