

# CONTEMPORARY FAMILY PATTERNS IN BIHOR COUNTY

Floare Chipea<sup>1</sup>

University of Oradea

Sorana Săveanu

University of Oradea

Raluca Buhaș

University of Oradea

**Abstract.** This study aims a descriptive presentation of the specific characteristics of the family group of contemporary society in Bihor County, by highlighting the marital and reproductive behavior. The data analyzed were derived from a survey conducted in 2012 on a sample of 1080 subjects. The results are in accordance with literature and other research conducted and they capture the increasing enrollment of contemporary family in the trend of post-modernism. Current couple relationship differ from those characteristic of traditional societies and by analyzing the process of partner choice, where the emphasis is on the individual cognitive-emotional satisfaction generated from partner selection based on socio-cultural homogeneity and axiological similarity. However, in some aspects, the individuals still experience a high degree of attachment to certain traditional social norms and values on the composition and dynamics of family life.

**Keywords:** family pattern, family of origin, procreation family, human mate selection process, post-modernism.

## Introduction

Family Group dynamics has been and will always be subject to continuous changes and transformations manifested within society. From this point of view, the traditional family characteristics are found decreasingly in the contemporary marital unions. Even the definition of family in the literature must be constantly revised due to changes in specific functions and modern and post-modern family.

---

<sup>1</sup> **Author address:** University of Oradea, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Universităţii Street, no.1, 410087, Oradea, Romania. **E-mail:** [fchipea@gmail.com](mailto:fchipea@gmail.com)

Although the scientific world's widely shared view is that the family is the natural and fundamental group of the society, a specific form of association of individuals, which includes among many other forms designed by the generic term of society, we won't meet a unique conception of the family, there isn't just one way of approach. Any of the synthetic definitions are limited because they leave out a lot of cases found in real life. For this reason it is preferable to discuss the definition of the family by presenting the characteristics of its functions, in the detriment of concern for its definition. Therefore, the family "the form of human community, a primary group, with all its characteristics, which differs from other primary groups by some specific notes: connects members (people) through the relationship of marriage, consanguinity or adoption; usually family members live together, forming a single household; common economical activity; its members are bound by certain biological relations, maintaining and perpetuating given society culture; they assist in the emotional-affective roles interacting in the roles of husband-wife, mother-son, mother-father etc.; under state and law, the group is based on certain rules, set out in official documents"(Chipea, 2001, pp. 24-25).

In this context, we believe that a scientific analysis overview of contemporary family patterns in our society is of central importance. The inventory of current family structure provides a clear picture of conjugal unions and it facilitates the capturing of evolutionary trends in this direction. This article focuses on capturing and describing marital and reproductive behaviors, discussing the main characteristic in this respect, as well as family structure, legalizing the couple relationship, number of children. In parallel, the process of social reproduction is analyzed within the family group by imitating the pattern of the origin family in the procreation family, but also in the choice of partner process, a phenomenon that meets new ways of emerging in the post-modern society.

### **Contemporary family. Current demographic and social configurations**

The emergence of modern family held concurrently with the proliferation process of industrialization and urban development (Smith, 2009; Vlăsceanu, 2011; Segalen, 2011), the characteristic family group of modern and postmodern society is the nuclear type, consisting of two spouses and their descendants (Iluț, 2005). Crossing the society towards modernity and postmodernity generated a series of changes in the family group, both on the functions that the family owns and on marital and reproductive behaviors. In this respect, comparative research on European family revealed a number of common transformations in marital behavior as follows: desecration of marriage; reducing economic motives for marriage by the free choice marriage, based on the feeling of love between partners; equalization of economic trends and professional positions of the partners at the time of marriage; diminution or disappearance of the role of parents and relatives in the marriage of young people; declining rates of marriage, especially after the 60s of the twentieth century; affecting birth rates by lower marriage rates, and due to other factors, particularly by discovering the contraceptive pill and the emergence of family planning; the relative decline of the nuclear family based on marriage, in favor of alternative forms of family life; increase of social tolerance towards new forms of

cohabitation; unmarried couples extension (Chișea, 2001; Vlăsceanu, 2011 Iluț, 2005; Smith, 2009).

Although the effects of postmodernism on marital behavior are undeniable, the data captured at the socio-demographic indicates that "the institution of marriage has remained attractive for the Romanian population, compared to most other European populations" (Rotariu et al., 2012 p. 126). Although the value of national marriage rate is higher than those recorded in many European countries, this demographic indicator falls, however, a downward trend in our country. Thus, in 2010 the marriage rate drops to 5.4 ‰ compared to that recorded in 2005 by 6.6 ‰ (World Economy in Figures, 2011). In 2005 the European Union marriages recorded just 4.88 / 1.000 inhabitants, compared to 1994 when the figure was 5.31 ‰ (Smith, 2009).

Although the emphasis given to the institution of marriage in Romania is significant, the individual choices and degree of satisfaction and comfort felt by partners on the relationship imposes certain directions and characteristics in family life. In this respect, more and more cases, the existence and functioning of contemporary family is not legally regulated; couples prefer cohabitation consensual unions. From this point of view, Romania's trend line is highlighted at international and European level, the number of couples who are in consensual unions are reaching values of 5.5% in 2009, a percentage higher than those recorded in other European countries (Smith, 2010). Studies conducted argue that the explanation of the development of this social phenomenon is found mainly in the low level of trust that people give to marriage and the manifestation of individualism becoming more pronounced (Casper, 2007).

Together with diminished marriage rates it is highlighted a diminished birthrate as well in the contemporary European society as a whole. In this respect, Romania has one of the lowest birth rates in Europe - 1.3 children / woman, with declining trends (Popescu, 2009). The factors that have generated changes in the reproductive behavior are not identical in all states, as changes are not the same, neither in scope nor in content. In European countries and European culture it is found that, in terms of reproductive behavior, the transition from traditional to modern family meant a reduction in family size, a positive assessment of families with 1-2 children compared to those with a large number of children. In justifying their reproductive behavior, couples often invoke the following reasons: the need and desire to achieve primarily professionally, fear induced by the responsibility of being a parent, desire to have a greater degree of independence, and so on (Zamfir & Vlăsceanu, 1998). In many ways, providing an appropriate socio-economic framework - underdeveloped in some former communist countries such as Romania, would help young couples change their attitudes towards reproductive process.

Although the emphasis given to the institution of marriage in Romania is significant individual choices and degree of satisfaction and comfort felt by partners on the relationship imposes certain directions and torque characteristics

and family life. In this respect, more and more cases, the existence and functioning of contemporary family is not legally regulated; couples in marital cohabitation prefer. From this point of view, Romania's trend line is highlighted at international and European level, the number of couples who are in marital reaching values of 5.5% in 2009, a percentage higher than those recorded in other European countries (Smith, 2010). Studies conducted argue that the development of this social phenomenon explanation is found mainly in the low level of trust that people given the manifestation of individualism marriage and becoming more pronounced (Casper, 2007).

Marriage rates diminish highlights a train down and in terms birthrate contemporary European society as a whole. In this respect, Romania has one of the lowest birth rates in Europe - 1.3 children / woman, with declining trends (Smith, 2009). Factors that have generated changes in reproductive behavior are not identical in all states, the changes are not the same, neither in scope nor in content. In European countries and European culture is found that, in terms of reproductive behavior, the transition from traditional to modern family meant a reduction in family size, a positive assessment of families with 1-2 children compared to those with a large number of children. In justifying their reproductive behavior, couples often invoke the following reasons: the need and desire to achieve primarily professionally, fear induced by the responsibility of being a parent, desire to have a greater degree of independence, and so on (Zamfir & Vlăsceanu, 1998). In many ways, providing a framework appropriate socio-economic - underdeveloped in some former communist countries such as Romania, would help young couples changing attitudes towards reproductive process.

There are a number of factors that determine different attitudes towards traditional perspectives on reproductive behavior of couples: increasing emancipation of women affects the fertility as women's outside of family roles offer alternatives to childbearing and rearing; high level of education of women is able to contribute decisively to the formation of an attitude of relative opposition to women's traditional role of housewife and child care-taker; the urbanization process allows the development of a certain mentality that favors small reproductive behavior (studies show that a higher rate of birth is typical for rural areas); age at marriage, especially for the wife; dynamics of family functions in the sense of taking over some of the relations between society and changes in family group members and so on (Chipea, 2001; Segalen, 2011).

Beyond these general trends, isn't less true that in the reproductive behavior of families interfere the internal factors, which are related to the specifics of each family such as: the nature of the relationship between the married couple; couple's ideology; relations parents - children; relationship between the nuclear family and related family. Therefore the explanation of a certain demographic behavior should take into account the socio-economic factors, somewhat outside the family, including demographic policy promoted in the community under review, but

equally important is to know how families, couples perceive the influence of these factors, the way they give value, thus adopting a certain proactive behavior.

Another negative effect generated by post-modernism on the family group is found in rates of increasingly high divorce. Divorce is a psycho-social and complex legal phenomenon, it is a final form of dissolution of conjugal life, with strong effects on marriage partners and their descendants. It is actually the last step in a process of erosion and dissolution of the family couple.

Although the trend is growing, in terms of the divorce rate, Romanian contemporary society proves to be conservative, preserving the traditional core values (Chișea, 2010), recording very low rates of divorce compared to other European countries: 1.5 % inhabitants in 2010 (World Economy in Figures, 2011). Thus, almost half of all marriages end in divorce in the European Union: Belgium 71% of married couples fall apart, in Austria 66%, while the opposite is Irish and Italians where only 17-18% of marriages end in court (Eurostat, 2008). In many European countries, divorce was not allowed under current legislation, a long time (e.g. Ireland, Italy, England). At present, there are three European countries that do not allow legal divorce in any circumstances.

Among the causes of divorce we can point out: women's economic empowerment; democratization and liberalization of social life as a whole, along with decreasing power of constraint of traditions and diminishing social control over marital and reproductive behaviors; growth of life expectancy of individuals; emergence and maintenance of demographic imbalances between the number of women and men in a given community, where the bachelors who do not marry exert some pressure on already established couples, and so on (Vlăsceanu, 2011; Chișea, 2001; Iluț, 2005; Segalen, 2011).

### **Social reproduction within the family group**

Along with the role that socio-cultural and psychological factors have in the development of a certain type of marital and reproductive behavior, the structure and pattern of the family of origin largely influences the manifestation of these social phenomena: people coming from families with many children (a high number of siblings) tend to have a high number of children in return (Ben-Porath, 1975; Thornton, 1980). Individuals tend to replicate the pattern of their family of origin within their own family (family of procreation); their attitudes towards marital and reproductive behavior are shaped accordingly to the social values inoculated by education and primary socialization (Knox & Schacht, 2010; Chișea & Buhaș, 2012).

Some studies have outlined a significant relation between the number of siblings (structural element of the family of origin) and the number of desired children (structural element of the family of procreation); thus, reproductive behaviors tend to perpetuate between generations (Chișea & Buhaș, 2012). Therefore, we state that the phenomenon of social reproduction is manifesting within the family group.

## Determinants of human mate selection process

Social transformations generated by contemporary postmodern society regarding the features of the family have and impact also on the process of choosing a romantic partner. Compared to traditional society, these elective principles are changed within the new social environment. Initially, the choice of a partner was a collective social process, where only financial, political or social interests counted, while emotional-affective aspects were excluded. Currently, partner selection is an individual process and personal interests and the achievement of a high degree of emotional satisfaction are fundamental (Chipea, 2001).

Researchers have identified two main directions of change within human mate selection process:

- a) the choice is made individually, and people feel free to choose according to their own standards; thus, the direct intervention of society is excluded from this elective process
- b) the choice is made mainly based on emotional-affective needs, other elective principles and material needs having a secondary role; W. Goode called this trend "the syndrome of romantic love" (Goode, 1970, apud. Chipea, 2001).

The human mate selection process manifests differently depending on the key elements underlying the individual decision. In general, people tend to develop relationships and form families with similar partners in terms of socio-cultural features (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2009). Thus, people search for similarity of race, ethnicity, religion, education, age or area of residence, based on social homogamy. Similarity favor homogamy marital unions; these couples register the highest values in the total number of marriages (Iluț, 2005). The elective process based on homogamy is the most common in the contemporary society and might be multi-criterial.

Sociocultural homogamy is doubled by axiological and value similarity. People tend to interact and connect with other members of society similar in terms of value, or cognitive and normative behaviors. Also, similarity manifests also in relation to personality traits and value systems. Families and couples founded by similar partners in terms of personality, mental and axiological systems have a higher rate of stability and marital satisfaction (Caspi & Herbener, 1990, apud. Stephens Brehm et al., 2001; Salánki, 2004).

Being almost always complementary to socio-cultural similarity, spatial proximity principle intervenes decisively in shaping human mate selection process. Romanian studies in this regard confirm the importance of spatial and geographic homogamy in choosing a life partner (Luceș, 2010), being consistent with the results achieved at European level. Spatial proximity principle is manifested especially in the rural environment, while in urban societies social proximity (networks of friends, relations) plays a much more important role in the selection of a marital partner.

## Contemporary family models in Bihor

### *Aim and objectives*

The paper aims to outline the image of modern family in contemporary society in Bihor County, by presenting socio-demographic characteristics and marital and reproductive behaviors. Our study has the following research objectives:

1. Description of family models in Bihor County
2. Analysis of the process of choosing the marital partner.

The data shown represent the results obtained from a survey conducted in Bihor County, between October and November of 2012. The study aims to identify family models in the sample, following both the features found in the family of origin and those of the subject's own family, and also capturing the main criteria for choosing their partners.

According to the scientific literature and our research objectives developed above, we advance the following empirical hypotheses:

1. Contemporary family in Bihor County presents characteristics of the modern family: small number of children, strong trend toward cohabitation instead of the legalization of the relationship, the choice of partner is based on socio-cultural similarity.
2. Within the family group social reproduction takes place by imitating the family of origin model in their own family (of procreation).

### *Sample structure*

The results presented below are obtained from a survey conducted in Bihar, on a sample of 1080 subjects aged over 18 years. The subjects of investigation were chosen using a stratified random selection. Stratification was performed according to the region of residence and size of locality. Were applied also restrictions on the choice of subjects by age, sex and occupation. Data were collected in November 2012 through face-to-face interviews and the selection of households was achieved by random route method.

The sample includes 52% females and 48% men, with an average age of 46.4 years. Regarding the residence environment, 53% subjects are from rural areas, while 47% come from urban areas. 75.5% are Romanians, 20.7% are Hungarians, Roma are 1.7% and 2.1% are from another ethnic group.

Regarding the level of education and occupational status, the data is as it follows:

**Table 1.** *The distribution of subjects according to their instruction level*

<b>Instruction level</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>	<b>%</b>
Without school, max 8 classes	206	19.5
Professional school, 10 classes	279	26.4
11-12 classes, Baccalaureate	350	33.1
Higher education	222	21.0

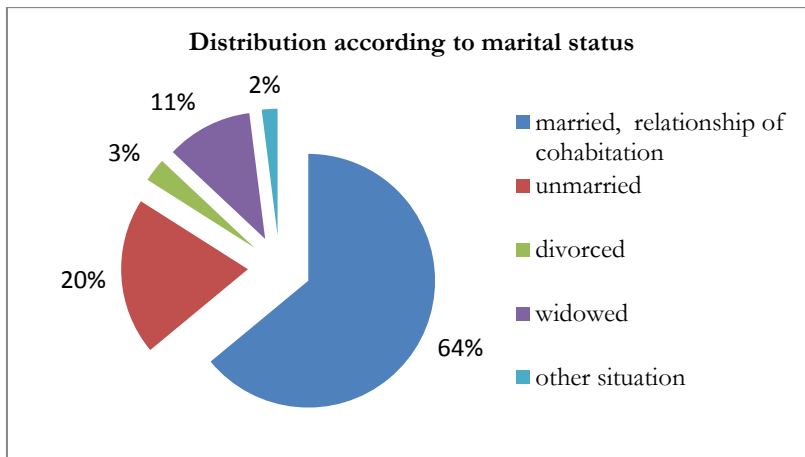
We can see that the highest proportion (33%) was found in the case of subjects with an average level of education, having completed high school with or without obtaining the baccalaureate. However, the percentage of those who say they have a higher education diploma is relatively high - 21%.

Regarding the occupational status, high proportions we recorded in the case of people who are retired (30%) or workers (about 29%). The most underrepresented occupational categories are those specific to rural environment (farmers, self-employed - 1.4%) and those that involve entrepreneurial initiative - 1.7% managers/entrepreneurs.

**Table 2.** *The distribution of subjects according to their occupational status*

Occupational status	Number of cases	%
Worker	298	28.7
Clerk with secondary education	42	4.0
Clerk with higher education	65	6.3
Manager, entrepreneur	18	1.7
Farmer, self-employed	15	1.4
Unemployed	87	8.4
Retired	315	30.3
Another occupation	198	19.1

From the research objectives perspective, we note that the sample includes 64% of people who are married or in a relationship of cohabitation, while 20% of respondents are single, 11% are widowed, and 3% are divorced.

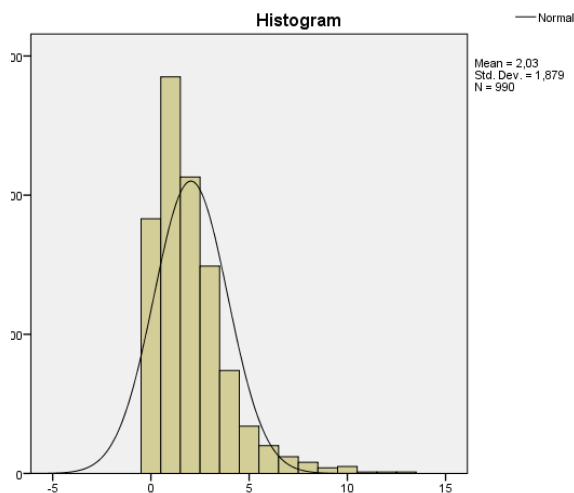


**Figure 1.** *Marital status*



### *Parental models of the family of origin*

Subjects included in the study come from families with an average of 2.03 brothers and the median has a value of 2.00. The data is shown in the chart below.



**Figure 2.** *The number of brothers (How many brothers and sisters do you have?)*

With reference to previous generations of subject's family, it is noted that the number of brothers of parents and grandparents have higher values, with the mean value over 3. In the first generation, the average number of children is around 3.5, the second generation (subjects' parents) the average number is 3, and then in the third generation (subject's own family) the number decreases 2. These results suggest that the evolution of family structure recorded a downward trend regarding the number of family members. This is also shown by a comparison made by looking at the reproductive behavior of subjects. Thus, the results presented in the following sections indicate that in the subject's own family, the average number of children complies with the downward trend, with an average value of 1.6. In other words, the contemporary family in Bihor County follows the postmodern pattern of family structure, characterized among others by low birth rates.

**Table 3.** *The average number of siblings in the family of origin*

	<b>Average number of siblings</b>
Mother's brothers	3.01
Father's brothers	3.13
Brothers of grandparents from the mother side	3.60
Brothers of grandparents from the father side	3.73

Parental models for the family of origin find correspondence subjects' own family. The data presented in the table below shows that the average number of subjects' siblings is higher for those who have already established their own family. Thus, we advance the hypothesis that those who come from large families (with many children) tend to get married, reproducing in this way parents' marital behavior. In the case of the number of siblings from previous generations we registered also higher values for subjects who are married or widowed.

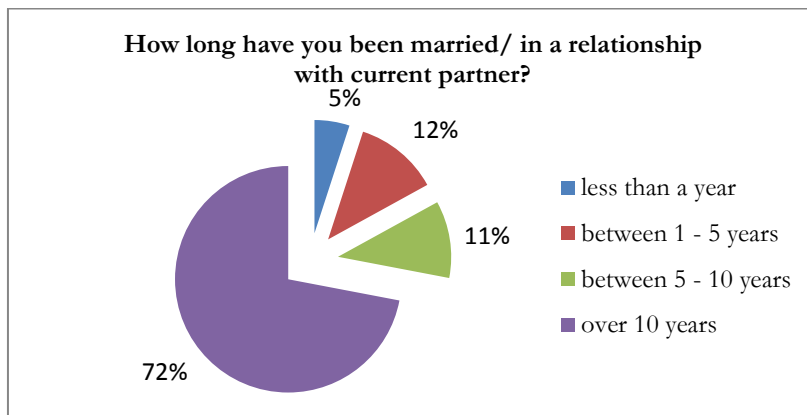
**Table 4.** *The relationship between the number of brothers and marital status of subjects*

Number of brothers	Marital status			
	Unmarried	Married, cohabitation	Divorced	Widowed
of subject	1.6	2.1	1.5	2.4
of mother	2.4	2.8	2.7	3.1
of father	2.3	2.9	3.0	3.2
of grandparents from the mother side	2.3	3.4	2.6	2.6
of grandparents from the father side	2.8	3.3	2.9	3.1

### ***Parental models of own family***

In the following we will present the relations between marital and reproductive behaviors and different individual characteristics of subjects such as age, gender, ethnicity, residence, duration of the relationship.

**Marital behavior.** According to the above statement, in the sample of subjects included 64% married subjects, 20% are unmarried, and the rest are divorced or widowed. Among those who are married or in a cohabiting relationships, 72% have a relationship older than 10 years, suggesting that there is a tendency to be involved in a stable, long-lasting, couple relationship.



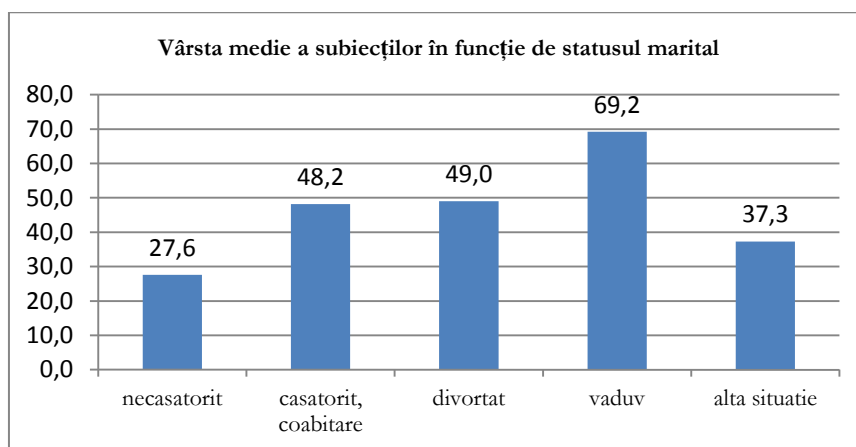
**Figure 3.** *The lasting of the relationship*

The data is significant in terms of the relationship between marital status and gender of the subjects (Chi Square 65.5; df 4;  $p=.000$ ). So, in the case of men there are more unmarried persons (55%), but also married, and for women are married, we registered higher number for divorced or widowed. We can explain this situation referring to a demographic issue: according to international and national statistics, the average life expectancy is higher for women than for men. Therefore, widowhood is characteristic primarily for female persons (value obtained for this sample is 85%). We notice a high percentage (almost 70%) of women who declare themselves divorced. These values can be explained by one of the most common causes of divorce, namely social and financial empowerment of modern women, characteristic that manifests itself increasingly in the context of contemporary Romanian society.

**Table 5.** *The relationship between marital status and gender*

Marital status	Female	Male
married, relationship of cohabitation	44.9%	55.1%
unmarried	46.9%	53.1%
divorced	69.7%	30.3%
widowed	85.6%	14.4%
other situation	61.1%	38.9%
TOTAL	51.8%	48.2%

The analysis conducted on subjects age indicates that young people are usually unmarried, while widowed is likely to be higher for people with an average age of 69 years. The average age of those who were married or previously married is 48-49 years.



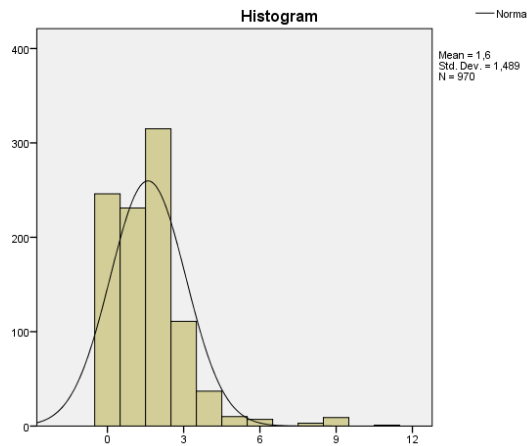
**Figure 4.** *The relationship between age and marital status*

The analysis shows no significant differences for subjects' marital status according to their residence environment. However, we observe that married people are more from rural area, and unmarried persons (52.5%) or divorced (almost 60%) are more in urban areas. These values highlights once again that the family from Bihor County group follows the trend of modernism and postmodernism; traditional values and norms with impact on couples' relationship no longer exerts the same influence on individuals as in traditional society.

**Table 6.** *The relationship between the residence environment and marital status*

Marital status	Rural	Urban
married, relationship of cohabitation	47.5%	52.5%
unmarried	55.5%	44.5%
divorced	41.2%	58.8%
widowed	50.4%	49.6%
other situation	61.1%	38.9%
TOTAL	53.0%	47.0%

**Reproductive behavior.** The data presented below refer to the characteristics of reproductive behavior and the attitudes towards it. The average number of children in the sample is 1.6, while the median value is 2.00 children. The difference is not significant regarding subjects' gender. For women, the average number of children is 1.7, and the average value for males is 1.5 children.

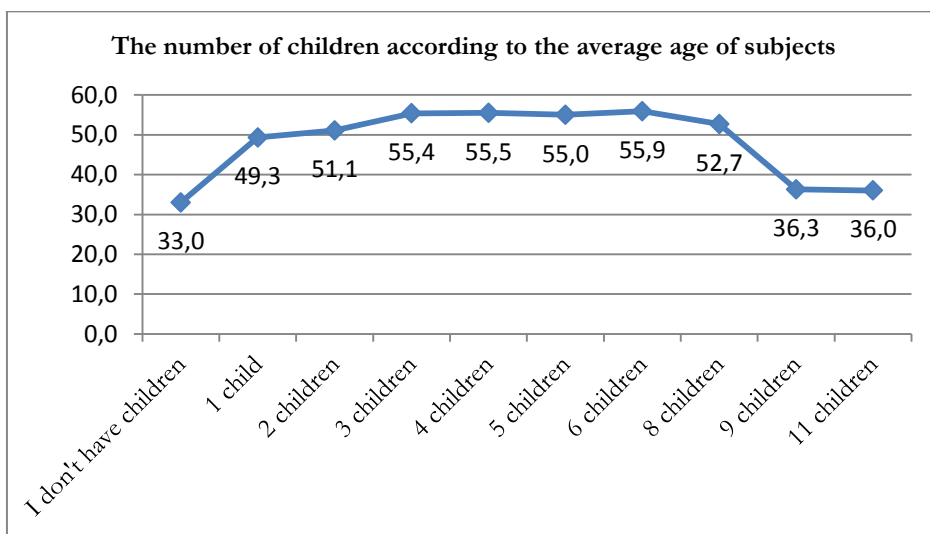


**Figure 5.** *Number of children (How many children do you have?)*

The mean values obtained for the subjects' marital status shows higher number of children registered for married persons (1.9 children) compared with the number of 0.5 children obtained for unmarried persons. In the case of divorced or widowed persons, this value is 1.8 children. Therefore, reproductive behavior characteristic to families in Bihor County follow the traditional rules of

expression, meaning that the decision to have children is dependent on the family legal framework.

The average number of children is positively correlated with the subject's age (Pearson correlation = 316;  $p=.000$ ). The average number of children is higher as age increases: young people do not have children, and adults have a higher number of children. However, the data indicates a difference regarding large families. In this case, data from our study show a smaller mean value for age.



**Figure 6.** *The relationship between the number of children and the age of subjects*

Results indicate significant differences in terms of subjects' ethnicity, the average number of children in the case of Romanians was 1.5, while for Hungarians the mean value is 1.7, and for the Roma is 2.7. Data points out that Roma enrol in procreation behavior differently than other ethnicities found at national level: the average number of children for Roma population is significantly higher than the values recorded for other ethnicities.

Reproductive behavior shows different facets of manifestation depending on the residence environment. The average number of children for subjects from rural areas is significantly higher than the average number of children for subjects from urban areas ( $t = 4.40$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In other words, individuals in rural areas have more children than those in urban areas, data supported by the literature as well (Zamfir & Vlăsceanu, 1998).

**Table 7.** *The relationship between the number of children and the residence environment*

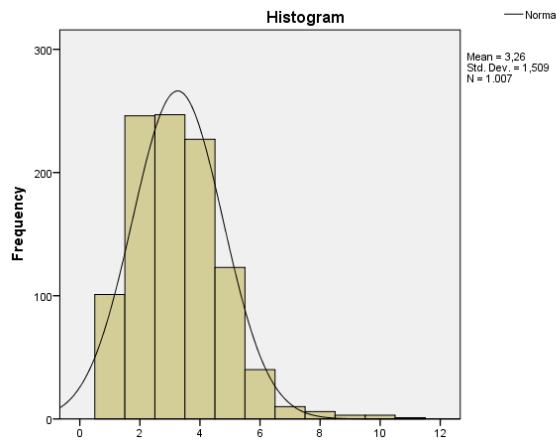
residence environment	Average number of children
Rural	1.79
Urban	1.38

Regarding the correlation between patterns found in the family of origin and their own family, confirm previous statements that the number of children in subjects' own family is correlated with the number of children in families from previous generations. In other words, subjects keep family patterns that they had in their families of origin, thus achieving social reproduction of the family of origin structure. In this case we can talk about intergenerational social reproduction.

**Table 8.** *The correlation between the number of children and number of siblings*

Number of siblings	Correlation Pearson	p	N
of subject	.225**	.000	933
of mother	.152**	.000	786
of father	.136**	.000	771
of grandparents from the mother side	.143*	.020	266
of grandparents from the father side	.164**	.000	255

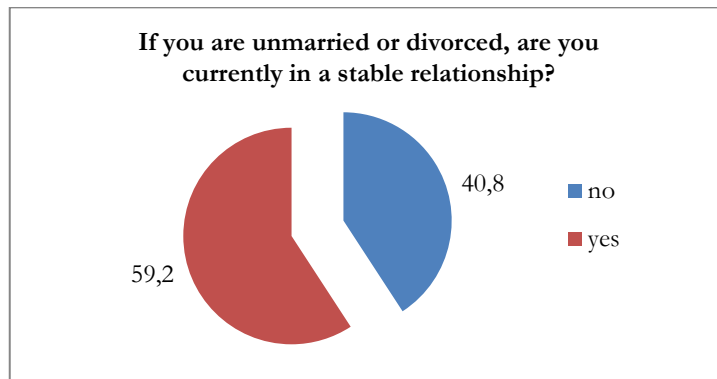
Analyzing the structure of Bihor County households in the sample, we register an mean value of 3.26 for the number of household members, while the median value is 3.00 members/household. Therefore, the average number of members belonging to rural households (3.46 members) is significantly higher than the members belonging to households in urban areas (3.04 members). In other words, rural households are larger than those from the cities. The explanatory framework of this situation can be defined in two aspects: first of all, higher mean value of children in rural areas than in urban areas leads to larger family size in rural area; Secondly, rural areas prone to several generations living together in the same household (often a household of three generations - grandparents, parents, children).



**Figure 7.** *Number of persons in household (How many members are in the household?)*

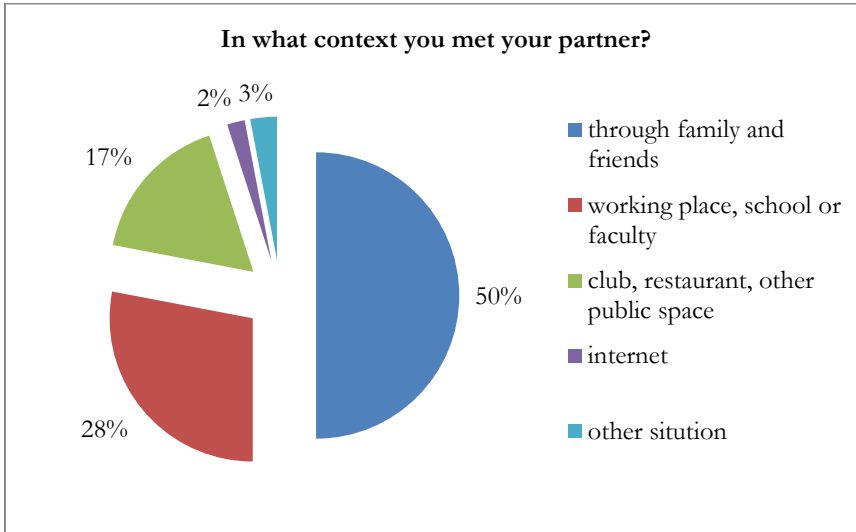
### *The choice of marital partner*

The analysis carried out in the section below follows the second research objective, namely the identification and presentation of the process regarding the selection of marital partner. In the sample there are 59% people who are involved in a stable relationship. Therefore, the attitude towards marital behavior is positive. In other words, the majority of subjects tend to develop and maintain long-lasting relationships, at the expense of passing relationships.



**Figure 8.** *Distribution of subjects involved in stable relationship*

The analysis of the process of choosing the marital partner indicates a tendency to resort to classic/traditional ways through which they can make contact with a potential marriage partner. Thus, most of the respondents declare that they had known the couple partner through family or other acquaintances (50%). The place of their professional activity also facilitates choosing their partners, 28% of subjects are registered in this category. Our data confirm the importance of spatial proximity as a criterion for choosing the marital partners. Postmodern society is characterized by a shift of emphasis on traditional means of selection of partner: traditional ways (family, friends and acquaintances) tend to diminish their importance, giving space to new elective methods promoted through online social networks (Buhaș, 2013). In the analyzed sample, we can notify subjects' opening to these new ways of human interaction and development of a couple relationship, 2% of respondents stating that they had known their partner via Internet.

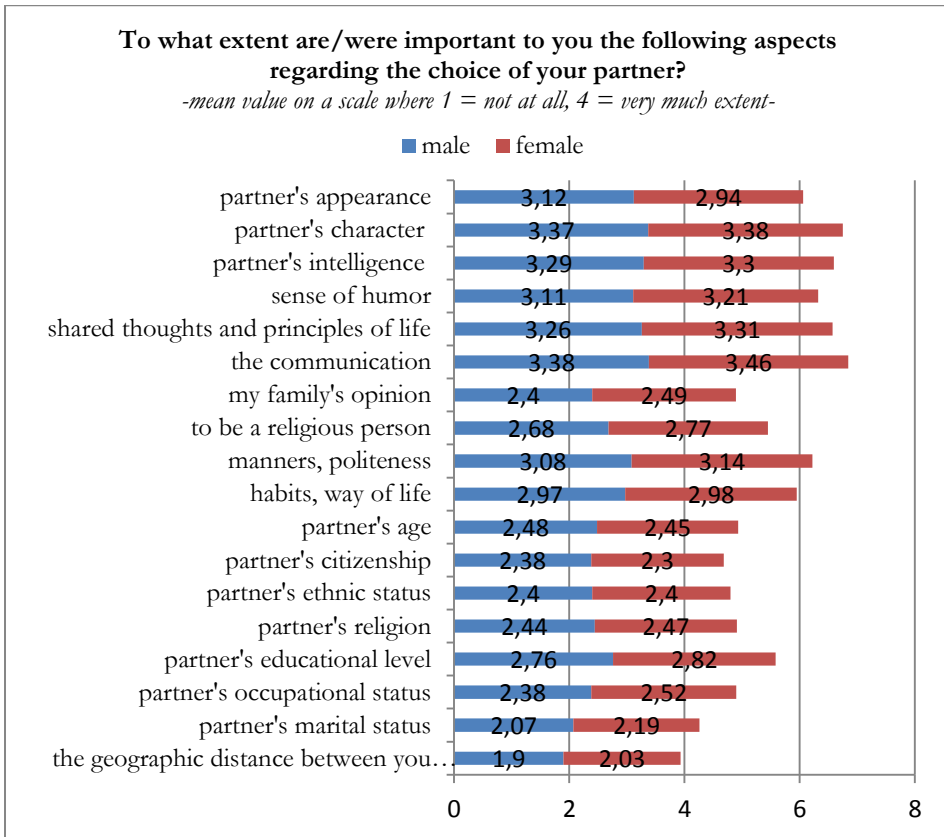


**Figure 9.** *The distribution according to the meeting place of partner*

The results obtained in our study indicate the great importance given by subjects to the principle of socio-cultural and axiological similarity in the choice of couple partner. Comparative data were obtained by calculating the mean value of each item depending on the gender of the subject. So, the respondents, both males and females, believe that the most important aspects that were taken into account when choosing their partner were couple communication, partner character, partner intelligence and shared ideas and principles of life.

Along with social homogamia, couple communication has a main role in the dynamics of the relationship, issue highlighted also by other studies (Buhaş, 2013). One of the lowest values recorded refers to the financial situation of potential couple partner, both in the case of female and male subjects, suggesting a low degree of pragmatism displayed in the choice of partner.





**Figure 10.** Selection criteria for couple partner

## Conclusion and discussions

We consider that our research objectives were achieved due to the fact that the empirical hypotheses were confirmed. The contemporary family in Bihor county presents some features associated with modernism and postmodernism, regarding its structure and also the expression of marital and reproductive behaviors. The attitude towards marriage and family is determined by the new social rules and values that emphasize the liberalization of marital behavior. Thus, the consensual unions or cohabitation relationships tend to increase as a number and therefore tend to be more socially accepted being considered as a modern expression of marriage. The juridical framework is no longer seen as a fundamental condition for the existence of a couple relationship. However, the results emphasize the traditional specificity of the contemporary Romanian society, due to the fact that the percentage of married couples is higher in rural areas than in urban ones.

Also, the divorce rate is increasing especially among people with urban residence. From this point of view, the Romanian rural society tends to put a greater emphasis on traditional social values that impose a more rigid control on the

dynamics of marriage. This statement is supported by the results obtained from the present research, where the proportion of divorced couple is higher in urban areas. The divorce rate is also shaped by subjects' gender, seen as a specific aspect for postmodernism: the emancipation of women has generated numerous divorces, also outlined by the higher percentage of divorces registered for female subjects, compared with men.

And in terms of reproductive behavior, the results indicate that the contemporary family in Bihor county follows the post-modernism trend: the contemporary family model comprises 1 maximum 2 children, their number being higher in rural areas. The decrease in the number of children is becoming more pronounced from one generation to another. However, the decision to bear and rear children is related to the juridical context of the couple relationship, so the tendency is to have children within a marital relation. This aspect suggests an attachment to traditional values which do not conceive children outside the legal form of couple relationships. Results outline the existence of social reproduction process: subjects tend to imitate the pattern of their family of origin in what regards their marital and reproductive behaviors. Therefore, subjects who declare a large number of brothers, tend to have in turn more children.

Regarding human mate selection process, socio-cultural homogamy and axiological similarity have the most important roles in this respect. Communication between partners is also a determinant factor of this elective process. The main social frameworks, seen as means of facilitating the selection of a partner remain the classic ones: family and acquaintances, the venue of professional activity. Thus, spatial proximity becomes a determinant factor.

As a general perspective, we state that the contemporary family in Bihor county undergoes a continuous process of adapting to new social norms valued within the postmodern society. Attitudes regarding marital and reproductive behaviors are similar to those in other European and global societies. However, in some respects Romanian family still experience a high attachment to traditional social values regarding marriage and family.

## References

- Ben-Porath, Y. (1975). First-Generation Effects on Second-Generation Fertility. *Demography*, 12, pp.397–405.
- Buhaş R. (2013). Construcția și evoluția relației de cuplu în spațiul virtual [The Construction and Evolution of Couple Relationship in Virtual Space]. Unpublised PhD. thesis, presented at University of Oradea.
- Casper, L. M. (2007). Family Demography. G. Ritzer (Ed.) *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (pp. 1583-1589) Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Chipea, F. (2001). *Familia contemporană. Tendințe globale și configurații locale* [Contemporary Family. Global Tendencies and Local Configurations]. Bucharest: Expert.

- Chișea, F. (2010). Dimensiuni demografice ale familiei bihorene în contextul național și al Uniunii Europene [Demographic Dimensions of the Family from Bihor County within National and European Context]. S. Bălțătescu, F. Chișea, A. Hatos, F. Ștefănescu, S. Bodogai, C. Oșvat, S. Săveanu, I. Cioară, D. Boroș, R. Onicaș, M. Cioară, M. Marian & R. Buhaș (Eds.) *Cercetare și politici sociale. Perspective actuale [Research and Social Policies. Actual Perspectives]* (pp. 17-27). Oradea: University of Oradea Publishing House.
- Chișea, F. & Miclea (Buhaș), R. (2012). Familia de origine – predictor al modelului familial adoptat de studenți. Studiu comparativ – zona transfrontalieră Bihor Hajdu-Bihar [Family of Origin - Predictor for the Family Pattern Adopted by Students. Comparative Study - Bihar Hajdu-Bihar Border Area]. *Sociologie Românească [Romanian Sociology]*, 10(4), pp. 36-60.
- Eurostat. NewsRelease (2008). Population projections 2008-2060. Eurostat Press Office. Retrieved November 6, 2012 from [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-26082008-AP/EN/3-26082008-AP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-26082008-AP/EN/3-26082008-AP-EN.PDF).
- Iluț, P. (2005). *Sociopsihologia și antropologia familiei [Sociopsychology and Anthropology of the Family]*. Iași: Polirom.
- Institutul Național de Statistică [National Institute for Statistics] (2011). Economia mondială în cifre [Global Economy in Digits]. Retrieved November 5, 2012 from <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/EconomiaMondiala2011.pdf?jseSSID=2be03311f5d9dc58b14546e616f720a763ad87c217a6f788b0732cb439e86cc9.e38QbxSahyTbi0Nbh0>.
- Knox, D. & Scahcht, C. (2010). *Choices in Relationships. An Introduction to Marriage and the Family*, tenth edition. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.
- Lamanna, M. A. & Riedmann, A. (2009). *Marriages & Families. Making choices in a diverse society*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition. Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Publishing.
- Luceș, D. (2010). Familia contemporană românească – disparități de opinii, modele generaționale și regionale [Contemporary Romanian Family - Disparity of Views, Generational and Regional Patterns]. S. Bălțătescu, F. Chișea, I. Cioară, A. Hatos & S. Săveanu (Eds.) *Educație și schimbare socială [Education and social change]* (pp. 131-134). Oradea: University of Oradea Publishing House.
- Popescu, R. (2009). *Introducere în sociologia familiei [Introduction in the Sociology of Family]*. Iași: Polirom.
- Popescu, R. (2010). Profilul familiei românești contemporane [The Profile of the Contemporary Romanian Family]. *Calitatea vieții [Quality of Life]*, XXI (1-2), pp. 5-28.

- Rotariu, T., Mureșan, C., Hărăguș, M. & Hărăguș, P. T. (2012). Căsătoria și reproducerea populației [The Marriage and Reproduction of the Population]. T. Rotariu & V. Voineagu (Eds). *Inerție și schimbare [Inertia and Change]* (pp. 125-160). Iași: Polirom.
- Salánki, Z. (2004). Teorii privind relațiile intime [Theories regarding Intimate Relationships]. *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „George Bariț” din Cluj-Napoca [The Yearbook of the Institute of History „George Bariț” from Cluj-Napoca]*, II, Series Humanistica, pp. 195-210. Bucharest: Romanian Academy.
- Segalen, M. (2011). *Sociologia familiei [Sociology of Family]*. Iași: Polirom.
- Stephens Brehm, S., Miller, R., Perlman, D. & Miller Campbell, S. (2001). *Intimate Relationships*, third edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Vlăsceanu, L. (2011). *Sociologie [Sociology]*. Iași: Polirom.
- Zamfir, C. & Vlăsceanu, L. (1998). *Dicționar de sociologie [Dictionary of Sociology]*. Bucharest: Babel.