

YOUNG FAMILY: ASPECTS ON ADJUSTMENT TO THE CHANGING SOCIETY

Maria Bulgaru, Inga Chistruga, *Familia tânără: aspecte ale adaptării
la societatea în schimbare*, Editura CEP-USM, Chișinău, 2015

Mihaela RĂDOI*

This book approaches a very important topic for contemporary society: family, focusing on young families and how they transformed and adapted to the demands of modern life. The authors assess – from a comparative perspective – the effects of various family policies upon family in general and how these policies have influenced the adjustment process of the family, focusing on families in the Republic of Moldova. The particularities of these families are underscored by the multitude of empirical data collected through quantitative and qualitative researches, which the authors outline in the book.

The work is structured in five chapters and the official data used are those provided by specialized establishments, processed by the authors in agreement with research specifics. They also use data resulted from six qualitative and quantitative studies conducted in the period 2009-2014. The qualitative research – based on semi-structured interviews – targeted 45 professionals with experience in family work and 35 young people who have had a family life experience (marriage, divorce, consensual union). The quantitative researches – using as instrument self-administered questionnaires on representative samples, within various regions in the Republic of Moldova – highlight various problems on the family institution, including the adjustment of young families to the new living standards. The authors' research endeavour also includes a content analysis of written press: articles within three newspapers in the Republic of Moldova written in the period 2005-2014, on the topic of family.

This book used data collected within other sociological investigations to which the authors participated. They approach family topic from a multidisciplinary perspective, thus providing information on the evolution and magnitude of the phenomenon, on the consequences of legal and psychosocial family “adjustment” and on prevention measures and intervention models. Hence, the scientific endeavour initiated by the authors is perfectly covered and motivated from the perspective of both social contemporary realities and the social efforts necessary to

* Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Carol I 11, 700506, Iași, Romania; e-mail: radoi.mihaela73@gmail.com; tel. 0745953809.

support families, while striving to identify new solutions to make authorities become involved and responsible. At the same time, we highlight the objective and pertinent way they analyzed the method used by State institutions to protect young families, an intervention conducted mainly through social services and social-security benefits, all of which are most often insufficient and inadequate, thus generating communitarian and social dependency.

In Chapter I titled “Theoretical and Methodological Orientations for Family Research,” the authors rigorously present – besides different thinking schools that analyze the evolution of family (Popenoe, D., Durkheim, E., Goody, J., Stahl, H.) – the main social, economic, political, and demographic alterations that influenced family evolutions in different periods. In the Moldovan society, one of the most common types of family was the traditional family, made up of three generations, but which suffered several alterations. In the industrialization context, authors contend that family has been submitted to an irreversible crisis and that the adjustment to contemporary living standards makes families prone to losing some of their functions, especially the function of preserving and conveying national values and traditions from one generation to another.

The studies conducted on the situation of families in several European countries within the past years underscore important trends, which have intensified every year, such as: increased number of divorces, birth rate reduction, increased number of persons who choose to live in consensual union or other alternative types of family. The greatest change recorded by families is the significant decrease in birth rate, characteristic to all European States.

The second chapter – “Family in Contemporary Society” – treats the family issue historically and by using comparative analysis elements, starting from defining the basic concepts and theoretical models of family policy in the field. The diversity of relationships between family members and their implications are outlined using a classification of various types of families. They are presented as follows: from the perspective of structures – families by large groups, nuclear families (family of origin, family of procreation), extended families, stem families, compound families or families with stepparents. From the perspective of lineage, role division and power relations, the authors present matriarchal families and patriarchal families. Another classification is determined by the place (residence) where family members unite/settle. Another classification criterion is the age of the family. From the perspective of family interventions, authors classify families by quality of life and by the types of potential social risks for these families, (incomplete families, homosexual families, restructured families, etc).

The third chapter – “Adjustment Methods Used by Young Families to Adjust to Social and Economic Transformations in the Republic of Moldova” – brings to attention the difficulties encountered by families in such challenging socio-economic setting involving transition toward market economy, where economic decline has deepened the economic gaps between various social classes. The

authors conduct a detailed analysis of the main demographic indicators correlated with an increase in poverty rate. The authors conclude that – given the high poverty rate – all young families can do is to ensure subsistence, because it is nearly impossible to invest in education, culture or health. According to the authors' data, in 2013 a fourth of the active population aged between 15-24 and 20% of the persons aged between 25 and 34 worked in agriculture, which means that their incomes failed to ensure subsistence.

In the fourth chapter titled “Young Family from the Perspective of Demographic Behaviours,” the authors present the socioeconomic conditions that forced a series of modification in the institution of family. The effects of these modifications influenced negatively the constitution of families, the spousal relationships, their reproductive behaviour and their lifestyle, as well as personal and family norms and values. In the Republic of Moldova, young people make up approximately 22% of the population, while annually 2/3 of those who start a family are younger than 30, thus facing a significant number of uncertainties, (job, stable incomes, housing); for this reason, young people postpone the decision to have a baby as much as they can. The effects of this type of behaviour are decreased birth rate and increased population aging.

In the fifth chapter – “Family Policy as a Way to Facilitate the Adjustment Process of Young Families” –, the authors present a series of measures meant to create favourable conditions to combine family and professional life. These measures include creating and extending childcare institutions – especially for children younger than 3 – in order to integrate mothers professionally, adjusting the schedule of schools and kindergartens to parents' working schedule, regulating the activity of nannies in agreement with EU practices, as well as other measures meant to facilitate the labour market integration of young families with children. The authors posit that it is absolutely necessary to invest in human capital – especially in the adjustment and modernization of health and education systems – if we aim for a durable development of the country.