

## The Institution of Marriage - Perceptions and Tendencies

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**Abstract:** *For a long time, the question of knowing of whether or not you should marry, was and has remained a continuous subject of discussion. The advantages and disadvantages of marriage, the need to have a legitimate wife, and to provide you with descendants, the worries and efforts to support your partner, to raise and educate children, to face - sometimes - their illness and even their death, were the inexhaustible themes of debates, sometimes serious, sometimes ironic, but always resumed. However, the study of the family was imposed as a necessity only in the modern age, although the preoccupations in this regard are very old. The issue of organizing family life and its functional consequences, the evolution of male and female roles, appears in the works of ancient and renaissance thinkers, and in a more immediate period, to utopian socialists. The preoccupation for family success, anticipating what later, in one form or another, would be called conjugal counseling and therapy, has appeared since antiquity. Changing the structure and the way it is accomplished the functions of the family directly related to the socio-historical changes of the contemporary age led to a diversification of the sociological and psychosocial concepts regarding the family and, implicitly, the ways of approaching it. The meaning and the direction of the contemporary society development also employs this primary cell, imparting to it a certain structure and fulfillment of family functions and roles, a certain way of life. Concluding, we can say that from a socio-historical perspective, marriage was set up for moral, social, economic, and religious purposes, and not for the affirmation of the couple as an affective, sexual and emotional entity. And the fact that the perception of marriage has always been updated according to how it was understood and applied at its beginnings was an impediment to its growing awareness of value. That is why contemporary society has proposed alternatives to marriage, which are nothing more than personal, free choices, and not duties based on tradition and constraint.*

**Keywords:** marriage, family, perceptions, tendencies.

### Introduction

Defined as the "free legal consensual union between a man and a woman for the founding of a family",<sup>1</sup> "a way accepted on social level through which two or more persons constitute a family";<sup>2</sup> "a freely consented consensual union concluded in accordance with the law, founded a family and governed by the imperative norms of the law,"<sup>3</sup> marriage is a simple social institution that unites the two constituent parts through a series of rights and obligations, conferring them well-defined social statutes meant to ensure legitimate functions: procreation, raising and educating descendants, socio-economic integration, etc. Renouncing these templates, with the pretense of defining the family phenomenon, could provide us with

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<sup>1</sup> Romanian Academy, *DEX, Encyclopedic Universe*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> C. Zamfir, L. Vlăsceanu (coord.), *Sociology Dictionary*, Bucharest, Ed. Babel, 1993, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> I. Mitrofan, N. Mitrofan, *Family from A to Z*, Bucharest, Scientific Editorial, 1991, p. 66 – 67, p. 16-19.

a better understanding of the meaning and the roles of marriage as a result of the fundamental encounter between the sexes.

From traditional to modern societies, choosing a conjugal partner - as personal decision-making - has gone the path of long metamorphoses, as a sense of family evolution from a rigid, stable, expanded and conservative institutional framework to a restricted, nuclear, mobile and open. The marital option's criteria have therefore changed from "rational" ones, to almost socio-economic exclusively, to socio-emotional and, in particular, sexually-emotional.

In the traditional family, normative-institutional character not only determines the functionality of the family, but also its formation. Thus, the institution prescribed who needs to marry and who can not marry. It also entrusted to the parents with the task of choosing the most suitable spouses for their children, which corresponds to the possibility of increasing wealth and ensuring the survival of the family line. So, the arrangement of marriage responded to rational criteria, including economic calculation. Today, not only no one no longer agrees to let their parents decide to choose the future partner, but any calculation on this issue is considered shameful and blameless. As such, the image of the modern couple became opposed to the traditional one.

From ancient Greece, Xenophan addresses the problem of marital roles in his work *Economist*, in a society that reduces the "legitimate woman" to the status of an object.<sup>4</sup> The marital relationship was based on a report from master to subject, excluding any political conflict, because by definition, full authority was the lawfulness of the spouse. Mismatches between spouses were expressed only in terms of dispositional incompatibilities, more or less disguised aggressions, or disease.

Also in ancient Rome, conjugal conflicts and tensions touch paroxysms that inspire satiricism and poets. *"Conscious of their economic exploitation and the lack of their real-social and political power - the Roman women transmit from one to the other the bar of sexual revolt as a symbol of dissatisfaction. Sexuality appears to them as the first bastion of possible freedom. The Roman woman abuses of sexuality, often at the expense of her affectional spirit and balance. Adultery has an unprecedented development."*<sup>5</sup> [In this climate of hostility and disputes between genders, the marital relationship loses its intimacy, turning into a series of quarrels and infidelities.

The medieval age imposes a new way of relationship between man and woman.<sup>6</sup> Towards the end of the eleventh century troubadours and knights impose the "chivalrous love" model. This new relationship between sexes simultaneously exiles adultery and chastity, duplicity and fidelity,

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<sup>4</sup> G. Tordjman, *Conjugal - La Maladie*, Paris, Marabout Universite, 1973, p. 47-49, p. 64-66.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47-49.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47-49.

pleasure and pain. At once with him, for the first time, the heterosexual relationship admits the values of esteem, respect and admiration towards women, which until then were not conceived except in the case of friendship between men. Beginning with this epoch, the woman is no longer the object of which the lord or the master could dispose at will.

The modern age redefines relational models and family roles, focusing on the social causality of family changes. K. Marx and Fr. Engels reveals the origin and essence of the family conceived as a form of human community including a complex of biological, social, material and spiritual relationships. They argue the appearance of the family in response to certain social requirements, thus denying its probable random development.<sup>7</sup>

The issue of family, marriage, and sexuality in the modern world can be analyzed starting from these four institutions that can be considered as sources of guidance: education, family and medicine, and religion which, historically constituted an important source of guidance for sexuality, retaining in special, the orientation towards asceticism and procreation. "Couple relationships and parenting are unique and different, so every adult needs to know the child's personality very well to meet his individualized needs."<sup>8</sup>

The regression registered by the nuclear family, regress anticipated by Toffler in the famous work, "The Third Wave", it would be explained by two theories: the first refers to the accentuation of individualistic ideals, the other to changes in the social environment (increased economic independence of women, the extension of contraceptive methods, increasing levels of education, social and demographic mobility, etc.), changes which have liberated many young people from the pressure of the conventional value system of parents and communities of origin. In the author's opinion, family breakdown is, in fact, a manifestation of the general crisis of industrialism. It is part of the cleansing of the land to create a new sociosphere, specific to the Third Wave. This process, reflected in our personal lives, is the one that changes the family system, making it unrecognizable.<sup>9</sup>

The present impossibility of finding legal solutions, regulated by the state, in order to end the aggravation of the crisis in the family domain, is also linked to the fact, that the family as an institution is reduced to one type, ignoring the multitude of its existential variants. In the psychosocial history of the family can be marked the critical moment of the significant proliferation

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<sup>7</sup> I. Mitrofan, N. Mitrofan, *Family from A to Z*, Bucharest, Scientific Editorial, 1991, p. 66 – 67, p. 16-19.

<sup>8</sup> M. C. Grigore, "Psycho-Socio-Professional Aspects of Foster Care in Romania", in *Journal of Experiential Psychotherapy*, XVII (2014), no. 4, p. 3-46.

<sup>9</sup> C. Roman, *Eternal story love*, Bucharest, Albatros, 1987, p. 88-91. Irina V. Vasenina, Valentina A. Sushko, "The Role of Religion in the Formation of the Family Values of Youth," in *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 451-459.

of family models under the sign of ever-increasing deinstitutionalization. Couples though they keep the nostalgia of definite emotional and social solidarity, aims and acts in the spirit of preserving permanent availability. We assist in the contemporaneity to an increasingly pronounced trend, of replacing legally constituted marriage, with a new family pattern, a free union, often stable and fertile over a larger number of years.<sup>10</sup> ... And yet the family exists, and its morpho-functional transformations require more than ever flexible solutions and legislative protection, transparency and comprehension, anticipatory effort and social therapy. Faced with multiple alternative repeated marriages, which submits resulted children to stress development and social integration sociopatogene significantly, a free stable and harmonious union under a climate socio-affective for a long or definitive periods, seems to be a defense reflex of couples in front of the social constraints of some traditional frames outdated, in which the individual drama of incompleteness of self through the other, has eroded in both individual expectations in relation to marriage, that triggered a psychologically war. The free union option tries to merge the dependency and identification needs with the autonomy, employing emotional involvement plenary, denying contractual aspects of the relationship and exalting it the one of freedom and plenary of manifestation on mutual measure satisfaction and genuine needs to be together. In modern couple, in search for new cohabitation patterns, it seems that the primary need for social and economic solidarity and security is overcome in intensity by the need for love, communication and valorisation of the other and self. It relapses the relationships of psychological forces in the couple, according to the principle of mutual coevolution, which expresses the reason to be together as long as the two succeed to remain not only necessary but also mutually satisfactory. In other words, the only accepted justification of the family-type union remains the mutual gratification, the honoring of the promise or the hope of being happy with and through the other.<sup>11</sup> Starting from the recognition of the need to fulfill the function of ensuring the perpetuation of human generations through reproduction by the family, today, the discussions that invade the public space lead us to reflect on family redefinition, the resizing of its functions, the need to respect traditions and the reconsideration of the theories of normal and abnormal, good versus bad values.<sup>12</sup>

### **Objectives**

A series of psychosociological researches carried out in our country showed that the option for marriage and family is still high, the cultural

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<sup>10</sup> I. Mitrofan, N. Mitrofan, *Elements of Couple Psychology*, Bucharest, Șansa, 1994, p. 225-249.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 225-249.

<sup>12</sup> S. Filaret, C. M. Floricica, *Statistics for Socio-Human Sciences*, vol. I, Constanța, Ovidius University Press, 2014, p. 45-51.

model valorizing them (Chelcea - 1986, Mitrofan - 1989, C.SUU - 1991). But, to see if the younger generation remains faithful to these principles, we conducted a survey of young intellectuals couples and student couples to learn about attitudes towards sexuality and marital motivation.

We have also insisted on the issues of sexuality, considering that this indicator is relevant to the hypotheses issued in the context of the paper and, at the same time, we wanted to observe whether the taboo of sexuality (established by the communist regime) is maintained in the context of contemporary society. We have also tried to find out the opinions, judgments, or valuations about family life, so how the family is conceived by the two partners.

### **Research hypotheses**

Based on these considerations, taking into account the characteristics specific to the traditional mentality (rigidity / conformism / intolerance), respectively the modern mentality (flexibility / nonconformity / tolerance), we have formulated three hypotheses that will underpin the practical approach.

These are:

H<sub>S1</sub>. Girls are more conformist, more intolerant than boys.

H<sub>S2</sub>. Young intellectuals couples are inclined towards non-institutionalized cohabitation.

H<sub>S3</sub>. It is expected to decrease the average age of first sexual contact and increase average age at marriage.

### **Research method**

To test these hypotheses, we used a built-in questionnaire that provides truthful information and an objective correlation between indicators, thus making it possible to know the motivations and mentalities of young couples. The instrument covered five sections: family issues, contemporary reality: which are the factors that condition the founding of a family, sexual life, and its implications in the life of the couple and the problems faced by the family in contemporary society.

### **Sample**

The group of people investigated was made up by 120 students and young intellectuals (60 couples) living together both formally and informally. Sampling was done on the basis of experience based on the researcher's experience.<sup>13</sup> 58 (48.3%) students or graduates of the humanist profile and 62 (51.6%) of the technical profile, 102 (85.0%) of them having urban residence, 18 (15.0 %) in rural areas.

## **Presentation And Interpretation Of Data**

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45-51.

Data analysis was performed for each item, depending on the frequency of occurrence of the responses.<sup>14</sup> Thus, to the question "*Generally speaking, do you think that contemporary society encourages or discourages the creation of new families?*", The answers were the following: 11 (9.1%) subjects considered encouraging, while 97 (80.8%) opted for the second option. It is noteworthy that the 11 subjects who considered that contemporary society encouraged the creation of new families belong to the urban environment, while people in rural areas chose the second variant in the corpore.

Regarding the question: "*Do you consider that, in Romania, the state currently supports the formation of new families?*", 3 (2.5%) considered that the state supports the new families and 108 (90.0%) shared the same view. Another question refers to "*Do you think there is a family policy at present in Romania?*", The answers being: 7 (5.8%) - there are 85 (70.8%) - they do not exist. These answers, of course, confirm the hypothesis of the inexistence of a family policy in Romania, but the very large percentage of subjects that support this idea must be thoughtful.

We can also point out that, out of the 11 subjects who consider that contemporary society encourages the creation of new families, none say that there is a family policy in Romania or that the state supports the formation of young families. At the same time, of the 97 subjects who said that society discourages family formation, 72 considers that there is no family policy and that the state does not support the young couples. The question: "*Do you consider that the family is a necessity for the individual?*", Presenting bipolar responses (yes / no), exemplifies, to a great extent, the mentioned risk of attracting a positive response: 86 (71.6%) responded with "yes", 17 (14.1%) answering "no". Aware of this risk, we have formulated a scaled question, and the subjects are in the situation of opting, between two variants. Thus, 39 subjects from the 41 who chose the value "1" are among the 86 who considered the family to be a necessity for the individual, 17 subjects who chose the option of non-response, answer one of the first three variants, denying the possibility considering family as a potential source of stress. If we add the values for "1" and "2", we get exactly the percentage (71.6%), which reinforces our conviction that the family is - still - highly valorized in Romania.

In fact, there is a significant correlation, the value of the gamma coefficient meaning that there is a maximum positive association between the two indicators: those who consider the family to be a necessity give it a special value, which - given their high percentage - family to be regarded as a vital condition of the individual's life itself.

From the justifications to the question: "*Why do you think the family is not a necessity?*", We remember: it can be substituted by something else

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116.

(friends, etc.); career is more important; you can handle it more easily by yourself; family functions have been taken over by other institutions.

In general, this age is considered to be higher for both sexes and the other. But for both sexes, the highest percentages occur between 24-27 years, meaning a significant increase for women and less significant for men. It is interesting to note that in the 20-23 years, the girls have a relatively high percentage compared to the boys, a situation that reverses between 28-31 years. From this perspective, the following trend is observed: men are perceived as fit for marriage from the age of 24 and women are considered to be "stigmatized" unless they marry until 28 years of age.

An important issue, which has received many connotations over the past decades, which refers to the need for coexistence of the two partners before marriage. Thus, to the question: "*Do you think it is necessary for partners to live together before marriage?*" The following answers were obtained: mandatory (24.0%); would be necessary - 59 (49.1%); not necessarily - 35 (29.1%); should not - 1 (0.8%); I do not know - 1 (0.8%). It should be noted that the sum of the first two variants is almost 70% and that 1% think that partners should not live together before marriage. However, it should not be overlooked that these are the opinions of persons already living together in a couple, the age of cohabitation being reproduced below: under one year - 34 (28.3%); 1-2 years - 36 (30.0%); 3-5 years - 40 (33.3%); over 5 years - 4 (3.3%).

Satisfaction with the current relationship is stated as follows: 61 (50.8%) subjects are very satisfied, 51 (42.5%) satisfied, 1 (0.8%) least satisfied, 1 (0.8%) satisfactory, 6 (5.0%) choosing the non-response option.

Concerning concubinage, we did not choose a question with dichotomous answer (yes / no), considering that in this way we would have "forced" the subjects to cut a response that could have been ambiguous by multiplying the number of non-responses. In view of this, we obtained the following results: 51 (42.5%) subjects agreed with the cohabitation, 50 (41.6%) subjects were partially agreed and 14 (11.6%) did not have was not at all agreed.

To get a more tedious response to "see" more clearly the options of the subjects for a lifestyle, I asked for the agreement or disagreement of the subjects regarding the free union on a scale of 1 to 4. The results are more than obvious, the balance clearly leaning towards the perpetuation of the free union.

We can also mention that, of the 18 subjects belonging to the rural environment, none of them chose "strong disagreement"; At the same time, only a quarter of them indicated that they would disagree with the statement made.

These results only show that the rural mentality is changing (vis-à-vis the traditional conception that has dominated for centuries) and is influenced

by a number of factors that only attack the perenniality of the faith in the family and in its fundamental values. Familial values are themselves put in balance, as it can be seen that only 2 subjects still consider that they will be important. Of course, this is only the concept of rural students and not of the population belonging to this environment, but the relatively rapid change in concepts about life, in general, and about family, especially (once unthinkable) we ask whether the young rural generation is still the beneficiary of a rigid and conformist socialization, or they have the right to decide on their own scale of values, according to which to direct and organize their lives.

An interesting aspect is also provided by the correlation between E1d and A10, demonstrating that people who have an age of minimum cohabitation (less than 1 year) or maximum (over 5 years) are those who value the most free union. In other words, the newly formed couples and those with a life experience in two understand better or accept the meaning of cohabitation more easily.

A question that seeks to clarify this controversial and thorny issue, the proliferation of marriage alternatives, emphasizes family values and their proliferation / non-proliferation in the future. Thus, 23 (19.1%) subjects consider that family values will be important and in the future, 68 (56.6%) subjects do not have a well-defined position and only 15 (12.5%) subjects consider it will focus on these values.

As can be seen, defining the existence or non-existence, importance or non-importance of values is a more delicate matter, which makes respondents hide behind the middle option ("might"). But it should not be forgotten that family values can be manifested either in a legalized framework or in an uninstitutionalised alternative, and the mistake made by associating the terms "concubinage" and "inexistence of values" should be eradicated because, in the end In any case, any interpersonal relationship is based on values, whether they are conscious or not.

It was necessary to make this clear because it was somewhat demanded by the situation that emerged from the research, a situation that can be highlighted by the correlation of questions E6 and A2. It is noticed that the number of those who consider that family values will no longer be important (12.5%) is roughly equal to that of those who do not regard the family as a necessity for the individual (14.1%). Similarly, those who see the family as a necessity (71.6%) consider that family values are important (75.7%).

In order to see if there really is a significant correlation between the two indicators (the need for family existence and the importance given to family values), we used the square chit () test that is 15.62. As it follows that there is a very strong correlation between the two indicators. In other words,



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It should be noted that, applying the same gamma coefficient  $\gamma$  previously explained, it does not come out anymore at the same level of high significance, but a low one that generates the following explanation: the socialization of children by different generations has little influence, insignificant, on the awareness of the importance of family values. In other words, neither the subjects (11) who lived with their grandparents had a clear option for family values nor did the subjects (46) who lived with their parents deny the importance of these values. It is, in other words, a confirmation of what is affirmed at E1d, of the fact that the young generation seeks to assert their personality, regardless of the conceptions of those who educated them, whether older or younger. Moreover, it can be observed (see Annex 14) the reduced number of those who affirmed the importance of family values, differentiated on the 4 socialization factors. We can also specify the following: the 11 subjects who lived with grandparents in childhood belong to the urban environment, and of the 18 rural subjects, 6 lived with parents and 11 with their parents and grandparents. This section also includes a series of prospective questions designed to test not just the imagination of the subject but its ability to insist on a series of trends that are, however, already profiled. The first one asked the subjects to say what would happen with the

average age at marriage in the future, the second, which would happen with the average age of the first sexual act. Responses (see Table 1) were as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of responses

| <b>Tendency</b><br><b>Age</b>           | Will increase | It will neither increase nor decrease | It will decrease | Do not know |
|---|---------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| The average age at marriage             | 69 (57,5%)    | 27 (22,5%)                            | 12 (10,0%)       | 12 (10,0%)  |
| Average age of first sexual intercourse | 4 (3,3%)      | 19 (15,8%)                            | 91 (75,8%)       | 6 (5,0%)    |

As you can see, the majority options are directed towards increasing the average age of marriage and decreasing the average age of first sexual intercourse, options coming to agree with the statements above mentioned subjects. At least until this point, the following trend is noticed: individuals begin their sexual life at an early age, adopt cohabitation for a period of time, and marry at a more advanced age, from the perspective of creating the framework necessary for the birth and education of children and mentality according to which the legalized, institutionalized family remains a necessity. The deviations from this trend are insignificant and the "accidents" that can happen on this path have neither consistency nor regularity, so they can be discussed.

To the question: "*How many children do you think it is good to have a family?*", We got the following answers: none - 0.0%; one child - 11 (9.1%); 2 children - 89 (74.1%); 3-4 children - 10 (8.3%); more than 4 children - 3 (2.5%). It is surprising that no subject wants to have no children, while there are currently people who want more than 4 children.

We can not ignore the fact that the 3 people who want more than four children belong to the urban environment and that 15 out of 18 rural subjects do not want more than 2 children. This is also a sign that the decrease in the number of descendants has become a certainty and where the problems were (not long ago) not the quality, but the quantity of wanted children.

Once we have reached this point, we will move to another section of the questionnaire, that of the problems that the founding of a family raises: the subjects were asked to hierarchize, in order of their importance, the factors responsible for the formation of a family. This was necessary for the following reason: if we present each of the factors that came out first in the hierarchy (80 - love, 2 - material conditions, 5 - sexual life, 11 - respect among partners, 19 - mutual trust, 1 - other factors), we only get a situation where we ignore the importance of other places in the hierarchy. So we give the following score: 6

points for 1st place, 5 for 2nd place, 4 for 3rd place, etc., and we will get the following scores: Love = 5.17; Mutual trust = 4.25; Partner Respect = 3,73; Sexual Life = 3.55; Material conditions = 2.36; Other factors = 1.06.

This hierarchy respects the previous one, but it is noticed that the differences between the factors are no longer so great. It captures the place occupied by "material conditions" and, above all, its score.

Also, the subjects hierarchize the reasons that would maintain marriage over time. Without calculating the scores, the 7 elected factors came out first: *because the partners love - 93 times; because both sides have made investments and can not risk changes - 3 times; because of the children - 7 times; because partners become accustomed to each other - eight times; for reasons of security and emotional affiliation - 8 times; because partners do not want to lose their prestige and social position - not once; other reasons - once;*

We can deepen the analysis of these factors by describing the answers given by subjects on some of the issues we insisted on the questionnaire. Thus, the question "Material conditions condition the founding of a family?", The answers were somewhat transient this time compared to the low score in the hierarchy (where, for example, it obtained 73 times the 5th out of 6 possible) : 65 (54.1%) subjects consider that these conditions condition the founding of the marital couple, 40 (33.3%) subjects think they have a minor influence and 13 (10.8%) subjects have no influence .

The same role was played by the question: "Do you think sexual intercourse has an important role in the couple life?", With the following results: Very important - 48 (40.0%); Important - 67 (55.8%); Not too important - 4 (3.3%); Not important - 0.0%; I do not know - 1 (0.8%).

We observe the low percentages for the last variants of response and the high value of sexuality resulting from the percentages of the first variants.

The Question: "*When You Started Sexual Life?*" opens a series of other important and deep-rooted interrogations. The responses on the five response variants are as follows: 13-15 years = 5 (4.1%); 16-18 years = 28 (23.3%); 19-21 years = 56 (46.6%); over 21 years = 25 (20.8%); no. = 6 (5.0%). These percentages may not tell us anything but, in correlation with C5 or C6, they certainly have greater relevance. By question C5, we sought to find out what the parents' position was about the subject's sexual life. Differentiated, these responses are as follows: *they insisted on having sex - 2 (1.6%); have agreed with my decision - 37 (30.8%); were indifferent - 33 (27.5%); opposed my decision - 16 (13.3%); I do not know they have sex - 32 (26.6%).*

It is noticed that over 25% of the subjects have sex without parents' knowledge and that almost 15% of the parents disagree with the sexual life of their children. We can also note that 10 of the 16 parents who opposed sexual activity had children over 19, while there were parents (3) who agreed with the sexual life of their children, even at the age of 13 -15 years. Also, 21

out of 33 parents are indifferent to the sexual relationships their children have over 19 years of age.

An interesting association can be made between answers about the parents' position regarding the sexual life of their children and the existence of premarital sex relationships. Thus, applying the same gamma coefficient presented above, a correlation coefficient equal to (-0.65) was obtained, meaning a significant negative association between the two factors. In other words, the more parents have an attitude of indifference or, worse, of resistance to sexual relations, the more the children tend to agree and have a premarital sexual life. Also, 17 out of 18 rural subjects agree to pre-marital sex and only 3 of the 108 urban subjects do not accept this situation. However, these figures should not impress us too much if we take into account that they come from persons who have a premarital sex life.

The question: "*What are your relationships with your parents?*" Comes to bring a clearer light on previous concerns. The subjects responded to the following variants: *understanding, harmony* - 82 (68.3%); *indifference* - 15 (12.5%); *tense relationships* - 16 (13.3%); *no.* - 7 (5.8%). It is significant that the percentage of those who have tense relationships with parents is the same as the number of parents who disagree with the maintenance of sexual intercourse by their children.

Equally important is the subjects' answer to the question of identifying the nature of parental relationships, such as: *understanding, harmony* - 62 (51.6%); *indifference* - 2 (1.6%); *occasional conflicts* - 38 (31.6%); *permanent conflicts* - 10 (8.3%); *splitting in fact* - 2 (1.6%); *do not know* - 6 (5.0%). It is noticed that the highest percentages met "understanding" and "occasional conflicts", the indifference relations being almost non-existent.

An important question in this section refers to the acceptance / non-acceptance of extraconjugal relationships, because through it it is possible to check the consistency of statements made by the subjects, it can test the ability of individuals to accept or not, a phenomenon sometimes responsible for the disintegration of even the most stable couples: 21 (17.5%) subjects agree with extraconjugal relationships, 80 (66.6%) subjects disagree and 19 (15.8%) subjects choose the path of non-response. These figures tell us that the number of those who accept extramarital relationships is relatively small, and roughly equal to the one that indicates that the family is not a necessity for the individual. He also approaches the percentage of those who deny the importance of family values. However, it should not be ignored that this percentage (17.5%) accounts for less than half of those who play a very important role in sexual relations or those who agree with concubinage. We say this so that no more often mistakes can be made between the existence of concubinage and extraconjugal relationships, or between the latter and the fact that the individual greatly valorizes sexual activity.

Regarding the causes of extraconjugal relationships, we can make the following assessments:

1. The "dissatisfaction of sexual life within the family" is considered to be the most important reason for the emergence of extra-marital relationships, 101 (84.1%) of whom are supported by this finding.

2. "Sexual dysfunctions that may occur" (pregnancy, illness, etc.) are not considered legitimate or justifiable in the appearance of extraconjugal relationships, representing the opinion of 89 (74.1%) subjects.

3. "Exceeding the marital boredom" is insignificant, because the opinions are divided: 64 (53.3%) subjects consider it responsible for extramarital relations, 56 (46.6%) subjects, no.

4. The other causes ("satisfaction of curiosity", "finding new sources of excitement", "form of punishment of the partner") are generally disapproved but their share is quite important (42.5%, 30.8 %, 36.6%).

The statement, "Ending sexual life leads to dismemberment of the couple" tries to see how far this obsessiveness of sex goes. Responses are: strong agreement = 14 (11.6%); agreement = 31 (25.8%); disagreement = 56 (46.6%); strong disagreement = 19 (15.8%).

Differentiated on gender, it can be seen that the number of male students agreeing with the assertion made (23) is equal with the female students and, implicitly, the number of those who do not agree with that statement is equal. (37) The responses show that the number of those who believe that sexual life maintains the couple over time is the same as the number of those who see the end of sexual life the main cause of dismembering the couple. On the other hand, individuals accept faster the way of extraconjugal relationships (17.5%) than breaking a sexual dysfunctional relationship (15.8%). Concerning the relationship between the termination of sexual life in a couple and the emergence of extraconjugal relationships, a weakly correlated ( $r = 0.18$ ) was obtained, which means that the termination of sexual life in a couple is not associated with the emergence of extramarital relationships.

An important place is dealing with divorce issues. From this perspective, "*In the case of misunderstandings, do you think it is good to divorce or not?*" Was to find out whether people's mentality about this phenomenon has changed and whether the social stigma associated with divorce has decreased. Subjects' responses confirm our expectations, since 40 (33.3%) subjects agree with divorce, 53 (44.1%) subjects, not 27 (22.5%) avoid a transient response . This attitude may also be the result of nonconformist behaviors, since 100 (83.3%) consider divorce to be a sign of decadence, only 9 (7.5%) of them claiming the opposite.

Interestingly, there are reasons why divorce is not right: misunderstandings can not be a real reason for divorce because there are no couples that are not affected by misunderstandings; time and patience can

solve the problems that have arisen; only weak characters choose this solution; it would mean to give up too easily the person you loved and whom you may still love; involves money and time and opposes God's desire. It should also be noted that 47 (39.1%) subjects hope in a favorable context for children in this situation, but none believe they will not suffer.

### **Conclusions**

Reiterating the milestones that underpin the horizons that are opening up to this millennial institution, we ask: Can we talk about a marital couple's agony? Does it continue to be an oasis of stability in the midst of an aggressive and neurotic world? These are just some of the questions that generated this paper. The answer is difficult to give. What we have pursued is not the present, but the future in the medium and short term of the couple's relationship, and considering that the younger generation assimilates and even imposes the fastest pace of change, we have turned our attention to couples of young people intellectuals and students trying to analyze the trends that are here. Following the data processing and interpretation of the results, the assumptions made in the case study contained in this chapter have been confirmed. The following conclusions are outlined:

1. Despite the fact that the family is still a necessity for the individual, being still highly valued and regarded as a vital condition of the individual's own life (including in the form of the traditional cultural model), couples of young intellectuals and students are in a moment of confusion, their choice not clearly referring to a particular lifestyle (marriage or cohabitation).

2. The young generation is more flexible and non-conformist. As such, it agrees with premarital sex relationships and has become accustomed to extramarital sexual relationships as a possible "alternative to couple life." However, it does not seem to be firmly in favor of a cohabitation in the free union and opposes the brutal dissolution of already consolidated relations, the girls being more intolerant and more conformist in this respect than the boys.

3. The trends that are outlined are as follows: increasing the average age of marriage and decreasing the average age of the first sexual act.

4. The concubinage is preferred in a first stage, and after a period of time (which tends to grow), the traditional family institution is sought and valued. It is worth noting the following: individuals start their sexual life at an early age, adopt concubinage, at least for a period of time, and marry at a younger age, with a view to creating the necessary framework for the birth and education of children.

5. Couples who are just constituted and those with experience of life in two, better understand or accept the meaning of concubinage more easily. They perceive the family as a necessity, considering that family values are a necessity and will remain important in the future as well.

6. In the same vein, emancipation of women is seen as the main reason for the emergence of alternative marriage models (free union) and the adoption of a cohabitation between married partners for a certain period of time.

7. Regarding the number of children wanted, no subject answered that they did not want followers, but it was confirmed that the decrease in the number of descendants is a reality that will keep its current trend in the near future.

8. It was revealed that among the factors that lead to the founding of a family, the first place was love (also referred to as the main "ingredient" that can lead to the couple's resistance in time), followed by the respect between the partners, then the life sexual and other factors.

9. The important role played by sexual relations in the life of the couple was also confirmed. Regarding the optimal age of onset of sexual life, respondents consider that the majority of boys have to begin their sexual life at a younger age than the girls, the general tendency being at the same time reducing the age of the first sexual act both at girls and boys.

10. The answers obtained largely reassert the importance and role of sexuality in both premarital and marital relationships, also explaining the decrease in the age of the onset of sexual life. Contemporary society has triggered an almost obsessive concern for sexuality issues, sexual satisfaction becoming a desire of most individuals. Moreover, the simple practice of sexual life no longer seems sufficient. Important issues have now become issues related to achieving orgasm, increasing sexual satisfaction. There is a gradual shift from the model perimeter of social conformism to a hedonistic perception of the couple's relationship

11. Sexual satisfaction is seen as the main reason for extra-conjugal relationships, although most of the questioned subjects have shown themselves against the practice of this type of relationship. Even the termination of sexual life can lead to the dismemberment of the couple, the divorce no longer seen as a sign of decadence. Synthesizing that sexual life keeps the couple together over time and that the termination of sexual life would be the main cause of disengagement of the couple, the end of sexual life in a couple is not directly associated with the emergence of extramarital relationships.

12. The results also highlighted the fact that there are no significant differences in gender or geographic determinants, but there are differentiations depending on the background environment: thus the rural area continues to have a more conservative position compared to the urban one, which is more responsive to change and more flexible.

13. Socialization of children by different generations has an insignificant importance on the awareness of the importance of family values, the young

generation, seeking to assert their personality, regardless of the conceptions of those who educated them.

The ways of knowing and understanding the importance of the family for man and society are, although sometimes unknown, not at all banal and always exciting, enriching their teachings, especially young consciences. The family is indeed a cell of society, but so complex that equating to monotony the data would amount to a brutalization of its significant truths. Changes in the education system with strong reverberations at the level of all the components of society generate the guiding and decisive line for moving to a new type of society. Nevertheless, the present paper has proposed and, I hope, has managed to throw some light on the exciting phenomenon of the couple's life.