

**The Education of Children of Religious - Secular
Mixed Couples: An Examination of the Relative
Contribution of Different Value Systems**

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Abstract

A fundamental condition for the continuity of a specific culture is the transmission of values from one generation to the next. Parents have a significant influence on the lives of their children, whom they educate according to the values entrenched in their own culture. Diverse cultures are differentiated by the dominant values that individualize each culture. Numerous studies have focused on the cultural transmission of religious/secular values from parents to children, a number of them dealt with religiosity or secularity and their association with the value transmission process; however, few studies have taken into consideration both cultures as functioning together in one structured unit called a 'family'.

This research examines which values secular/religious mixed couples will transfer to their children as opposed to religious (only) or secular (only) couples. The study contends that parents are two individuals with two separate value systems and therefore must not be treated as equals when addressing the value transmission process. This study attempts to explain which secular or religious values are more dominant in the transmission process of secular/religious mixed couples.

The sample for this research consists of 211 family groups. The family groups were divided into four separate family group types: (1) the homogeneous religious family group which consisted of 73 family units, (2) the homogenous secular family group which consisted of 69 family units, (3) the "religious father- secular mother" family group which consisted of 32 family units (one spouse religious, reared in a fully religious family and the other spouse secular, reared in a fully secular family) and (4) the "religious mother-secular father" family group which consisted of 37 family units (one spouse religious, reared in a fully religious family and the other spouse secular, reared in a fully secular family).

In order to test the research questions and the hypotheses arising from the study's objectives, six questionnaires were administered to the participants in the study, which examined the value transmission process of religious/secular mixed couples in comparison with religious (only) or secular (only) couples. The questionnaires were aimed at testing the different variables that conceivably play an integral part in the cultural transmission process: Demographic Data Questionnaire, IAA - Adolescent Attachment Inventory questionnaire, PAQ - Parental Authority Questionnaire, PVQ -

Portrait Values Questionnaire, SRQ - Student Religiosity Questionnaire and SEQ - Social Environment Questionnaire. Due to the fact that the study consists of two groups, parents and their children, different questionnaires were administered to each group.

The data collected in the study was analyzed by using both multivariate statistical procedures, SEM and Process, (Structural Equation Modeling). SEM and Process were used in order to examine the relationship between the independent variables, the mediating variables and the dependent variables. The results enable an understanding of the intergenerational transmission from parents to their children in the four different family groups.

The research hypotheses were partially supported by the results. **The findings show no significant differences between the four groups with respect to the transmission of secular values but differences with respect to religious values were found** where the mixed family group, “religious father-secular mother” were more similar to the homogeneous religious family group in the transmission of religious values. However, the opposite was true with relation to the mixed “religious mother-secular father” family group, who were more similar to the homogeneous secular family group in the transmission of religious values.

In addition, **the results further illustrate that the intergenerational transmission of religious values, is less successful when the transmitter is a religious parent, this was constantly seen in all family groups**, suggesting the fact that religious transmitters aim at transmitting very high religious values to their children in the face of modernism; however their children are not inclined to accept such high religious values.

Further, **the model of the study reveals that in the intergenerational transmission of the religious/secular homogeneous family groups the transmission of religious/secular values were successfully mediated**, illustrating that the children both perceive and accept their parents values; however, **in the mixed family groups the mediation and transmission were not successful** with an exception to the religious father in the mixed “religious father-secular mother” family group, where religious values were in fact transmitted and mediated successfully.

Finally, **the study found that parenting style, parent-parent relationship, parent-child relationship, gender and the social environment are all important factors in the intergenerational transmission process.**

The present study provides a theoretical contribution to the intergenerational transmission of values in general and more specifically this study is one of the first of its kind to give us an insight into the intriguing intergenerational transmission of values by mixed religious-secular family groups. The uniqueness of this study is in the fact that it deals with two different systems of religious/secular values that are transmitted to a specific child who must process both types of values before choosing which values to accept or reject.