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TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE FAMILY MODELS IN ROMANIA

Abstract of PHD Thesis

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Abstract

The last years are a marking point in the growing interest of the researchers in *family* as research topic, as a proof of this comes the 5000 papers written on this topic in the last decade that are now part of the Harvard Library. The increasing interest in family as a concept and the problematic around it among sociologists, anthropologists, demographers and historians it is perfectly justified if the multiple changes through which the model of traditional family underwent in the last decades are considered. Thus, in the developed countries until the '60 the "standard" model of a family was formed of the husband employed and a housewife whereas the '70 are characterized by the birth of the "double carrier" couples. The '90 bring about a decrease in number of families formed by two spouses having in background a proliferation of consensual unions, of mono-parental families and couples formed by members of the same sex.

Put differently, one could argue that in the contemporary society, more and more individuals opt out of formalizing their couple relationship, endorsing alternative models of living together. Precisely these trends the evolution worry public opinion, as well as political actors or academic circles, hence the idea, which becomes more and more popular, that the family as institution finds itself in a profound crisis.

In this context more and more researchers are showing growing of interest in the transformations family undergoes in contemporary time. Authors like Zeitlin and others (1995), Peterson and Steinmetz (1999), Teachman (2000), Levy et al. (2002) or Kellerhals et al. (2003), are unanimously agreeing that the post-industrialization and the post-modern cluster of values, that are characterizing the last decades in the developed westerns states, had a strong impact on couple life, revolutionizing the forms of cohabitation. Thus, put differently, in western societies, the legal constituted family stops being the dominant model at the societal level, becoming a mere specific case in the constellation of alternative cohabitation models.

Furthermore the authors mentioned above, are expressing points of view that are more or less optimistic with regard to the future of the family in these societies. The family as we know it today, will continue to exist in the future by adapting itself to the new social, economic conditions, endorsing contemporary society's set values or otherwise it will be replaced step by step by the consensual unions, mono-parental families or other alternative models of cohabitation.

The problematic of the transformation that the family undergoes in the contemporary period is also very appealing to the Romanian researchers. The works of authors like Mihăilescu (1999), Ghebrea (2000), Voinea (2005), Iluț (1995, 2005) or Popescu (2007, 2009) are detailed analysis of the process of evolution of the couple's life in Romania of the last decades. The general conclusion of these studies is that Romanian society is still undergoing the process of modernization. Therefore the evolution of the nuptial behaviour in the last years in Romania are underlining that there is a growth in the cohabitation rates as well as in the number of the mono-parental families and a decrease in the number of legal constituted families. We have to emphasize that all these transformations that the Romanian model has been undergoing for the last years, are only subscribing to the European tendency, but do not reach the degree of change that is registered in the western society. Thus, currently, Romanians are still strongly endorsing marriage, while cohabitation of mono-parental families having rather a contextual character than a choice. Furthermore, international comparative research on social values (Voicu 2007) show that from the point of view of the attitudes towards the family, Romania is placed at an European level in the group of traditional countries.

The transformations that take place in the model of the Romanian families represent the main topic of this PhD thesis. The present research aims at analysing the changes that have been taking place in Romania in the last decades as far as couple life is concerned. The title of this thesis is relevant for this statement. We have to underline that we entitled this thesis "Transformation of the family models in Romania", due to the fact that according to the academic literature the transformations that are taking place at the level of the couple life in the last decades, are a direct consequence of the modernization processes that are taking place in contemporary societies. Therefore we could make an analogy with the evolution of society and argue that the evolution of family is thus inscribing itself on the modern- traditional axis. Put differently, depending on the historical context and the specificity of the way of organizing, the concept of the family can be treated in terms of "traditional family" or/and "modern family".

Keeping in mind the aspects presented above, we initiated our research on the evolution of the family, starting from the existence of at least two distinct models of family organization: the model of the traditional family and the model of the modern family. Furthermore the structure of this PhD thesis is coherent in this sense.

The first seven chapters of the thesis are dedicated to some aspects that are pertaining to the organization of the traditional family, and the next seven chapters are dedicated to the models ascribed to the modern way of organizing the family. Moreover, the dichotomy traditional family - modern family is touched upon also in the last part of the present thesis, and it presents the results of the research that has been carried out by the PhD candidate in order to look into the way of organizing of the Romanian contemporary families. We have to underline here that the task of studying the evolution of the family is a challenging one due to the fact that it requires concomitant answers to series of questions such as: What are the characteristics of the traditional family? What are the characteristics of modern family? What is the profile of the Romanian family in the European context? How can the traditional and modern aspects of the organization of families of contemporary societies be highlighted? The current research attempts to provide pertinent answers to all the above mentioned questions. This study thus combines theoretical orientations aimed at presenting the main issues and the changes in the field of family research, with secondary analysis of demographic data or investigations that are relevant to highlight the changes that occur at the level of the organizing ways of the families during their historical evolution.

On the other hand we must state that throughout our research we aimed at presenting the features of the permanent organization Romanian family, while making reference to family patterns at the European level. During research, analysing historical data on the organization of traditional families, such as the historical data, monographs and historical demography regarding the medieval family part of the collection of publications entitled in a generic way *History of Private Life*, proved extremely useful. Moreover these sources are frequently referred to throughout the thesis. Monographs of the boyar families, Romanian customary law studies or works on the subject matter of the joint property structure in the free villages, are on the other hand, important sources of data on the organization of traditional Romanian families.

A similar situation is found in the section on the organization of the modern family. The analysis of the changes that are taking place within the family in modern times has required the use of a large number of data on the structural features, relational features and attitudinal family values in contemporary societies. In analysing the situation at the European level the data contained in the Eurobarometer,

World Values Survey (WVS) proved to be particularly helpful. Aspects of the situation of families in Romania have been highlighted both based on official statistics from censuses or directories, as well as the results of field research that have been carried out in recent years in Romania. Thus, our approach to analyse the characteristics of the contemporary married life in Romania often relied on data and researches such as Gender Barometer (Soros, 2000) Life Barometer couple (Soros, 2007) or Family Life Barometer (Soros, 2008). As previously mentioned, the first part of this thesis concerns defining aspects of how the traditional family is organized. This section of the thesis begins with some general considerations on specific aspects of the research on traditional family. Here are considered aspects such as the cultural context in which family sociology developed as a science, major theoretical and methodological approaches to the organization of the traditional family or valences and limitations of past research on family history. Based on the idea that the traditional family is integrated into a vast system of kinship, Chapter 1.2 includes extensive references on the issue of studying medieval kinship. In this chapter anthropological perspectives, the sociological ones and the history of kinship, are listed and reviewed, with emphasis on concepts such as consanguinity, lineage, pedigree structures, nation, clan, extended family or kinship conventional. The Chapter also includes references to the evolution of family structures in the medieval period, both in Western Europe and the Romanian cultural space. Chapter 1.3 is an overview of the characteristics of marriage in the Middle Ages. Thus, in this chapter topics such as the social importance of marriage and family in medieval society, the role of matrimonial alliances feudal social system, the closure of marriages and their influence on the behavior of traditional nuptials are addressed. The Chapter also includes presentation of historical demography data on marital behavior in Romanian tradition. We also emphasis and discuss some aspects of age at marriage, the relationship between marriage and birth rate, divorce or remarriage scale in the Romanian area in the historical past.

The chapter 1.4 is devoted to analysing the structure of family farms in the Middle Ages. The beginning of the chapter presents a theoretical "classical" dilemma, if whether the traditional family household of the European cultural space is the extended or the nuclear type. Closely related to the issue of traditional family farm structure, the chapter contains references to the process of family atomization and the implications this process has at family level. There is also taken into account the

problem of the relationship between the family structure and the type of housing, the relationship between the way of organization and the form of domestic group farm, the problem of authority in the relationship between spouses and between parents and children.

Closely linked with the previous chapter, Chapter 1.5 discusses the changes that occurred during the Middle Ages in family ownership structure and its mode of transmission of succession. Here are considered the existing inter-conditioning feudal system structure between family groups and forms of land tenure. Put differently, the discussion emphasizes on the relationship between the phenomenon of dissolution of family clans and the individualization of the output from joint family property. Furthermore, the discussion points towards to the further characteristics of the process of exiting the joint ownership in the case of Romanian territories. The second part of the chapter tackles a comparative analysis of inheritance customs of the countries in Western Europe and Romanian territories. The analysis covers the provisions of customary law on succession, such as application of the "primacy of masculinity" or on the contrary, the division into equal quotas of the heritage. Finally, the last part of the chapter examines the specific practice feudal estate retractable in the case of disinheritance on the male line, and the strategies adopted by families to avoid it.

Chapter 1.6 summarizes the main characteristics of traditional family models from the European cultural space. The history and features of the nuclear family, the type "strain", or the communitarian family are widely discussed. Typologies of the traditional families in Western Europe developed by authors such as Todd (2002), Burguiere (2001), or Collomp (1997) are also presented. Finally the chapter presents the distribution of traditional family models on the geographical area of the European continent.

The section dedicated to traditional family issues ends with a final chapter, which includes general considerations and conclusions on the characteristics of traditional families from the European cultural space.

The following chapters of this thesis are addressing the issue of modern family organization. Although dividing the thesis into two distinct sections may seem peculiar at a first glance, we opted for this solution due to some objective reasons, mainly related to the fact that the family of the present research differs from both theoretical and methodological study of families in the historical past.

If the research on the traditional family is analysed typically from historical or anthropological perspective, the study of modern family is mainly addressed by sociology. Obviously this has direct consequences concerning the methodology of analysis of the two family types. Therefore the typology of the traditional families is designed based on family lineage relationships, while specific organizational models of the modern family are determined based on couple relationships. Therefore, it may be argued that if the organization of the traditional family is analysed in terms of kinship, customs of inheritance or types of housing, modern family organization is highlighted by research on couple relationships. Furthermore, the study of families in the past is tackled based on data from monographs of the time, historical demography data or provisions of customary law, while the study of present families is based on official statistics and data on the results of field surveys, these tools being eloquent in the case of the later.

Chapter 2.1 opens the section on patterns of organization of modern family. The chapter presents the main changes taking place in the contemporary domestic group structure, in the couple relationships, or attitudes and values regarding family. The first part of the chapter presents the characteristics of the "standard" nuclear family as reflected in the works of many functionalist authors.

The second chapter presents the main structural changes experienced by families in contemporary societies in recent decades. The chapter discusses issues such as reducing the size of family households, lowering their share among types of households, increased instability in the case of legally constituted families. The discussion includes extensive reference to structural changes experienced by families in Romania in the last decades. Statistical Romanian data are analyzed concerning the evolution of the number of nuclear families per household, and data on the evolution of marriage, birth rate or divorce.

The third section of the chapter discusses the effect of the changes of social values regarding the level of gender inequality in the family, and the labour market.

At this point the importance of the effect that changing general attitudes toward marriage and family, and changing attitudes towards traditional gender roles, effects that have an impact on salaried employment levels of women, and namely the degree of involvement in domestic tasks and care of children by men are underlined.

Having as theoretical scaffold the structural model of gender relations developed by researchers Swiss Rene Levy, Eric Widmer and Jean Kellerhals the last part of the

chapter constitutes itself as an analysis of couple relationships of Romanians in terms of marital satisfaction, the distribution of domestic tasks and ways of making decisions, and career adjustment to family needs.

We must emphasize at this point that the discussion in the chapter 2.1 defines the general frame of the way that we organized the next chapters of the thesis. Therefore the following chapters of the research paper tackle issues such as the distribution of domestic tasks, salaried employment or the process of making decisions in a couple, which are essential for highlighting the organization of the couple life. It is clear, however, that we can not have an overview on the changes that couple relationships are currently undergoing, without considering the specifics of gender relations in contemporary society. Moreover, as we noted above, the whole issue of Modern Family revolves around the relationship of the couple, which is inherently a relationship of gender. Based on these considerations, Chapter 2.2 presents the main aspects of the problem of gender relations as reflected in literature. In this chapter the main theoretical guidelines on gender issues are presented: culturalist perspective, e gender roles perspective and gender construction. It is also dealt widely with the ideologies of gender issues, issues that constitute the core component of these perspectives. In this regard, the discussion stresses on the research methodology of gender ideologies on their determinants and on the effects of family-level gender ideologies. The final part of the chapter is dedicated to the attitudes and gender stereotypes of Romanians.

The following two chapters of this thesis deal with the issue of gender segregation of gainful activities, both in the family and on the labour market. Chapter 2.3, focuses on the topic distribution of domestic tasks. Framed in terms of the theoretical perspective of gender roles, the issue of gender division of household labour is therefore tackled in terms of segregation or undifferentiated conjugal roles. In this sense, the discussion focuses, for instance, on the so-called theory of "specialization of gender roles" model derived from Gary Becker's domestic economy view.

The discussion carried out in terms of specialization / de-specialization , inequality / or imbalance equalization / balancing the distribution of domestic tasks, stresses on the pre-existence of the traditional model unequal division of household labour and its modernization by reducing gender inequality in the allocation of household chores.

In this regard special attention is given to factors such as the relative resources of the partners, attitudes and ideologies of their gender or married life cycle stages, which may influence the gender division of household chores. Finally, we analyse the profile of distribution of domestic duties in the case of Romanian couples.

Closely related to the issues addressed in the previous chapter, Chapter 2.4 is devoted to the analysis of the growth of salaried employment rate of women, so often encountered in recent decades in developed societies. In other words the chapter deals with the effects of occupational mobility of women on gender segregation, gainful activities in the family and in the labour market. We are looking into issues such as: the effect of female employment on the distribution of domestic tasks at work, the relationship between occupational mobility of women and declining gender segregation of the labour market, or specific labour market participation of women in different societies. The chapter closes with a section dedicated to the specificity of labour market in Romania in terms of gender segregation of occupations.

Chapter 2.5 comprises a discussion of power relations inside modern couple. Specifically, in this chapter issues of couple relationships, in terms of relationship of power between partners are tackled. The chapter opens with a theoretical discussion of the concept of "marital power" and the "sources" of marital power. The discussion insists on issues such as personal values, income partners or relationships between members, according to social role theory, the culturalist perspective, the relative resource theory perspective or life cycle, is the main "sources" marital power. The second subchapter presents the research methodology on the marital power on the basis of decision-making couple. The third subchapter deals with theoretical and methodological aspects of research in terms of marital power through the relative resources of their partners. Finally, the closing of the chapter is dedicated to the process of decision making in couples in Romania.

Chapter 2.6 is a review of the main changes that occur in the life of the couple in contemporary societies. According to academic literature, the modern age is characterized on the one hand, by the increased instability of family couples, and on the other by the proliferation of concubinage relationships as alternative forms to legally constituted families. With these considerations as a starting point, the chapter deals with topics related to stability issues of contemporary couples as well as with aspects of the status of the relationship of cohabitation in the current society. The first part of the chapter focuses on stability issues of contemporary couples. The overall

conclusion of this section is that aspects of the quality of couple relationship, and family welfare, or marital satisfaction, are the most important factors that influence the stability of couples. Moreover, this conclusion is supported by data presented in the next chapter. The second subchapter deals with the issue concerning the dissolution of couples, thus putting out the causal relationship between marital satisfaction and divorce. Here are highlighted also the negative effects of divorce on the wellbeing of the former partners. The second part of the subchapter is a discussion of the characteristics of modern cohabitation. The themes addressed here are the history of cohabitation phenomenon in the modern period, the features that make life partnership a viable alternative to established legal family, or the institutionalization of concubinage in the contemporary societies. We must mention that a separate subchapter is dedicated to the institutionalization of cohabitation (concubinage) in the European societies. We also have to mention that the last part of the chapter contains a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of cohabitation in Romania.

Chapter 2.7 concludes the section dedicated to modern family by reviewing the characteristics of social policies of the European states and the effects of these policies at the family level. The central idea that emerges from the data presented in this chapter is that there is a close connection between social policy measures applied by contemporary states on family and the changes taking place in the recent decades within the family. The first chapter contains a comparative analysis of the main characteristics of social models applied in European countries. At this point of the discussion, we highlighted the differences between the social policies of the European countries at the level of the objectives and specific measures for the achievement of these objectives.

Moreover, the issue of social policy objectives in the family “field” and the mechanisms by which these objectives are achieved is developed in detail in subsequent subsections. The second subchapter is devoted to an analysis of the objectives of support policies of the family. Here are taken into account the specific objectives of welfare policy, the policy focus on household and child support policy objectives. The following two subchapters are an overview of the main categories of measures taken by developed countries to support their families.

We must point out that the discussion focuses on one hand on the mechanisms for combating family poverty and on the other hand on the incentives for exercising parental roles. Finally the chapter concludes with an analysis of the characteristics of

family policies promoted by the Romanian state, both in terms of objectives and in terms of family support measures under Romanian law.

The third part of the paper is structured as a separate section in which the results of field research conducted by the PhD candidate in order to highlight the degree of modernization of the Romanian family relationships are discussed. We must point out that from the theoretical point of view; the research is part of the modernization paradigm of structural arrangements of the family, presented in detail in the chapter dedicated on changes in family patterns in this paper. The research starts from the idea that therefore based on issues related to the characteristics of couple relationships, and intergenerational relations structure, distribution of domestic tasks, and attitudes and values of both spouses towards gender roles, it can be emphasized either the traditional or modern character of the organization of families.

The study also takes into account what academic literature has revealed aspects such as area of residence, age, or level of education of their partners, are key factors for the "modernization" of couple relationships. Given these considerations, the research examines the comparative profiles of intergenerational exchanges, the specific distribution of domestic tasks and attitudes towards gender roles, the married subjects belonging to the two categories "contrasting" couples: a) families of young people with higher education level and urban residence. b) Families are made up of older people with lower levels of education, who reside in rural areas.

The analysis of survey data suggests that in terms of life couple organization Romanian family is in the process of modernization. Thus, older people with lower levels of education and living in rural areas reported a relatively high frequency of intergenerational exchanges and unequal distribution of domestic tasks between partners of torque, all amid a general attitude of support for gender inequality.

On the contrary, couples consisting of young, highly educated, who live in urban areas are characterized by a low level of intergenerational exchanges of a more egalitarian distribution of domestic tasks, and attitudes and values that support a greater equality between men and women both in the family and the labour market. The results of the research thus reinforce the idea that the process of modernization of the Romanian family, which is currently underway, will continue in the future.

The last chapter contains a brief overview of the most important conclusions of the thesis, it highlights valences and limits of the approach taken by the author to

carry out this work and proposes issues or related topics that can be addressed in future researches.

Keywords: *family models, the organization of family, traditional family, kinship structures , extended family, marriage, lineage, inheritance customs, modern family, standard nuclear family, family structure, couple relationships, gender roles, gender ideologies, domestic tasks, wage labour, marital power, cohabitation, family policy, intergenerational exchanges*