"Instruct the child in the faith and he will not stray from the path!". The socialization of children and family in two non-Catholic religious associations (Mexico)

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Résumé :

« Instruis un enfant dans la foi et il ne s'éloignera pas du chemin ! ». Socialisation de l'enfant et famille dans deux associations religieuses non catholiques (Mexique). Dans cet article, nous nous intéressons au processus de socialisation auquel sont soumis les enfants de nouveaux membres qui adhèrent à deux congrégations religieuses, l'une pentecôtiste et l'autre de l'Église de Jésus-Christ des Saints des Derniers Jours (mormons), dans la ville de Zamora située dans l'État du Michoacán, au Mexique. Pour situer ce processus dans le contexte relationnel dans lequel les enfants sont élevés, et où l'enseignement doctrinal et normatif est renforcé, nous procéderons à une brève approche des modèles familiaux que les deux congrégations cherchent à établir, ainsi qu'à l'analyse du processus de socialisation auquel sont soumis les parents (nouveaux membres récemment convertis). Ces modèles sont transmis à travers les enseignements, les valeurs et les normes de comportement communiqués dans les instances internes créées à cet effet selon l'âge et le genre, dans chacune des congrégations.

Mots-clés : famille, Mexique, mormons, pentecôtistes, socialisation de l'enfant

Abstract :

This article analyzes the socialization process in which children are immersed when their parents become members of two religious congregations, one Pentecostal, the other the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), in the city of Zamora, Michoacán, Mexico. To place this process in the relational context in which these children are raised, and where doctrinal and normative teaching are reinforced, it presents a brief profile of the models of family that these two congregations seek to shape while discussing, as well, the socialization process through which the parents pass as recent converts of these congregations. These models are transmitted in the form of teachings, values and normative frameworks of behavior through certain internal instances created, *ex profeso* and on the basis of age and gender, in each congregation.

Keywords : family, Mexico, Mormons, Pentecostals, socialization of children

Abstracto :

"Instruye al niño en la fe y no se apartará del camino". Socialización infantil y familia en dos asociaciones religiosas no católicas (México). En este artículo se analiza el proceso de socialización por el que pasan los niños cuyos padres se han adherido a dos congregaciones religiosas no católicas, una de tipo pentecostal y la otra de la Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos

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de los Últimos Días (mormones), en la ciudad de Zamora, Michoacán. Para ubicar este proceso en el contexto relacional en el que los niños son criados, y en donde se refuerza la enseñanza doctrinal y normativa, también se hace un breve acercamiento a los modelos de familia que se busca configurar en estas dos congregaciones, y al proceso de socialización por el que pasan los padres (recién conversos). Estos modelos se transmiten a través de las enseñanzas, valores y marcos normativos de conducta que se comunican en las instancias internas que se han creado, ex profeso, por edad y género, en cada una de las congregaciones.

Palabras clave : familia, México, mormones, pentecostales, socialización infantil

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Introduction

Zamora is the administrative center of the municipality of the same name; it lies in a fertile agricultural valley in northwestern Michoacán, a region known as the *Bajío zamorano* (see map 1 below).

Figure 1: Map of Zamora

Source: Marco Hernández, Departamento de Cartografía, El Colegio de Michoacán

Zamora is considered one of the most important agro-exporting cities in the state and a main commercial hub, where agriculture has been complemented by the construction of packing and freezing plants that process a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. The city has experienced various sociocultural changes that in a few short years have led many residents to re-think and/

or diversify traditional customs and cultural practices. This process of change has been spurred by diverse factors; primarily integration into international markets through export agriculture and remittances of money and materials from an extensive international migratory flow, and advances in the means of communication, such as highways, cable TV, parabolic antennas, cell phones and the Internet, all of which facilitate the circulation of information and sociocultural and symbolic elements. Added to this, we find that migrants – both those who go to work in the U.S. and those who come to Zamora from rural towns – bring sets of values and conceptions that expand the city's cultural holdings.

Although Zamoran society participates in the revolution of information technologies and the restructuring of capitalism, Zamorans preserve cultural traits and practices strongly tied to an identification with their "homeland"; among these we could mention such enduring customs as Catholic religious activities and rituals, for Catholicism has played a preponderant role in the daily life of residents as the moral system that orders, regulates and sanctions social behavior in accordance with symbolic referents that, moreover, facilitate identification with a specific ethos: that of the Catholicism of central-western Mexico[1]. Since the 1960s, however, this once monolithically Catholic religious domain has witnessed the emergence of new and different religious associations – including Protestants, para-Christian organizations, and groups belonging to the so-called "New Age" religions (of "Orientalist" inclination) that offer religious rituals and practices distinct from Catholic ones with new language, new symbolic constructions of a sense of belonging, and new orderings of meanings.

It is in this social milieu that we find the two religious associations on which I focus this analysis of the socialization process of children. My approach begins with an elucidation of what I mean by the term socialization, followed by the presentation of data on each congregation studied and the processes, instances and mechanisms employed during their respective socialization processes aimed at children and adults. In both cases, I found that the family is the primary setting for the socialization of children, so it is incumbent upon us to examine and understand the models of family that these groups seek to achieve, and the assignation of the roles and tasks that men and women, and boys and girls, are required to perform. Particular attention will be paid to the importance that these congregations attribute to training mothers to ensure that they fulfill the expectation that they will serve as the main transmitters of the religious precepts and behavioral models that their new religion strives to establish. The final section presents a detailed analysis of the process of the socialization of children in these two congregations, followed by some pertinent conclusions.

The starting point

Berger & Luckmann (2001: 166) define socialization as the "broad and coherent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or one sector of it". They speak of socialization first by referring to the process through which children – primarily – pass in the family and at school. Second, they discuss the process that adults experience, especially when they change from a familiar cognitive, cultural or social framework to one that is new and markedly different. One example of such a change occurs when a person converts to a religion distinct from the one she/he learned during childhood. Ruth Benedict (1974), George Mead (1990), Margaret Mead (1955, 1972, 1973) and Jean Piaget (1990) propose various phases and factors that are present in socialization processes like the ones conducted in the two congregations studied, as we shall see below. These include: the teaching and/or acquisition of values, behavioral norms, beliefs, cognitive frameworks,

and moral codes, among other elements that, on the one hand, allow an individual (child or adult) to be incorporated into a group or collectivity, and, on the other, prepare her/him to fulfill the expectations that the group holds for its members. Upon interiorizing what she/he has been taught (through verbal, symbolic and/or corporal language), the child or adult should begin to behave like other members of the same age, position and gender, and thus earn recognition as part of the group. Another useful definition that guides my argumentation comes from Abad (1993, cited in Mieles & García 2010), who defines socialization as a process of social interaction through which a person learns and interiorizes sociocultural elements in their environment, and then integrates them into their personality structure under the influence of experiences and significant social agents present in their social surroundings. In the case of religious/doctrinal instruction, the values and normativity that are taught to children in the church are designed to be reinforced in the home through their parents who, moreover, have the obligation to monitor their children and ensure that they apply those norms and values in their everyday lives. In real life, however, these teachings may be contradicted because of the different milieus outside of home and church where children act in the absence of their parents.

The universe of study

Attention now turns to the two non-Catholic religious groups established in Zamora2; the first a Pentecostal congregation, the second a group classified as an "independent" or "para-Christian3 association", the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints. Elaborating the similarities and contrasts between these two institutions in relation to their socialization processes allowed me to discern the importance they assign to socialization and the formation of specific models of family, and to illustrate how believers re-create the teachings of their respective churches in their everyday acts.

The Pentecostal congregation studied was established around 1979 as a mission. At first, it attracted only a few adherents who met in a private home, but in 1991 they built their temple in the southern area of the city. The members of this congregation had suffered aggressions by Catholics, similar to those that the Mormons faced in the early years after their arrival. In fact, the presence of Pentecostals still raises suspicion and resentment among Catholics. This may be due, at least in part, to the fact that the openly-emotional practices and expressions that characterize Pentecostal religious services (where members applaud, sing, dance, cry, shout and pray loudly) seem very strange to Zamorans accustomed to the formal, sedate rituals traditionally conducted in the Catholic Church4.

The members of this group come mainly from lower class socioeconomic brackets and vary in age from around 30 to over 70, though a considerable number of young people also attend services. In terms of its internal organization, this congregation is rather simple and loosely-structured. Membership rarely exceeds 100 individuals. Relationships among the faithful are face-to-face and marked by closeness, which favors the construction of solidarity and mutual support networks, a particularly important aspect for people whose process of conversion to a non-Catholic doctrine often means breaking ties to their existing networks. Most of the women in this group work outside the home, but because they do not have the educational levels required to aspire to well-paid jobs, their work usually consists in stemming strawberries at local processing plants, doing domestic labor (washing, ironing), day-labor in the fields, or small-scale commerce. Men, meanwhile, participate in various urban trades as taxi-drivers, merchants, tailors, bricklayers, painters, clerks

in stores, or unskilled municipal employees. Some with more schooling have jobs as technicians.

Joining the Pentecostal congregation is free and voluntary, but membership entails accepting a personal commitment "to God" and to the congregation, obedience to the leader's authority, and an ample series of prescriptive norms and prohibitions. Because of their beliefs, Pentecostal groups tend to distance themselves from a secular world that they consider to be "full of sin". In addition, their doctrine includes a set of ascetic measures proposed to guide believers' lives. In part because of this separation, members of Pentecostal congregations tend to develop strong affective bonds based on the shared belief that they form a community of "the chosen". In terms of organization, Pentecostal congregations tend to be loosely-structured with no nucleus of specially-trained officers, and the faithful are free to express their feelings spontaneously. In most cases, Pentecostals behave as a closed community, a form of protest against certain aspects of the social order; though this does not imply a desire to transform society through violent or revolutionary means.

Formal instances of socializationfor adult men and women

Several instances of socialization, both formal and informal, are evident in Pentecostal congregations, all designed to instruct new members (recent converts) according to their age and gender. These instances transmit the precepts, norms, values, habits and forms of behavior that new members must adopt as a condition of their admission to this congregation.

Socialization of men takes place, above all, through the sermons and discourses that the pastor presents during the Sunday religious service, and in the "couples encounters" organized by, and within, the congregation. Topics dealt with vary widely, but particularly common are the themes of family, marriage, good Christian behavior, and the obligation to pay tithes, among others. Whatever the specific theme may be, all teaching and discussion is based firmly upon the Bible.

In the Pentecostal association studied, as among the Mormons, a special space and time is set aside to instruct women. These groups are called "Women's associations" and their meetings are conducted by the pastor's wife, though all the women in attendance can participate actively in planning and carrying out activities. The teachings and orientation provided at these reunions serve to establish the models that form the basis for reproducing the feminine behavior and identities that these churches deem "correct". Of course, those "models" are delineated by religious precepts that women interiorize and add to (or substitute for) their previous fundamental values. The objective of the topics discussed at meetings is to (re)educate women to become good Christians and so establish better relationships within the family, and to be better wives and mothers; women better prepared – according to this religious doctrine – to resolve diverse kinds of domestic problems, including matters relevant to family life that may also influence their behavior in domains beyond the strictly religious sphere.

Pentecostal congregations do not prepare women to perform any kind of work that might help them ameliorate their families' economic condition, though this aspect enjoys high priority among Mormon groups. When both spouses convert to Pentecostalism, or join this church, the situation of their families tends to improve, largely because the men find themselves obliged to stop smoking, drinking and dissipating their wages outside the domestic unit. They are taught that money is to be spent on food, clothing and material improvements to their homes. In contrast, if the man does not agree to follow the woman's lead and join the religious group, the family situation will not change in any significant way.

Conception of the family

The Pentecostal congregation studied presents women with a notion of the "ideal" family, a model that is expressed constantly when they talk, and that they imagine will be achieved if/when they succeed in converting their husbands to the new faith. This model is hammered home in the sermons delivered by the pastor during the Sunday religious service, in the teachings offered at women's meetings, and on special occasions, such as the "couples encounter". However, during informal chats and in their testimonies, Pentecostal women recognize that their "struggles" with their families' problems do not always "end in triumph"; to the contrary, cases of alcoholic spouses or young drug addicts, among others, are a constant concern that they voice, especially in their petitions during moments of collective prayer in the religious service. While this Pentecostal congregation emphasizes that women must do everything in their power to maintain their families united, a second priority is to "act as saviors"; that is, to convince all members of their family to become "Christians". This reveals another difference between Mormons and Pentecostals: the importance placed on continually preparing individuals to "adequately" perform their functions as fathers and mothers; for among the latter this aspect is significant only in the sense that it forms part of being a good Christian.

Profiling the para-Christian congregation

The origins of the Mormon Church in Zamora appear to date to 1960, but manifestations of intolerance by some Zamorans impeded its consolidation[5]. Most members are low – or middle-class men and women; only a few are from the upper-middle class. Most Mormon men are merchants, though some have a profession and work in banks or local government. Others ply their trades as electricians or plumbers, or work in stores. Most women are homemakers, but some work in stores or food-processing plants. A few are bureaucrats, teachers or independent merchants.

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints was erected upon a hierarchical structure with the founder as its maximum authority. It was within this structure that the instances required to instruct members and re-educate people from other denominations who chose to join were created. In most countries where it operates, this Church is characterized by habits of cleanliness, honesty, diligence, productivity, and patriotism, as well as by a solid organization guided by the goal of ensuring family unity and wellbeing. Its objectives include sustaining close relationships among members and developing congregations so that they can progress. One important area of contrast with Pentecostal groups that, as we saw, are characterized by a separatist attitude, is that Mormons actively encourage going out to attract "people of the world" to their religion; indeed, they seek to "move the world" through an active process of proselytization.

But there are other differences between the Mormon and Pentecostal congregations in Zamora, and these can be categorized in terms of age, generation, socioeconomic status, integration in the wage-labor market, religious activities, membership in a confessional-type congregation (para-Christian *vs*. Pentecostal), and, of course, by observing the domains in which believers move in their daily activities. However, one important element that members of both groups share is their status as "converts"; that is individuals who once belonged to the Catholic Church. A second characteristic that stands out is that 80-85% of adherents are women; indeed, both congregations have institutions devoted specifically to re-educating and socializing women. The Mormons call these "Support Societies", while Pentecostals use the aforementioned name, "Women's Association".

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Formal instances of socialization of men and women

As we learned for the case of the Pentecostal congregation, the Mormon Church also has instances of socialization for different age groups and the two genders6.

The Mormon Church is unusual in that it has an instance of socialization aimed specifically at men. In addition to teaching the doctrinal precepts and abilities they require to serve in one of the Church's formal positions, men also receive orientation designed to help them become better parents and heads of household. However, this male-oriented socialization process often entails contradictions with what they learned earlier in their original social milieu, and means abandoning certain behaviors that are deeply-associated with masculine identity; *i.e.*, womanizing, drinking alcohol, smoking, aloofness from children, etc.

Teachings for Mormon women seek to strengthen their feminine identity based on a symbolic system that includes conceptions that the Church believes will help them achieve greater respect in the family, and the wider society as well, through a process of self-revalorization. As we will see below, these conceptions reinforce the role assigned socially and historically to women. While socialization of married women occurs mainly in the "Support Societies", informal talks with peers or with the president of the women's association in which the Church's prescriptions are constantly reiterated are also important.

Conception of the family and men's and women's roles within it

The Mormon group stresses re-valorizing women as persons, and offers them ongoing preparation. Teachings in this regard are imparted through discussions and readings organized by the "Support Society", whose president constantly stresses the importance of women "in God's plan" as mothers, daughters, wives, neighbors, workmates, citizens, etc., and the need to teach them so that they can better perform their mission in this world. This re-valorization of members of this Church goes hand-in-hand with obedience to the norms that regulate gender relations, inter-generational relations, and the individual's personal relationship with God and the society in which she/he lives. The values, precepts and norms that are transmitted to recent converts underscore Mormons' obligation to refrain from behaviors that are considered injurious, such as smoking, drinking alcohol and coffee, extramarital affairs, theft, abortion, "licentiousness", domestic violence, and premarital sex, among others.

Members of the Mormon Church also learn that foul language and swearing are prohibited, as are making fun or speaking ill of others. They are also constantly exhorted to respect the Church's norms of cleanliness, diligence at work, respect for others (members or not) and for civil authorities and the country's patriotic symbols. As employees, they are assumed to be industrious, responsible and honest. Women are specifically and insistently taught not to use foul language, to keep their homes neat and clean, and to be supportive of others in the economic and material domains, as well as when problems of a moral nature arise.

The instruction offered by this Church is not limited to the attributes and tasks that reinforce the roles of the masculine and feminine genders, but also focuses on aspects that help members increase their social capital. For example, illiterate women are taught to read and write so that they can participate more fully in religious activities, and are encouraged to read the Church's magazines and books to continue their "preparation" and help their children with schoolwork and

tasks assigned at Sunday School. One responsibility of the president of the "Support Society" is to visit each member on a weekly basis to learn what family problems they may have and help them find solutions. In her chats with women, she insists on the importance of studying so that they can better educate their children and improve family relationships, even if they do not work outside the home. For some women in the group in Zamora this idea has propitiated changes in the practices that characterized them when they were Catholics.

Far from opposing the roles (including the division of labor and responsibilities) that Zamoran society assigns to men and women, this Church's teachings rigorously reinforce them on a daily basis. Married women are constantly reminded that their duty is to look after their children and home as faithful, loving mothers. Men, meanwhile, learn that they are responsible for maintaining the (nuclear) family and educating their children, and should be loving parents and diligent workers. While emphasizing the obligations of men and women, this Church also stresses the value of each believer as an individual, a "child of God". This re-valorization leads recent converts to develop a new self-perception that includes their role and duties in the family. This process is more clearly marked in the case of men, for it modifies the image they transmit to those who do not belong to this religious group.

It is important to stress that when Zamorans join a non-Catholic religious group, their previous social networks are weakened, or may even dissolve, because they no longer participate in the "worldly" activities or forms of entertainment characteristic of those networks. This usually leads Mormon converts to develop much of their social life within the religious group. In addition, if their decision leads to a rift with their birth family, they often center their attention and affection even more intensely on their own nuclear family, even if not all its members have converted to the new faith.

The "mission" of each family member

Among Mormons, each member of the nuclear family is considered to have a task to fulfill on Earth. Parents and children, spouses, women and men, are all constantly reminded of their "mission", which is reinforced through the teachings imparted in the instances of socialization mentioned above. It appears that Mormons seek to "burnish" the behavior of men and women and transmit it to boys, girls, and young people so that they "effectively" develop those same roles upon reaching adulthood. It is important to clarify that for Mormons, the person's "mission" cannot be carried out if she/he does not form part of a family. They also learn that adversity is best overcome when the family remains united. By constantly striving to consolidate the family structure of its members, Mormon groups strengthen themselves as a minority religious group in an adverse social setting, and this allows them to better confront situations of religious intolerance, as occurs in Zamora.

Mormons further hold that the "mission" of spouses includes procreating, setting a good example for children, and achieving harmonious co-existence. For this reason, they place great emphasis on the sessions of the "Support Society" and the group for married men, whose goal is to ensure that members' behavior is coherent and congruent with what their children are being taught. The "mission" of men includes safeguarding the family, being good providers, and supporting the family at all times. Women, meanwhile, are reminded that their duty is to look after, feed, and protect their children. The "mission" ascribed to children is to behave properly, be studious, and help their parents in any way they can in accordance with their age.

The importance that Mormons attribute to family is further reflected in the teachings offered at Support Society meetings, where the "recommendation" is that women should not work, but if they need to earn money to help maintain the household, this should not involve entail leaving the home. To this end, they receive various courses or workshops where they are taught activities that can provide income with no need to leave the house. At church they also receive cooking classes and instruction in baking, nutrition, sewing and dressmaking, preparing preserves and sweets, haircutting, and domestic economy.

The teachings imparted to men and women in the church building are planned to help them improve their behavior towards other family members, especially their young and adolescent children. To this end, parents receive special talks whose purpose is to communicate a code of conduct and exhort them to practice at home what they learn in class. Also emphasized is the transcendence of family stability, for this is the nucleus where children learn the principles that will help them become "good Mormons" in the future. For all these reasons, teachings stress that order should prevail in the family as only this will ensure that the household remains well-integrated and strongly united. Ultimately, the idea is to propitiate good communication and respect among all members. In this way, they think, children will learn correct behavior and follow the Church's guidelines. In the family, parents are also expected to establish and sustain a set of ethical-moral principles that includes prohibiting pre-marital sex because "it fosters promiscuity and a lack of self-respect in the individual".

Activities that reinforce this model of family

Mormons advocate organizing what they call "Family nights" as part of their multifaceted strategy to keep families united and ensure that parents remain fully involved in their children's lives and activities. At these reunions, which are held one night a week, each member of the family is responsible for preparing and directing an activity (prayer, Bible study, singing praises, or preparing and serving dinner). This is a space where people can ventilate problems and seek solutions. In contrast, the activities that Pentecostal families perform depend more on the amount of time and money available. This Church provides no explicit prescriptions to hold specific kinds of reunions like the Mormons' "Family nights".

Socialization of children: The Mormon congregation

The process of socializing children in this congregation is ongoing and is carried out through diverse means. The most formal of these involves the teachings that young people receive while at church, both during the religious service and while attending Sunday School, where they are separated into groups by age and/or gender. The so-called "primary" group is mixed, but sub-divided by age as follows: (i) "daycare" (nursery school) for children aged a few months to two years; (ii) "the sun's little rays" for 3-year-olds; (iii) "little stars" for 4-to-5-year-olds; and, (iv) "do what is fair" for children aged 6-7. At the age of 8, boys and girls are placed in separate groups; two for boys called "Markers A" (8-to-9-year-olds) and "Markers B" (10-to-11-year-olds). At age 12, boys join the group of adolescents known as the *Group for the Priesthood*. Girls, meanwhile, are split into the "*Minimozas*" A and B groups for 8-9 and 10-11-year-olds, respectively. Like boys, at the age of 12 they join the adolescents' group.

Teaching at Sunday School is divided in two parts. In the first, the subject matter is exclusively

religious themes. Sessions begin with a prayer, and then children are allowed to give testimony of thanks (for example, for having passed an exam, for good school performance, etc.). If they had been assigned homework, the teacher (almost always a woman) may publicly recognize the children who completed it, but rebuke those who did not and scold them for their lack of commitment. The second part focuses on instructing the precepts that should guide the children's behavior. These sessions are usually led by young single women, whom the boys and girls address as "teacher". They employ various pedagogical techniques (songs, drawings, theatrical representations, games, etc.) to get their points across, but the instruction offered at each session is guided by a manual specially created by the international church for this purpose. Children participate by reading paragraphs from writings published by the Church and answering the questions that their "teachers" ask.

The second principle means of socializing children is informal, as it is communicated in, and practiced through, recreational activities organized inside the church's installations on special dates or during vacation periods. On these occasions, children who are new to the Church observe the behaviors and interaction of adults and receive instructions from them. Newcomers also observe, and learn from, the behavior of other boys and girls who have been members of the congregation for more time and display greater familiarity with the group's codes of behavior, and so conduct themselves, as people say, "in an adequate manner". The congregation's leaders, however, emphasize that the principle instance for socializing boys and girls is the family; thus the great emphasis placed on re-educating adults who recently joined the Church.

Socialization of children: The Pentecostal congregation

In this Church, doctrinal and normative instruction for children are transmitted at Sunday School, where the young people are divided by age into mixed groups, including one for very young children aged 3-to-5 years, and another for school-aged children (6-to-12 or 13). In the former group, teaching consists largely of activities like playing instructional games or puppet shows (the young women in charge is currently studying to be a kindergarten teacher). In the second, the focus shifts towards learning and memorizing verses from the Bible and songs, while normativity is often communicated by showing examples of "inappropriate behaviors" committed by personages in the Bible. The leader of this group is a single woman who works as a teacher in a primary school. At Sunday School, she relies primarily on traditional pedagogical techniques, such as rote learning and constant repetition. These sessions begin with a song, followed by the introduction to the day's lesson. When the teacher wishes to discuss a specific topic (e.g. the importance of the family), she will reinforce her lesson with verses from the Bible. The doctrinal precepts so inculcated, as well as the topics discussed, constantly remind the children of the behavioral norms that should characterize them now as Christians, while emphasizing behaviors that are to be avoided (e.g. playing video games, shouting, foul language, and fighting with other children, etc.).

The socialization process in perspective

The teaching that the children of recent converts receive in the instances of socialization that function in the church and that are transmitted in the home as well, do not include only a series of doctrinal tenets, but also indicate how the different elements of the relational structure inside and outside the new group to which they now belong should function and be articulated. To achieve this, the socialization structures provide children with a clear cognitive and normative framework in an effort to ensure that, as Berger and Luckmann (2001) stress, they will interiorize the series of

precepts and prescriptions that this framework contains such that their actions and thought will be guided by them. In diverse ways, these frameworks also contribute to the congregation's survival as a minority religious association in an adverse social environment, as in the case of Zamora.

Given the characteristics of the two religious congregations under study, it is evident that the process of socializing children carries with it a constant concern to shape, standardize, monitor and control what are considered good practices, actions and behaviors by children in the home, at school, on the street, and in the temple. In this regard, adults in general (including parents, Sunday School teachers and pastors) are those entrusted with the tasks of ensuring that the group's norms and prescriptions are followed. Here, the children are not recognized as having an active role; rather, they are seen as simple receptors who have no possibility to manifest their opinion on aspects that matter to them (especially homework assignments and activities they must perform in the home and as members of the congregation). Indeed, they cannot even express their desire to belong – or not – to their parents' congregation, since the conversion of the sons and daughters of recent converts is "automatic" – a "given" – once their parents join the congregation. This is especially true when it is the mother who opts to convert to a different doctrinal group from the one in which she was raised.

Hence, it is not surprising to learn that the instruction offered to children inside the temple – in instances created *ex profeso*, and in specific, marked periods of the consecrated ritual process; that is, the regular Sunday religious service – is presented uni-directionally by individuals who the hierarchy of the religious association and its members recognize as "capable" of transmitting and teaching not only doctrine, but also the frameworks of interpretation, meanings, codes and values of the group, together with its normativity.

The fact that the women who teach children the new religious doctrine are referred to as "teachers", just as in the official non-religious public school system, and that they utilize many of the same pedagogical techniques that children see at school, means that they are perceived as authority figures. Thus, the content of the teachings they transmit to the children appear as "unquestionable truths" that simply must be believed, accepted and applied as such in their daily lives. In addition to the prohibition on questioning the knowledge taught in the temple (once again, similar to what children encounter in the traditional educational system, especially in primary school), children are not given any space to voice their opinions, and reflexive attitudes are actively discouraged since they could lead to dissident behaviors that stray from the path being transmitted in their new faith and so may be considered threats to the "order" that the congregation seeks to impose on the lives of recent converts. Clearly, in terms of both content and teaching style, the aim is to create children who are well-disciplined, submissive, and subjects of norms; hence the heavy emphasis placed on reinforcing these norms not only in the temple but also in the home as a means of channeling children's actions and shaping their thoughts and attitudes. As Bourdieu (1985: 31) phrases it: "...indicating to the child (…) what she/he is will lead her/him to become, with time, what she/he must be."

The process of socializing children in these two religious congregations includes the explicit elucidation of the mechanisms of control and supervision employed to regulate their actions and practices. These measures are applied mainly by adults, but can also be used by other children who have formed part of the congregation for a longer time and may be the first to point out the bad behavior – or incompliance – of a new member. It is in this regard that the affirmation by Lay & Montañés (2013: 314) becomes relevant: "control is required to ensure that the children obey and

assume as their own the ideas and conceptions that emanate from the adult world."

Up to this point, analysis has focused on the processes for socializing children that are performed in these two religious congregations. However, there are other, informal, instances that can contradict what children learn at church. Lahire (2007) discusses the contradictions that can arise during processes of socializing children from the different milieus in which young people move, and their unavoidable interaction with diverse social actors outside the religious congregation. In the two groups studied, these contradictions emerge primarily when children confront their peers at school, in the neighborhood where they live, or on the street, especially with people with whom they routinely interacted before joining the new religious congregation (and whom they may be forced to abandon if their parents consider, in light of their new religion, that they could constitute a negative influence). Television programs and the Internet, of course, are other potential sources of elements that may contravene the teachings and norms that these children receive, due to the use of language (words with double meanings, foul language, swearing, etc.), or by presenting inappropriate images. This threat is especially dangerous if television and/or the Internet are the only forms of entertainment available to children at home; that is, if their parents do not allow them to play in the street with their old friends, or if both the mother and father work full-time.

Conclusion

Both congregations studied place great importance on the family as the nucleus for reproducing doctrinal teachings and norms, and for ensuring that members continue to participate in their new religion. For these reasons, recent converts (adults and children) go through an intensive process of socialization designed to inculcate in them the models that should guide their behavior in the future. Although it is difficult for recent converts to Pentecostalism or the Mormon religion in Zamora to fully comply with these models, it is clear that they strive to do so, for they have seen that by following these new teachings their children become more obedient and collaborate more in household tasks. Moreover, in families in which the husband also converts, the couple's conjugal relations are less conflictive. However, and despite their best efforts, women do not always succeed in convincing their husbands and children to follow them in joining the new congregation; or even if they do, those family members may not commit fully to the values, precepts and rules that the new religion teaches.

In the cases examined in my research, the concept of family transmitted to recent converts collides with the cultural practices and schemes of a traditional society that has lived diverse, accelerated transformations which have deeply influenced the current formation of families. While it is true that the father continues to be considered the breadwinner and authority figure, and the mother the parent entrusted with caring for children and the domestic sphere, masculine and feminine tasks and roles are changing due, among other factors, to male migration to the United States, and the massive insertion of women into labor markets, which also means that they make a greater economic contribution to family income. As mentioned earlier, many – perhaps most – of these Mormon and Pentecostal women work outside the home, so if they wish to make the model of family that their new churches propose a reality they must accept that their responsibilities (and efforts) will expand markedly, especially if their husbands are not physically present or have not joined the new faith. This situation can cause great anxiety, for if women are not successful in controlling and channeling their children's behavior such that they become "good believers", they may feel that they have failed to adequately perform the "mission" assigned to them by God.

Because these are minority congregations and their members must break away from many of their existing social networks upon changing their religion, the social isolation in which recent adult converts may live is mitigated to a degree by the close and constant relationships they develop with their peers inside the congregation's installations, during the courses they attend, and through daily interaction with other members outside the religious domain. This closeness is fostered by religious leaders as a means to achieve various objectives at the same time; for example, impeding that converts maintain "their old customs and bad habits", preventing children from being "contaminated" by what they may learn and adopt from their peers at school or while playing in the street, and reinforcing the teachings received during the socialization process, which they should follow whether they are with the congregation or far away from it. Clearly, striving to keep families permanently-linked to the religious association on a daily basis, and having them continually participate in activities organized within the congregation, helps ensure that the religious values will endure, while also facilitating the vigilance that some members maintain over others.

For Mormons and Pentecostals alike, values and religious teachings and conceptions obtain their maximum development and duration when they are profoundly rooted in the most basic experiences of each individual; even more so when they are lived and reproduced in both the temple and the home. In the case of the Mormons, making children participate constantly in religious activities inside the family while also involving them in different tasks and assigning them responsibilities at home, has turned out to be a very effective pedagogical technique through which they learn to see and conceive their family as a united group, and to perceive themselves as an integral part of the household. Similarly, the participation of very small children with their family in public religious rituals contributes to developing the sense that they are part of a greater unit, while simultaneously allowing them to create and mark the differences that separate them from those who do not belong to their doctrinal group. This helps children form their identity and feelings of belonging, as members of a broader community made up of people in the four corners of the world who participate in the same rites.

It is important to mention as well that these processes of religious socialization lead children to modify their perceptions of activities performed in the home because their religious teachings conceive of such tasks not as "obligations" but, rather, as part of "God's divine plan". Therefore, as they perform such "chores" they feel that they are fulfilling their part, their role, or their function in this great plan. Of course, having children participate in household labors is neither a new practice nor one performed exclusively by the members of the two congregations studied, for in most Mexican families children are assigned different tasks and responsibilities from an early age, especially if both parents work outside the home, or if the household is led by a woman. The difference consists in that Mormon or Pentecostal children re-elaborate their ideas to make them coherent with the religious norms and values that are inculcated in them, and this imbues daily household labors with new meaning.

Both congregations place great emphasis on the socialization of children, but for this to be effective equal attention must be paid to the socialization of recently-converted parents. Here, religious leaders constantly seek to regulate and influence the private milieu of believers' families, by attempting to re-order and "normalize" men's and women's participation in socially-assigned tasks required to "safeguard" the values associated with the family. This "normalization", however, inserts men and women converts, together with their families, into a situation of constant contradiction between the teachings and ideals that the new religious group proposes and the reality of their everyday lives. On the one hand, activities inside the congregation are designed to reinforce the

belief that the main responsibilities of women revolve around home and family, and that their primary role in society is that of homemaker-mother. But in contrast to this, they may be obliged, out of economic necessity, to participate in domains quite distinct from that of the family, especially if the declining value of wages and unacceptable working conditions no longer allow the male head of household to be the only breadwinner. Indeed, in some cases, the remuneration that women receive for their work constitutes the larger share of family income.

In conclusion, we can say that if the norms and teachings proposed and disseminated by the two congregations studied herein were put fully into practice, they would significantly transform the relations between spouses and between parents and their children. However, observations show that the members of these groups do not always, or necessarily, follow the behavioral models presented. Rather, they learn them "selectively", and then reinterpret, reproduce and adapt them in such a way that they cease to be "obligations imposed upon them" and come to be seen as referents that are applied and negotiated in their daily lives depending on their personal experiences, social class, level of schooling, and the characteristics of their families. Hence, they serve as a "guide" that helps them voluntarily maintain "appropriate" behavior in accordance with their new condition as members of a non-Catholic association. But these models also help recent converts form a self-image – one that is positively-valued according to the group's criteria and parameters – that they can present to other people who do not belong to their congregation and so do not share their beliefs and practices.

Children discover that complying with the models of behavior inculcated by the new faith requires considerable effort, because both at school and in the street they co-exist, and share their time and interests, with children who receive an education quite distinct from what they experience in their congregations. Mormon and Pentecostal children interact with classmates and friends who use foul language, lie, and fight other children; that is, peers who do not belong to their congregation who may exhibit inappropriate behaviors that would be sanctioned in their churches. For the children of recent converts circumstances like these can generate confusion and uncertainty, even a dilemma as to whether they genuinely wish to continue interacting with peer groups that do not share the doctrinal norms and beliefs that have been transmitted to them through the congregations to which they pertain.

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Notes

1 For more information on this cityand Catholic practices and beliefs, *cf*. Arizpe (1989) and Juárez (1997, 2006).

2 This research was conducted in different periods between 2003 and 2012. Information was obtained through open-ended and structured interviews, observations made during religious services, at Sunday School, in meetings of women, and during visits to the homes of members of both congregations. Information on children was gathered during informal chats, observations in their Sunday School classes, and by observing activities performed at home.

3 Aubrée (1986, cited in Aubrée 2007) calls these "revealed sects", but following the lead of classic sociologists of religion like B. Wilson (1970), I prefer to call them para-Christian groups.

4 Though with the founding of Charismatic Renovation Groups in that Church, similar practices are gaining acceptance (*cf*. Juárez 1997).

5 This term refers to religious groups whose normative doctrine and predication are not based *exclusively* on the Bible, but incorporate the writings of their founder(s), expressed in books, pamphlets, sermons, etc. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints – Mormon – is one such case, as the doctrinal principles, norms and commandments that guide members' lives are

found in basic texts: *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrines and Covenants*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *Words of Wisdom*.

6 An earlier study of this congregation can be found in Juárez (2003).