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The Impact of Patterns Provided by the Media on Society

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Mihaela CANANAU⁴, Alina-Costina LUCA⁵, Emil ANTON⁶

Abstract

Throughout its evolution, consciously or mimetic, each individual chooses a model to build his personal and professional life. If twenty years ago, these patterns were represented by the parents, teachers and other people who through their influence on the course of life altered one's existence, today, models are offered daily by the media, especially by TV stations. The patterns are chosen, whether you want to make money, to be a politician, to have a "six-pack", be the girlfriend of a celebrity, to be thin or have a boob job. You just have to reach out and take from the cyberspace, generously offered by the media, any of the models to which you aspire. The research conducted primarily among parents sought to highlight their conceptual transformations regarding the future of their children. The study also analyzed the consequences acknowledgement of the media influence accepted by adults. Are the media the main source of models to which have reported, for years, generations of young people and children? Are the media the only responsible for the creation of these models deprived of substance? Can these patterns truly reflect the moral consistency of a free and democratic State, at some point?

Keywords: media, education, social involvement, social model, children, parents.

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Introduction

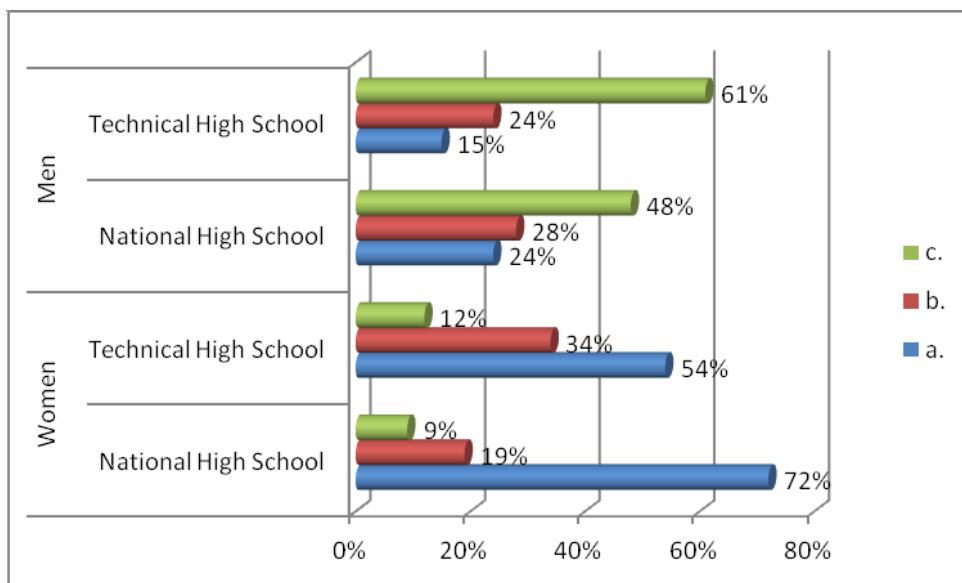
From early ages, at the urging of parents, after a pattern reinforced by dozens of generations, children seem to know what job they will embrace. With a safety protected by the proud smile of the family, most girls “would become doctors or teachers” and boys dreamt of doctors’ white coats or police uniforms. These aspirations, popular twenty years ago, no longer find themselves nowadays in the top preferences of younger or older children of the last generations. Only the conservative families still encourage former top professions such as doctor, educator, teacher or policeman. They require too much study, they are not quite money-making and they do not launch you on the small screen. Model, soap opera actress or TV assistant is the ideals for girls and football player, singer and businessman represent the boys’ goals. It seems to be almost the perfect combination for a fulfilling and carefree life. In choosing these popular pursuits, mass-media had a crucial role. With the help of these young people parents who, mostly concerned with the material welfare of the child transfer the entire responsibility of education upon the school and the society with all it entails, namely the group of friends, the internet with all its applications and not last, but not least, the often decisive influence of the media, especially the television. We see, therefore, at a temporal and educational level, a radical change in the moral values and professional aspirations.

Materials and methods

This research aims to highlight the mentality transformations regarding the involvement of all the factors which may influence the professional and moral future of the current generations. The study was carried out over the period from Oct. 2014 to May 2015. 960 questionnaires were distributed, each of them comprising six simple complement questions, to four top high schools and technological high schools of each county. The study involved parents from all the counties of Moldova respectively Iasi, Suceava, Botosani, Neamt, Bacau, Galati, Vaslui, Vrancea. The selection of those who agreed to participate in the study did not take into account the level of training, the fact that they in urban or rural areas, provided they have children in the 11th and 12th grade, years in which one assumes they have chosen, in general, the path they will take to complete their education. The factors competing to form a vision on their future were also analysed, regarding the involvement of parents, more or less. After the verification, 138 questionnaires were annulled, as the answers were incomplete, so that the treating process effectively took into account 493 women and 329 men.

Results

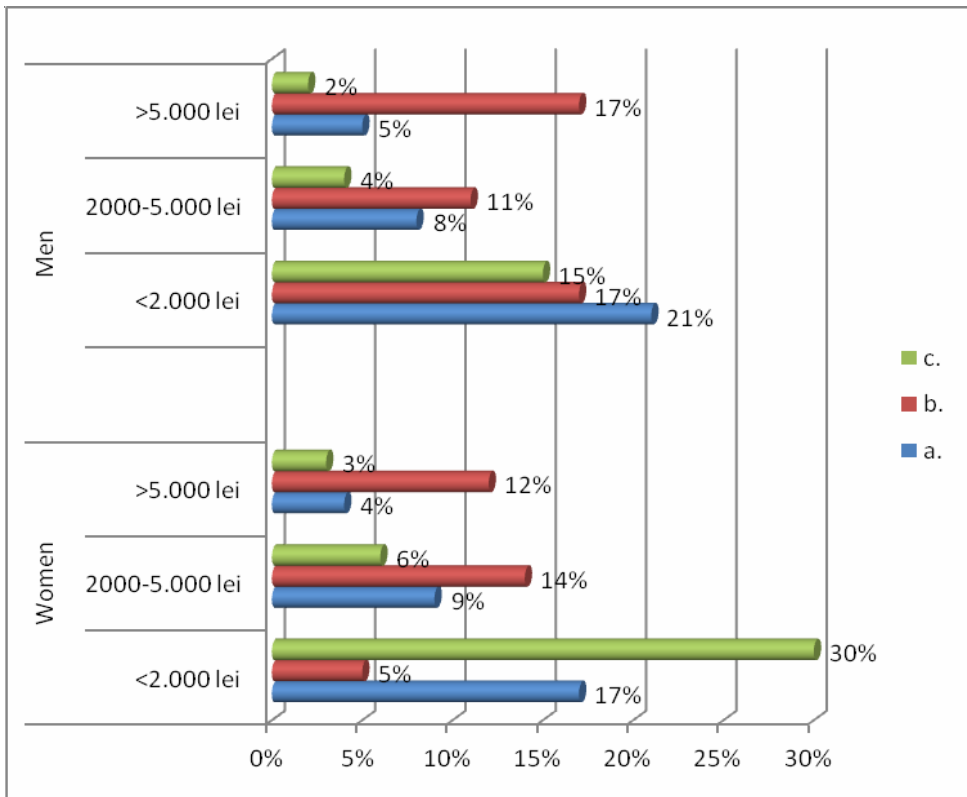
The questions have been gradually conceived, the first one “How much have you got involved, over the time, in the personal education and evolution of your child?” aimed at establishing the bases on which the parent-child relationship was created. According to the already received precepts, on historical, society bases, men are those who ensure the financial comfort, while mothers have mainly the role of educating and raising children. Even though, for years, in most of the families, women work side by side with their husbands, well they have not been absolved of the role of children educator. As a consequence, the answers to the first question (*Figure 1*) were relevant, only 24% of the fathers from the elite high schools and 15% of those from technical high schools getting permanently involved in the education of their children, most of them (48%, respectively 61%), acknowledging that they rarely bring their contribution in this respect. We must notice here a strong increase. This role continues to belong to the mother, with a maximum of 72% in the elite high schools. In the technical high schools, the percentage decreases to 54%, being though doubled by a high percentage, 34% - within the limit of the available time. The high percentage can also be justified by the tightening of the conditions to the baccalaureate examination.



- a. Permanently,
- b. Whenever I had time,
- c. Rarely, because my job occupied all my time

Figure 1. Parents' involvement in the education of their children

The second question, approached as a consolidation extension of the first one, namely “What do you think is more important for the personal development of your child, offering him material comfort or spending quality time together?” has been interpreted via the “income” variable. Therefore, if women having a minimum income of 2,000 lei/month try to supply the lack of money with the time spent with their children (30%), the men of the same salary category < 2,000 lei think that the optimal variant is to spend quality time with the child, but also to ensure him a financial comfort. Their answers are somehow natural, taking into account that in the Romanian traditional family the mother is in charge with the education of the children while the father, apart from representing the authority, is also the one supporting the family mainly from a financial point of view (Figure 2).

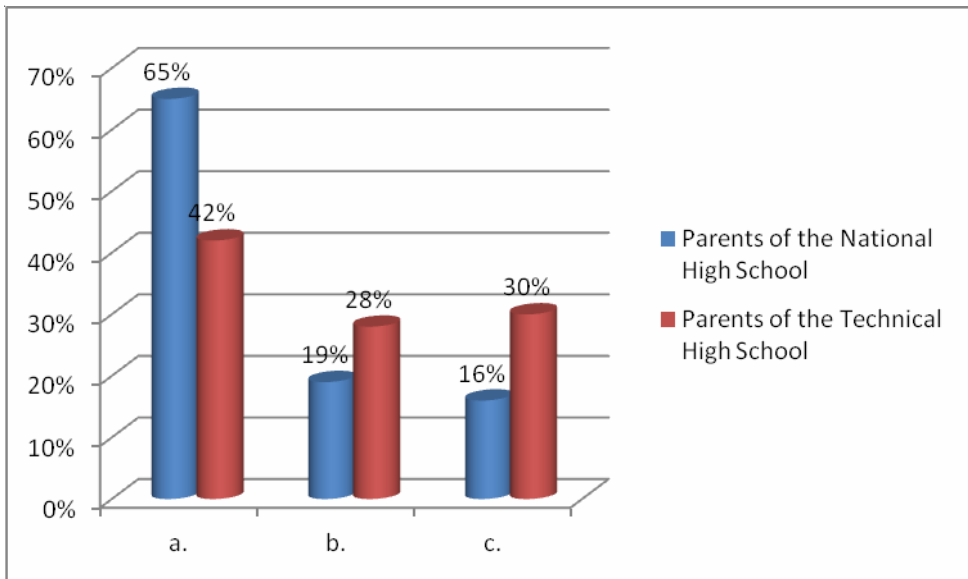


- a. Both are equally important but, nowadays, they can hardly be achieved at the same time.
- b. If you have money, you can supply your absence in your child's life with qualified persons who can ensure their education.
- c. The time spent in family cannot be compensated in money.

Figure 2. Parents' opinions regarding their children's needs

Once with the income increase, the respondents, women and men equally, change their options, assessing that their absence from the family can be successfully supplied by other persons who can take care of the education of their children (women < 5,000 lei - 14%; women > 5,000 lei - 12%; men < 5,000 lei-11%; men > 5,000 lei - 17%).

The third question “Who were the models to whom your children reported to a large extent in their personal development?” highlighted a major discrepancy between the parents from the elite high schools and those from the technical high schools. The parents from the top high schools deemed the family education as the headstone of the formation of the teenager (65%) while the parents of the children from technical high schools deemed that they insist twice as compared to their colleagues (30%) on the media coverage of models. Visible discrepancies between the two categories of parents can also be noticed in the “school” variant of answer, as the parents of the children of the technical high schools consider that school and the group of friends have influenced their children to a larger extent. This aspect can be explained by the more severe competition in the elite high schools, where the teenagers study more, they study in private, and the competitive spirit, together with their individualism, is much more accentuated.



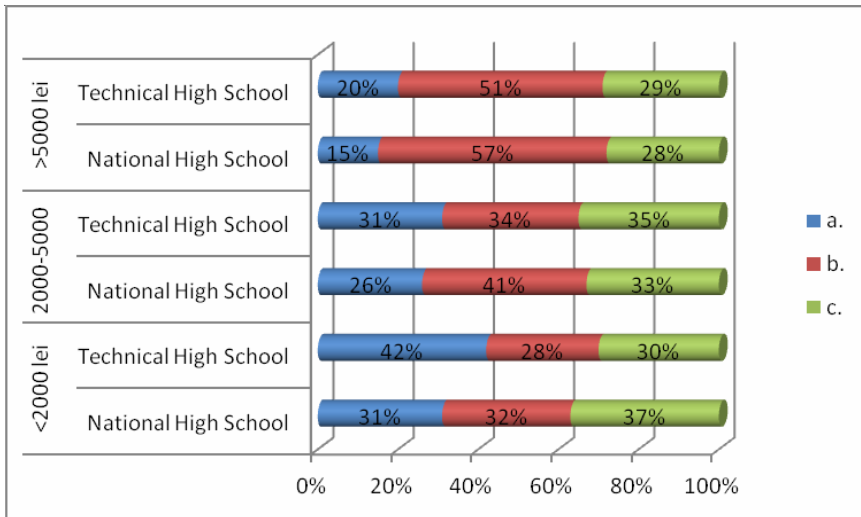
- a. Family and the education offered by it.
- b. School and the group of friends.
- c. The public persons promoted by the media.

Figure 3: Parents’ opinions regarding the models of their children

The fourth question “Do you really think that the public persons presented by the media offer adequate examples for young people in formation?” aimed at highlighting the socio-cultural values promoted by the parents of the students in the last years of high school. The answers were correlated according to the “income” variable.

Results

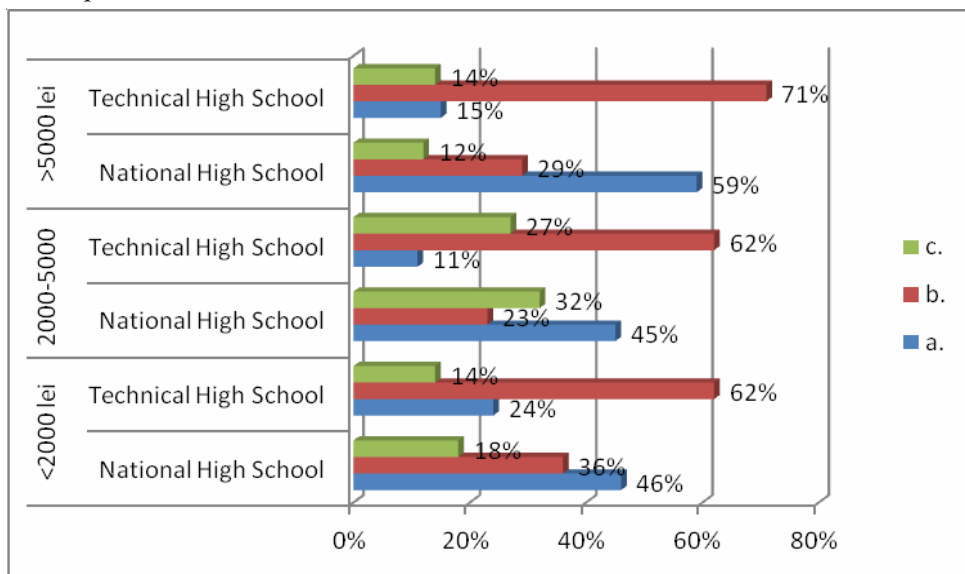
A very large percentage of the respondents with high incomes (29%) declared that they did not take this issue into account. The percentage significantly decreases to 37% in case of the parents with low incomes from the national high schools, but by 1 percentage only in the respondents from the technical high schools. As for the influence of media models, the parents with average and above average incomes deem that the persons promoted in the media cannot represent a model for their children, this percentage decreasing once with the decrease of the incomes. Contrary to the expectations, the parents with lower incomes dream together with their children that they become famous like the public persons that they admire in the media.



- a. Yes, because otherwise they would not be presented in the media.
- b. No, because the media do not only promote values but, to the contrary, they promote mainly circumstance starts, deprived of substance, but who increase the rating.
- c. I have never thought of this issue.

Figure 4: Parents’ opinions on the public persons, seen as a model for their children

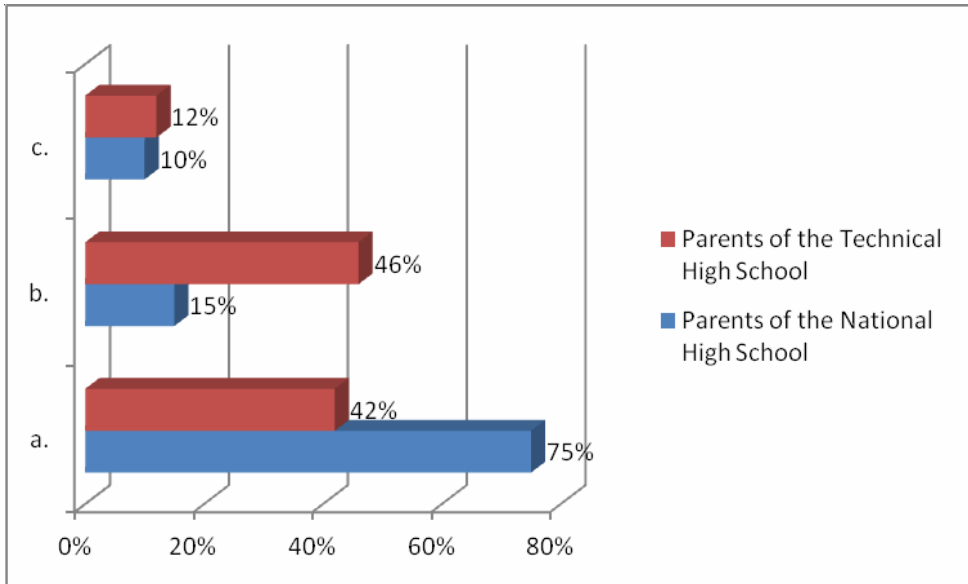
By means of the fifth question, “Taking into account the models promoted in the media, do you think that in the current society it only matters to get to the top or to adopt the step by step policy in your career?” the study carried out aimed at knowing the parents’ opinions with regard to the manner in which they advise their children to build their career. To do so, the chosen reporting variable was the high school in which the respondents’ children study, respectively parents’ income. The parents of the children who study in high schools that select their students according to performance criteria declare to be annoyed by the fact that, in pursuit of audience, the media promote primarily modest persons, from the point of view of the human and professional value, to the detriment of the true leaders. They say that they try to counter-balance this value emptiness promoted by the media, through discussions with their children on this topic, but also through vocational offers specific to the age, but full of consistency (*Figure 5*). The parents of the students frequenting the courses of the technical high schools have a totally different opinion, most of them stating that the most important thing is to succeed in life and that the compromises that you have to do so as to achieve your goal are not important.



- a. Step by step is a successful alternative, that is why I have often discussed with my child and I tried to create healthy alternatives for him, but specific to his age, such as sports or the improvement of his native skills.
- b. No, because I noticed that in the current society it doesn't matter how you get to the top. It only matters to get there.
- c. I have never thought of this issue.

Figure 5: What do parents think about the manner in which their children’s career must be built?

The manner in which the sixth question was formulated “Do you think that the media is the only in charge of the superficiality with which are created overnight the so-called public persons?” aimed at finding out parents’ opinions on the lack of consistency of what the media delivers daily to its consumers. In this case, it seemed interesting to us to interpret the answers by reporting them to the “education” variable. Those vehemently accusing the media of lack of substance are the respondents with higher education. Therefore, 75% of the respondents in this category accuse the practices which lead indeed audience, of creating starts deprived of consistency and of placing them on the media, where they can become models for personalities in formation (*Figure 6*).



- a. Yes, because in the pursuit of audience, one artificially creates stars that cannot indeed represent models, mainly for personalities in formation.
- b. No, because this is the prototype of star agreed by a significant part of the society.
- c. I have never thought of this issue.

Figure 6. Parents’ opinions on the influence that the media can have on the professional choices of their children

This opinion is not shared by the parents of the children who study in technical high schools. Therefore, 46% of them think that this type of public persons are indeed the product of what people want to see, respectively a prototype of star agreed by a significant part of the society in which we are living.

Discussion

The Romanian Academy awarded recently for outstanding achievements in the Romanian theatre and film, a truly great actress Tamara Buciuceanu Botez. Unfortunately, the event was treated with great discretion by the media, the promotion not being proportionate with the value of this name of reference for the Romanian culture. For good reason, on social networks comments appeared that called down the press, particularly the tabloid, for this fact. The choir of anonymous dissatisfied persons was also joined by the actress Carmen Tanase who, in a virulent comment on Facebook sends a venomous, but also hypocritical, message to journalists telling them rhetorically that: *“It’s a story that does not sell, isn’t it? I am only telling you this: you should be ashamed! Deal with Bianca Dragusanu in the future as well! That’s what you deserve!”* Venomous, because it hides much frustration and with good reason. Why hypocritical? Because the same Carmen Tanase, known especially as a soap opera actress, was, in turn, invited to some tabloid shows. On the other hand, the kind of film in which she is cast by the same superficial media, is not even close, crème de la crème of what a film production means in terms of consistency. Moreover, audiences showed that soap operas sell more and better than documentary films, for example. Probably, the actress Carmen Tanase plays in these types of series for a salary. The journalists from the tabloid press also work for a salary. Neither one nor the other are not exempt and together have moral duties on the models they promote and deliver on the media market (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Gutu, 2008).

On the other hand, it is equally true that the desire to make rating, translated by revenue from advertising (Ferguson, 1992; Selaru & Coman, 2005), prompted more and more media companies to give up, for example, to contest type shows of general knowledge, somewhat available to the general public, in favour of more entertainment shows, in which kitsch is promoted, both informally and through the people who bring it into the spotlight. “Celebrities” such as Bianca Dragusanu, Vica Blochina, Beyonce of Romania, Andreea Tonciu etc. were transformed by the media from ordinary and decorative girlfriends or mistresses of “someone” known in public figures who come and tell with flatulence on TV about their “projects”, creating false but easy models for young women who make it their goal in life to imitate them. Because, in fact, who does not want designer clothes, cars of tens of thousands of euros and exotic holidays. The brightness of this image can hardly prevent the instant blocking of the left cerebral hemisphere activity, the one responsible for the logical side of the brain, and giving a free hand to the right hemisphere to dream with “its eyes open” (Dixon, 2007; Gheorghe, 2006).

After all, who would refuse all these things? What difference does it make that behind this bright light hides the hideousness all non-value? Actually, it is known that in the media newsrooms there is the practice to invent celebrities overnight in

order to have who to write about (Albulescu, 2008; Scannell, 2008). This is not even difficult, given the thinness of moral and professional values which these exhibit. Bad taste and lack of consistency of shows and characters assiduously promoted by a part of the media hooks audience easier than a serious show. The inconsistent information are accepted by a significant part of our society, as an ingredient able to spice its boring life, in which the main concern is the fierce race to ensure living (Gibson, 2006; Munteanu, 1993). This is the reason why a significant percentage of the respondents of this research is only present in their children's lives by the material intake. Phrases like "for him / her I work from morning to night," seem to justify, in the eyes of these parents, their effective absence, and especially the qualitative lack from their children's life. Thus, from the traditional family in which education and role models life came mainly from the family (Kulik, 2000; Steinberg & Lerner, 2004; Tynkkynen, Vuori, & Aro, 2012), there was a transfer of image and reference to the public space. A public space that has proven to be a land of quicksand (Balaban & Hosu, 2009; Deaux, 1993; Fiske & Hartley, 2002), where each step must be done with caution, otherwise there is a danger of being engulfed and suffocated by the multitude of information and heterogeneous models (Bordo, 1993; Dittmar & Drury, 2000).

Basically, what is a public figure? According to DEX, a public figure is a VIP, a celebrity, a personality. In reality, this elitist status has been repudiated so any person promoted by the media, whose work often not at all important for society but which is constantly monitored by ordinary people (Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves 2004; Schwartz *et al.*, 2000), became a public figure. But is this new type of public figure models for the general public, specifically for young people? For example, Paris Hilton and Adrian Mutu are public figures, but can they be role models for younger generations? (Lecomte, 2004; Popa & Stratilescu, 2006) Politicians who at some point come to lead large masses of people and change destinies, and later come to be deprived of liberty. Can these be models? And if so, in this chain of good and bad, how can you or who can help you separate the wheat from chaff?

It is good, it is bad that there is this social mix? (Stratilescu & Popa, 2006; Muchielli, 2002). Most likely, this is normal. We just have to reach out and take from the huge esoteric window the model that we want (Clarke & Miller, 2002; Gill, Karen, & Carl 2005).. And for the selection to not be a lottery based only on form and colour, the involvement of the young person's family would be imperative, both in terms of time spent together and consistency thereof (Maigret, 2003). The significant concern of adults to provide, in particular, to their children material comfort, which, most often, they did not have when they were the same age, is not exactly the definition of a good and loving parent. Just as the splitting of duties with the school to ensure your child's best interests, is not the best solution for the future of a young person. Moreover, since it is known that the current mass education is more informal informal (Harter, 1997; Sica, 2009), and less educational.

Today's students no longer stick to the inside passing lanes when teachers pass, no longer wear uniforms, and many times, they don't even conceal the cigarette when talking to them. What teacher has the courage today to ask the boys to give up their gelled Mohawk and girls their long trend coloured fingernails.

In their hearts, most of them are teachers troubled and ashamed of their students who have phones worth their salary, dress from fancy shops and get out of expensive cars. In this context, how much can such a teacher contribute in partnership with the parent, in the education of a young person? In the absence of the parent concerned to earn money, the teachers who are themselves powerless in the face of this problem, the public example remains, delivered lavishly by the media (Klaczynsky *et al.*, 2004; Miede, 2000), every day, over and over in bright colors, giving the feeling of a permanent well-being, welfare, carefree. And then, why should the girls not dream to become TV assistants or "someone's girlfriend", and boys businessmen without a high school diploma? Because the media sells only a picture (Stojkovic, 2013; Habermas, 2005) as bakeries sell bread and wholesalers supply from detergent, soap and clothes to cigarettes and alcohol. The society demonstrated that it needs all these more or less material goods. It depends, however, only on free will, and the quantities we need from each.

Conclusions

In recent years, an image, but also a reference transfer had occurred, from the predominantly traditional family to the public area. In this context, a significant part of the interviewed parents declared that they accept, without reserve, as models for their children, the so-called public persons promoted by the media. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference, from a conceptual point of view, between the parents of the children studying in elite high schools and of those attending the courses of the technical high schools. Therefore, the parents of the children studying in top high schools accuse the value emptiness promoted by the media. In the relationship with their own children, a significant percentage of the parents of the children studying in top high schools highlight the step by step development policy and believe that, to a significant extent, the media is guilty for the promotion and supply in the public area of these models deprived of substance. The percentage is however reversed in case of the respondents from the technical high schools, who think that this type of public persons promoted by the media represent, indeed, exactly what people want to see.

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