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**The parent child relationship in the context of  
partners' separation**

**Doctoral thesis summary**

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## Thesis summary:

The thesis subject is the influence of divorce and migration on the quality of the parent – child relationship, and, further, the possible influence of this quality on the children’s self esteem, alcohol consumption, smoking and school adjustment.

The paper starts with an introduction referring to the reasons for which it is important to study this theme but it also contains a theoretical model and goes further to the first chapter which has three parts. First of this parts contains a definition of the main concepts of the paper and short descriptions of the corresponding sociological fields. Second part of the first chapter contains an analysis of the sociological studies of parent – child relationship and its effects on psychological well being of the children. Third part is focused on the effects of the divorce on children and the situation of the children in transnational families. Second chapter characterizes the socialization process in general, but also refers to the situation of the children growing up with a parent missing. Third chapter is a theoretical one, structured in four parts, as following: first is focused on theories about divorce, second on theories about migration, third part contains a synthesis of the theories used to explain the effects of divorce on children. The last part of the third chapter contains an attempt to build a bridge between the sociology of family and the sociology of migration in order to explain the effects of migration on children. Chapter four contains three researches: a qualitative one, based on interviews, a quantitative one, based on a questionnaire, applied to a random sample of children in Cluj county, and a third one, which analysis the connection between the parent child relational qualities and the features attributed to the child by his classmates. The conclusions underline the results and futures research directions.

First part of chapter one contains references to the three sociological fields offering the theoretical background of this thesis: sociology of the family, sociology of migration and sociology of childhood. Sociology of the family gives us the definition of the familial unit, which is a social group beholding a married couple and its children (Mihăilescu, 1993) and the definition of divorce, as a social and legal opportunity to dissolve the marriage” (Mihăilescu, 1993). After discussing the definitions we moved on to a succinct

description of the divorce rates evolution, which is relatively stable these days. The sociology of childhood is implied in this paper because it spread and sustained the idea that we should treat children as social actors, actives, creative, producers of their own culture, unique (Corsaro, 2008), which allows us to discuss the results of the researches realized on children samples. We also learn here the recomposed marriages are not news, as in the past the structure of domestic units was changing because of death. The sociology of migration is important because this phenomenon is massive, at global level but also national, and the social effects were inevitable. The concept of transnationalism comes from the sociology of migration and can be defined as the process through which people establish and maintain social and cultural relationship which surpass sociopolitical boundaries (Glick-Schiller and others., 1992 cf. Ferro, 2009). A family is transnational if the parents are married but the members of the family are separated because of working abroad. It is important to mention that the possible connection (it hasn't been studied enough to say it exists but there is data (Sandu, 2006; Toth and Toth, 2007) which goes to testing this hypothesis) between the divorce and migration theme lays to the fact that the financial problems leading to work migration are associated with high levels of intramarital conflicts and favors a possible divorce.

The parent – child relationship quality and its influences on welfare can be assessed in different ways. One of the possibilities is the evaluation of this relationship through the dispositions attributed by the parents to their children, and this approach is relevant because the attributions of the parents influences the self image of the child. Dix (1993) characterizes the parent – child relationship using the knowledge on attributions and the knowledge on socialization. The attributions depend on parents' purposes, dispositions and social abilities and hold a systematic influence on children's' behavior. Once defined, the dispositional attributions of the adults influences not just their attitude towards children, but also children's' self perception and towards the behavior they should express. The conclusions of the study show how important the fairness of the attributions is and the correct calibration of parents' actions, because the parents' perceptions of children's actions influences their actions. Dawber and Kuczinski (1999) shows how mother's attitude towards their own children is different compared to the one towards

other children, as they have long term purposes in the first case rather than in the second. Ooi and his colleagues (2006) shows how parent – child attachment is a protective factor against aggressive behavior. Parent – child communication decreases the chances for the child to use drugs and Miller – Day and Dodd (2004) analyzes models of communication on this subject. Steitmatter and Jones (1982) analyzes the influence of parental styles on children's self esteem, and shows that children who perceive their parents as less authoritarian and more democratic have better self esteem. Next part of the chapter is focused on parent – child relationship in the context of parental conflict and divorce, as reflected in sociological studies. Amato and Sobolewski (2005) demonstrate how being close to the parents favors the psychological adjustment and Kari Moxnes (2003) observed that most of the children having a relationship with their father after parental divorce were content. Shek (2000) conducted a study which shows how marital relationship qualities predicts parents welfare, and the quality of marital relationship in the case of the father and his psychological well being predicts father – child relationship. The difference between the results of this study, realized in asian cultural space and the ones realized in euro-american cultural space is the fact that in this case the well being of the child depends more on the father. A factor with important influence on child's wellbeing is the financial situation, and Shek's (2005) results shows that the psychological well being of the children with financial security is better than that of those with economic problems.

Third part of the first chapter is focused on the children's situation if they are apart from the parents, and the separation can be caused either of the divorce or the migration of one or both parents. Guttman (1993) brings to attention the results of the studies showing that the processes in the family influences the wellbeing of the child more than family type, and previous studies (Hess and Camara, 1979 cf. Guttman, 1993) shows that the most powerful predictor of the child's well being is the parent – child relationship. Still, children from divorced families have adjustment scores less than other children, but the studies have certain limitations. Terry Arendell (1992) found out that divorced fathers explained the absence as a direct consequence of the divorce, as a realistic possibility, a response to the conditions of the divorce and it is justified because of the divorce's conditions. Fine, Coleman and Ganong (1999) analyzed the process of

defining the step parent role using a social constructivist method, and observed that stepparents and their respective children have different ideas about the content of stepparent role, even after many years spent together and the consensus of the family members about what the stepparent role is moderately associated to the children's adjustment. Eileen Spillane – Greco (2000) realized a case study which shows how therapy can attenuate the negative effects of divorce. Kari Moxnes (2003) analyzed interviews realized with children and showed how they manage the parent's divorce, the risks, the changes and the stability felt by the children as their parents separated. The financial decline of the family is a risk for the children. Flowerdew and Neale (2003) discuss, reexamine and clarify the notion of „multiple transition” and advance the idea that the focus of the analyses should move from the divorce to the associated processes (the ones related to school, friends, death, unemployment, financial issues, domestic chores). The analysis of the interviews showed that the problems associated with divorce are about moving to a new place, managing the relation with the step parents, negotiating new rules about money or daily routine, managing the relation with stepbrothers or space. For some children the adjustment is easy because of a good quality of the family relationship, a useful insertion in a larger social network and a possible cooperation of divorced parents, so the transitions are easily accepted by the children if they are slow and if the children are surrounded by adults forming cooperative social networks. Amato (2003) compared the results of some quantitative studies to the qualitative ones, realized by Judith Wallerstein, observing that most studies, like Wallerstein's studies in moderate version, advance the idea that parent's divorce is a risk factor for psychological wellbeing as an adult; another common idea is the fact that parent's divorce is a risk factor for children's marriage; children from divorced families have lesser connections to the parents and help each other less. As a general idea, the results of quantitative studies support the moderate version of Wallerstein studies. In a case study Baum (2006) describes the failure of a man to be a father after he ceases to be a husband. Amato and Booth (1991) assert that as long as parent – child relationship has a good quality the risks of the divorce for children are relatively low. Ross and Mirowsky (1999) describe how the effects of the divorce on mental health are mediated by educational attainment and economic difficulties. Avenevoli, Sessa and Steinberg (1999) exemplify the ecological

perspective. Independent of ethnicity, socioeconomic status are parents marital status, teenagers who's parents are warm, consistent and democratic have better grades in school, higher self esteem, lower scores for anxiety and depression and less chances to involve in delinquent activities. Amato and Sobolewski (2001) show how negative divorce effects on children's mental health are mediated via three processes: socioeconomic status (education and income), parent – child relational qualities and relational instability. The most powerful effect is that of parent child relationship quality. Kirby (2002) show that there is a statistical connection between parental divorce and smoking. McLanahan's (1999) metaanalysis revealed that, in average, children growing up without fathers are less adjusted compared to children growing up with both parents. Hetherington (1999) also showed that in average, children who's parents are divorced or live in high – conflict families have more adjustment problems than those living in intact, nonconflictual families. Marsiglio and his colleagues (2000) revealed the importance of the father – child interactions quality, and father play an important role in children's life, as long as their attitude and behavior towards children are appropriate, and the parental style is democratic. Amato (2000) noticed that most of the studies, independent of the explicit theoretical perspective subsume the idea that the divorce process is a stressful one and necessitates adjustment. Finally, Kelly (2003) organizes divorce stress factors in following categories: initial separation, interparental conflict, parental failure, loss of important relationship and economic opportunities deterioration.

Last part of first chapter is a discussion about children in transnational families. Parrenas (2001) analyzes the emotional impact of the distance and managing strategies, but it also includes children's perspective. They are in conflict with the parents in three ways: they don't agree that material goods can replace love, they think their parents don't realize the efforts they make to maintain family integrity and they reproach their mothers the rare visits (in average, they spend together about two months in four years). Some children treasure the closeness to the mother more than material goods and they see them as excluding each other. Toth and Toth (2007) reveals that more than 80% of the children talk to the parents at least weakly, about children's school results, familial relationship and children's wishes. More than 70% of the children who's parents are working abroad describe their relationship with the absent parent as very good but the absence of a parent



to work abroad is associated with a lesser quality relationship to the present parent. Regarding to the effect of a parent working abroad to the mental health it seems that children with both parents absent or just mother absent reported more often the frequent presence of depression feelings (Toth and Toth, 2007, p.24), so the absence of the mother creates more problems than that of the father. Some studies indicated that the absence of a parent to work abroad hold a negative effect on children's school grades (Bădescu, Stoian and Tănase, 2009; Tufiş, 2007).

Second chapter of the thesis is focused on the socialization process, defined as „the process through which the individual, in interaction other humans, learns skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviors” (Rotariu and Iluţ, 1996, p.91). Certain conditions must be fulfilled: a society must exist, as a frame for the child's socialization, a healthy biological heritage (there are physical and mental impediments which could prevent the socialization of an individual) and human nature. Any society holds a set of norms and values. Norms are implicit rules defining the behavior in certain situations. Values are related to the desirable and hold the position of criteria for norms. The status represents the position in the social structure and the role contains the expected behaviors from the person holding a status (Elkin and Handel, 1984). We can use socialization theory in order to explain the mechanisms through which the parents' divorce can influence children's lives. The most important assumption of this theory is that the support, supervision and behavioral models offered by the parents will have their influence on children's development and wellbeing. In this context the reason children with divorced parents have lower self esteem is the fact that the family type resulted after divorce seems to be less able to offer security and a proper environment for socialization (Kirby, 2002). The family functions changed from economical ones to the emotional ones; one of the most important functions of the family is the children's socialization; the family constitutes itself in a socio – emotional background for children (Iluţ, 2005). Primary socialization is the first stage of the process and it takes place mostly throughout the childhood. The child learns knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours and becomes a member of the society. The significant others in child's life mediates the interior transformation of the social life. The social world appears to the child filtered through the social status and chosen values of the significant others. Secondary

socialization is characterized by individual's relation to different specialized institutions, the transition from the „home” world to one bigger and more complex, and mentally it coincides to cognitive development through the transition from concrete to abstract. If the world of secondary socialization is different from the one assimilated through primary socialization a re-socialization process takes place. This means that the whole individual's world is redefined according to present conditions (Iluț, 2001). Leena Alanen (1988) makes an analyze of the socialization process in the frame of sociology of childhood. The author shows how socialization was seen as a social process, with effects to the child's psychology, which carries on the difference between the civilized one (the adult) and the barbarian one and the definition of socialization was interpreted as being elitist, using the perspective of the institutions interested to reproduce themselves. Most of the times the children's point of view is either excluded, either it is wrongly considered that it is identical to the one of the institutions, children are seen as passive objects of external influences but children must be seen as being able to participate in social actions. Traditional theories of socialization are focused on the anticipatory features of childhood and considers childhood and adulthood as being completely different (Corsaro, 2008) but we should be aware that social reality is build throughout every day experiences. William Corsaro advances the expression „interpretative reproduction”, referring to the fact that „children actively participate to the social preservation (or reproduction)” (Corsaro, 2008, p.4). This new definition expresses an extension to the idea of socialization.

Among the theoretical models of socialization are the one proposed by Sigmund Freud, the psychosexual development model or the one elaborated by Jean Piaget (Iluț, 2001). In the transition from a psychological point of view to a sociological one we will see that Charles Cooley is the one who pointed out that human development, including the ability to perceive ourselves subjectively and objectively, is a product of our interactions to other human beings in social groups. Further, using his observations but also those of his colleagues George Herbert Mead reaches the conclusion that the mind and the self are also social products, the result of individuals' interactions to other people (Bryjak and Soroka, 1989). Spera and Matto (2007) elaborated the context congruence model, developing a new approach for empirical examination of the socialization process, seeking to explain the sociocultural differences.

The socialization process is based on certain mechanisms. Abell and Gecas (1997) analyzed the importance of the feelings of guilt and shame to the socialization process, throughout the relationship to three types of parental control: inductive, effective and coercitive. The reflexive emotions (the ones associated to the roles and self consciousness) support the socialization process. Shame and guilt play the role of self controllers against trespassing the limits associated to norms and morality. The undertake of a role has as result feelings in two ways that make the connection between social control and self control: through empathy and through emotions resulted after looking your own person from the perspective of the others. Parents characterized as adopting inductive behavior give the children verbal information as to what is right and what is wrong, and Abell and Gecas (1997) point out that this parental style is positively related to self esteem. Affective behaviors (in socializing contexts) are associated to holding back affective behavior in order to obtain the expected answer from children. The coercitive parental style is based on threatening or physical force in order to obtain obedience from children and it is negatively associated to the children's ability to resist restricted behaviors. Another aspect of socialization process can be described throughout attributions associated by the parents to the children. Attributions to children depend on purposes, dispositions and social abilities of the parents (they are the ones perceiving) because they hold systematic influence on the children's behavior. Once formulated, the dispositions attributed by the parents to the children influence their reaction towards them (and, implicitly, the socializing experiences of the children) and children's perception toward their own person and toward the expected behaviors (Dix, 1993).

Family is one of the most important socializing institutions. Irrespective of the society, family has a structure and interactional patterns with effect on the children. Family introduces the child to the interpersonal relationship world, they are cared for because they are dependent and they get attention for their sociability. As time goes by they become aware of the other persons presence (and their wishes or interests), they learn to share the space or the resources with other persons and interactions are based on affection and discipline; the child improves his or hers ability to interact with other persons. Family is the first reference group to the child, who adopts its norms, values and practices of evaluation of its own behavior (Elkin and Handel, 1984). School is another

socializing institution, and as we continue we will discuss the results of the studies comparing socializing institutions. Barber and Olsen (1997) analyzed teenagers' socializing experiences in four contexts: family, friends, schools and neighborhoods. Significant socializing principles, usually analyzed in the family, were examined in the four contexts (and this fact makes this study an explorative one). Based on the results the four contexts can be characterized: family and friends hold an important, positive role in the teenagers' life, but at the school are reported significantly less positive experiences. The reports on the family predict depression, the experiences at school predict grades. Rapoport (1989) advances a conceptual frame, supported by empirical evidence, in which experimentation and control are perceived as independent dimensions coexisting within each of three influential socializing instances in adolescence: parents, school and peer group. Results revealed that there is a clear distinction between the two dimensions for each instance. The socializing institutions are different, each of the two dimensions becoming socializing patterns.

Third chapter starts with theoretical perspectives on divorce. Based on analogies with other processes Guttman (1993) elaborated a theoretical model underlying the elements common to all divorces: it is a familial but also personal crisis, it comes with psychological difficulties but also with personal development opportunities, the process can be analyzed at different stages characterized by qualitative differences of concerns and the degree problems are managed. Using a systemic frame it is possible to elaborate a model which will reflect the changes within the families (Robinson, 1991). Within a symbolic interactionism frame will see that family members interact based on the definitions they give each other, and family life is the result of construction and reconstruction of the symbolic reality (Iluț, 2005). The social role theory is focused on stress and tensions relatively constant associated to certain roles. Living as a divorcee is often associated with social isolation, lack of social support, economical difficulties, increased responsibilities towards the children (for parents) or stress factors associated to the responsibilities toward the children, such as custody (Amato and Booth, 1991). Within a conflictualist perspective family is seen as a system of permanent conflictual rules and it reproduces at low levels the existing conflicts between social classes (Mihăilescu, 1993). Feminist movements continued the conflictualist traditions and

contributed to the redefinition of the gender roles and role expectations (Iluț, 2005). Costs and benefits theory reveals that the growing inefficiency of marital union enhances the attractiveness of leaving it (Ono, 1998). The macro structural opportunities theory is based on the concept of marital alternatives and shows that the chances of leaving a marriage multiply if one of the partners sees himself as being attractive and finds a new partner (South, Trent and Shen, 2001). The crisis theory and divorce – stress – adjustment perspective is paradigms allowing us to explain the events associated to the divorce. Marital dissolution is a life crisis which holds negative influence on the mental health and can be seen as a challenge with powerful stress effects on those implicated (Johnson and Wu, 2002). Divorce – stress – adjustment perspective is focused on the effects of the tensions appeared before the divorce on the adults and children involved and on the way they manage this tensions (Amato, 2000). Social selection theory shows that divorcee's high levels of stress are because of the poor mental health of those getting a divorce. So, one of the reasons in the difference of level of stress between the married persons and the divorced ones is that married people having pre-existing mental health issues are often inadequate (they are not able to perform properly the married person role) and this is the reason they have higher chances to divorce than the persons not having this type of problem (Johnson and Wu, 2002). The saturated role theory explains the divorce by the fact that postmodern paradigm advances a multiple self, and individuals divorce because of the conflicts between multiple selves (Lyle and Gerhart – Brooks, 1999). Within a life history perspective Umbertson (2005) underlies the multiple dimensions of the time (example given: age, duration of marriage, years passing) but also on the familial transitions (the birth of the children, emptying of the nest as children leave and they come back). The hypothesis that events and circumstances of a generation can have its effects on the long term for next generations (Amato and Cheadle, 2005) results from the life course perspective so as we continue we will discuss the results of a study focused on the connection between the grandparents generation (G1) and the one of the nephews (G3). Compared to the adults whose parents never divorced, the adults coming from divorced families are inclined to go less to school (have low educational levels), to have lower income, to be part of couples with adjustment problems, to have weaker connections to the parents and to manifest symptoms of psychological discomfort. The relationship

between the parents' divorce and children wellbeing is not direct or linear but it manifest itself as a risk and in certain cases (if the connection between the father and child is weak) the possible effects can be quite strong.

Migration theories can be classified in categories: there are studies about migration and studies about sedentarization; based on the discipline within the study was elaborated, there are sociological, anthropological and economical studies. A third distinction can be operated based on the micro or macro orientation: first are focused on the actors and social networks actions as macro studies are concerned with structural analysis (Horvath and Anghel, 2009). The social network theory seems to be the most appropriate to explain the romanian migration. It is based on the assumption that most migrants leaving a certain area tend to move to the same target zone. The migration network is the support allowing the migrants from an area to another one. Initially the pioneers of migration move, they initiate the network formation, followed by the actual forming, the last stage being mass migration. For a network to take life, certain mechanisms are needed. Another aspect of migration is brought to light due to institutional analysis: applied to the migration studies they are concerned with the institutions supporting migration, there are migrants' networks, and we spoke about it, but there are also other institutions supporting migration such as the church (Horvath and Anghel, 2009).

First of the theories applied in order to explain the effect of divorce on the children is social learning perspective: children witnessing parents lacking healthy communicational abilities can become adults with poorly developed relational abilities and a inventory of interpersonal behaviors which will undermine the marital satisfaction and stability (Amato and Cheadle, 2005). The social – cognitive development theory reveals that child's response to the parents' divorce can be analyzed in terms of social-cognitive development and interpersonal relation abilities (Guttman, 1993). Attachment theory shows how those children having a good relationship with the parents feel secure as far as emotions are concerned, they perceive interpersonal relationships in a positive manner, they trust people, as opposed to the children having a distant or even hostile relationship to the parents, so they feel insecure emotionally and they have difficulties when they depend on other people (Amato and Cheadle, 2005). Social and economic

capital was often tested, under many names. Such an example is offered by Jackson and Scheines (2005) and they show that social and economical factors influence the child's development because of its impact on the family and intrafamilial processes. Stress perspective shows that divorce is a source of tension and anxiety for children (Amato and Booth, 1991). Parents' divorce is accompanied by changes constituting a important source of stress for the child: the intensity of divorce's effects depends on the number and intensity of this transitions – changes (Moxnes, 2003; Kelly, 2003). The selection perspective, as applied to children hypothesis that the behavioral problems observed in the case of the parents will be present also in the children's marriage (Amato, 2000). The theory of familial systems brings to light the fact that the parents' divorce is a problem for children because its result is the changing of the family structure; problems generated by this changes are avoided if mononuclear family before the divorce becomes a binuclear one after divorce (Moxnes, 2003). Social control theory shows that powerful social relationship, especially those between parents and children favor the decrease of the children's probability to involve in socially bad behaviors, while the socialization theory asserts the idea that the support, the supervision and the models of behavior offered by parents are related to the development and well being of the child; if children and parents are separated the benefic influence of the parents will decrease (Kirby, 2002). Within a constructivist theoretical frame we observe that certain relationships and living arrangements generated by divorce are yet to be defined (there are no certainties) and can be studied using the constructivist method. In this context the growing diversity of living arrangements for fathers and their children now days must be acknowledged (Marsiglio and his colleagues, 2000).

Theories explaining children's place in the migration process are now developing. Such an example if offered by the study conducted by Leah Schmalzbauer (2004). Data came from a study realized throughout two years and the theoretical ideas emerged ad the study was made. In essence, the study showed that those children left home by their mothers are cared for by other women, playing the role of community mothers, rather than being cared for by their fathers

Chapter four is based on three researches. First of them it is qualitative and it is based on interviews with children. The theoretical frame is already discussed, the

questions were mostly open, around themes like parent – child relational dimensions, family type, financial status, transitions and questionnaires about self esteem and stress. The hypothesis analyzes the connection between the family type (intact, divorced or working abroad parents) and the perception of financial status, the connection between self esteem and the parent – child relational qualities and the connection between transitions and stress. In order to be in the sample the child had to live in any other arrangement beside with both parents. Some of the children lived with the grandparents, some of them with one of the parents, either mother or father, and one child lived in a rented room (without parents or relatives), some of them lived in recomposed families, with new mother's or father's partner and possible step siblings.

As far as financial status is concerned, the results showed that most of the children either didn't notice or didn't remember that the financial situation worsened starting with the divorce. There are parents (fathers) who lack parental abilities (they don't see the children, they don't keep promises, they drink a lot of alcohol and children see or know that) but they respect their financial agreements and give help if asked for. Children with parents working abroad highlight the fact that parents left because of the money problems and most of the times children understand the parents: "he/she left because we needed money". Children whose parents work abroad live with grandparents and they lived with them before the parents left, so it is very probable that this children's parents weren't able to live just with their family. First hypothesis is partially confirmed: all the children with parents working abroad have no financial problems, parents send them money to buy what they want, but most of the children with divorced parents never noticed differences in the financial situation before and after divorce, maybe in some cases because the children were so young that they can't remember.

The second hypothesis tested the possible connection between the parent – child relationship quality and children's self esteem. The results revealed that this relationship can influence the self esteem and child's wellbeing. The quality of parent – child relationship varies on a span from one side where are the children with no connection to the biological father or the encounters are so rare that we almost can consider the relationship as being non-existent, to the other side where are the children maintaining a permanent connection to their mother, they get attention, moral and material support



from the parents, help with the homework or other benefits, in case the child needs something. Somewhere in-between there are children whose parents maintain a connection, sometimes they send money, but they don't offer the attention children need so much. In one of the cases a girl, whose family detains a high economical and social status, declared that she doesn't love her parents, she doesn't need to see them and that she would be just fine if she would never meet them again and she would stay just with the grandparents. The deficiencies in the parent – child relationship are obvious when children declare they don't love the parents, they don't remember how the parents look like, because they haven't seen them in years (even though the parent visited the city child lives in but he didn't find time to see him), the child sees the parent as being distant, feels shame to ask for help when in trouble, he doesn't really trust the parent: "he doesn't keep his promises,..., very rare,..., he said two months ago he would come for the summer break and he didn't and other stuff" and believes "he should at least apologize". Even though the father broke his promises the child still expects him to come "he will be here for my birthday" (12 years old boy, hasn't seen his father in four years). The mother sometimes acts as a mediator in-between the ex husband and her child: "he sometimes calls me, my mother calls him too...she rings him once and he calls back", confirming observations in the literature (Baum, 2006). In other cases the parent – child relationship has a poor quality even though the child meets his father almost every week: "I don't know, when he drinks...for example when...he doesn't drink because he is a driver and he doesn't drink during the week just saturday or sunday when we go to my grandmother then he drinks...and... he shouts at me". In this cases children suffer, usually for a long time, and because of the lack of a model children's social abilities are rather poor. Some children avoid labeling the relationship as being poor but such an attribute comes out from the description: "mmm...I have a good enough relationship, he doesn't understand me ...he calls me, and if he calls we fight" (14 years old girl). Even when the father gives up any initiative to maintain a connection to their own children sometimes the offsprings are the ones trying to contact the parent: "I send him postcards from the sea side but he didn't answer" (13 years old girl). For a child is natural and healthy to ask for help when in need, and this is the reason when a 15 years old teenager answers to the question about people she goes to when in need for help with "I don't really ask for help, I solve my own

problems” we can say that she is independent, but also that it would be best if the parents gave her more attention. Sometimes children hold back comments on parental behavior: “they both left and leave me here alone...still that, that they left me here alone” or they say “sometimes my father upsets me ... he doesn’t keep his promises”. As opposed to this cases there are those parents which, even though they don’t live with their children, they visit them every day, to help them with math homework for example, or they talk every day on the phone or on the internet daily if they don’t live in the same town. Very few children talk about the relationship to the parents in negative terms, most of them use evasive terms. A few children mention the alcohol related problems of the parents or grandparents. One of the mothers get back with the father but “then he started again drinking and stuff like that with my father”.

Last hypothesis is focused on the transitions. As far as the moving is concerned the intensity of the transition is given by the distance to the initial residence zone. For the children the moving from a neighborhood to another is accompanied either by the changing of the school, either going a longer distance on daily basis in order to get to the same school, and in our sample there are children who changed either the city, at least two times (they moved out the initial residence city and afterwards they moved back), and there is even a child who lived for a years in another country. In-between the actual separation and the divorce can be a long time. One child’s parents were separated for four years but they had divorced just before one year and the parents of another child weren’t legally divorced but they both had new partners “no, they haven’t get a divorce, ..., no, so my mother is with somebody and my father is with somebody”, so the presents might be actually a transition, maybe felt as such by the children. If we would summon the number of moves and the number of the kilometers associated to those moves we would definitely get a very large number. The third hypothesis is partially confirmed: there are stressed children (moderately on the scale we used to measure stress), who went through many movings, but there are also stressed children who never moved, as there are children who moved, sometimes to another cities, and they feel fine.

Second study is a quantitative one and is based on the theoretical premises that the most important thing for the child’s wellbeing is the quality of the parent child relationship, more important than the structure of the family. Based on the theories in

sociological literature, but also on the results of the research we previously discussed here, I elaborated a set of hypothesis testing the relationship between the family type (if the parents are married and living together, divorced or working abroad) and the parent – child relational qualities as independent variables and indicators of children’s adjustment as dependent variables. In order to evaluate children’s wellbeing (adjustment) I relied on self esteem, measured throughout Rosenberg’s scale (Brinkerhoff and White, 1988), alcohol use, smoking and school adjustment (it includes the conflicts child is involved in, if he or she declares having friends at school and last semester’s grades). Each hypothesis focuses on the comparison between the children living in intact families to the children whose parents are divorced or working abroad for self esteem, alcohol use, smoking and school adjustment. In the study there is an analysis for the connection between each of this variables and parent – child relational qualities. Another set of hypothesis is focused on the connection between the perception of financial situation and family type. Last part in focused on a comparison for the two genders, suggested by the logistic regression analysis results, and on differences between children coming from country side and from the town.

The research was realized in april 2008 on a sample of 568 students going to a sample of schools in Cluj county. The schools were chosen randomly and out of each school were chosen a level (a class of one level between 6 and 12) in order to have similar numbers of children for each age. The number of children with divorced or migrant parents is higher than its range in normal population in order to allow comparisons, and in april – may 2009 a new wave of questionnaires was applied to children with migrant or divorced parents, in order to be able to realize comparisons.

The results of the research are in the next table:

Table 1: The synthesis of the relations between independents and dependent variables:

Independent variables		Divorced parents	Migrant parents (transnational family)	The quality of mother – child relationship	The quality of father – child relationship				
Dependent variables									
Self esteem (Rosenberg's scale)		Means comparison – t test SS	Means comparison T test NS	Correlations / linear regression SS	Correlations / linear regression SS				
Smoking		Crosstab - $\chi^2$ NS	Crosstab - $\chi^2$ NS	Logistic regression SS	Logistic regression SS				
Alcohol use		Crosstab - $\chi^2$ SS	Crosstab - $\chi^2$ NS	Logistic regression SS	Logistic regression NS				
School adjustment	Conflicts:	Colleagues	$\chi^2$ test NS	Means comparison – t test NS	Crosstab - $\chi^2$ NS	t test NS	Linear regression SS	Linear regression SS	
		Teachers	$X^2$ test NS						Crosstab - $\chi^2$ NS
		School regulations	$\chi^2$ test NS						Crosstab - $\chi^2$ NS
	Friends among colleagues		Crosstab - $\chi^2$ test NS	Crosstab - $\chi^2$ NS	Logistic regression SS	Logistic regression NS			
	Last semester grades – average		Means comparison – t test SS	Means comparison – t test SS	Linear regression SS	Linear regression SS			

Note: NS = statistically insignificant

SS = statistically significant

Examining the table we see that we have statistically significant for the mother – child relationship and all the dependent variables. We also see that the grades are always better for the control group.

Next table contains the comparison for genders and residency area:

Table 1: The synthesis of the differences for genders and residency area

		Differences for genders	Urban – rural	
<b>The quality of mother – child relationship</b>		Means comparison (t test) NS	Means comparison (t test) NS	
<b>The quality of father– child relationship</b>		Means comparison (t test) NS	Means comparison (t test) NS	
<b>Self esteem ( Rosenberg’s scale)</b>		Means comparison (t test) SS	Means comparison (t test) SS	
<b>Smoking</b>		Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test) – SS	Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test) – NS	
<b>Alcohol use</b>		Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test) – SS	Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test) – SS	
<b>School adjustment</b>	<b>Conflicts:</b>	<b>Colleagues</b>	Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test)– NS	
		<b>Teachers</b>	Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test) – SS	
		<b>School regulations</b>	Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test) – SS	
	<b>Friends among colleagues</b>		Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test) - SS	Crosstabs ( $\chi^2$ test) – NS
	<b>Last semester grades – average</b>		Means comparison (t test) SS	Means comparison (t test) – SS

Note: NS = statistically insignificant

SS = statistically significant

Self esteem is significantly higher for boys and children living in urban areas. Boys smoke more, drink more alcohol, they participate in conflicts and they have lower grades. Children living in rural areas drink less alcohol, participate less in conflicts but they have lower grades.

As a general rule, our results confirm other studies, with stronger or weaker tendencies in certain cases. I would like to mention a certain feature of the present study: the situation of the family, if the parents are married and living together, migrants or divorced, has no significance, confirming other results, as the direct effects of divorce are actually inexistent, as they are mediated by the quality of parental style (Hetherington, 1999), and the observation that the processes within the family explain more of the child’s wellbeing than the type of the family (Guttman, 1993).

Third research is based on the assumption that every students class becomes a social network. Children get to know each other and form images one about another. From another point of view each child comes from a family, and naturally this family has a certain effect on children, because is the primary socializing institution. Out of the multiple features of a family we measures the parent child relational qualities and we analyzed the connection between that and the children’s image in his colleagues eyes.

The hypothesis assume that those children seen as sociable (friendly, communicative or helpful) have a good relationship with the parents, while those seen as aggressive redrawn characterize their relationship to the parents as being good (they participate in conflicts with the parents and they get more punishments). The sample included three classes of students, two of six graders and one of eight graders, participating to the courses of a high school in Cluj Napoca. In order to test the validity of the hypothesis I analyzed individually the relationship between the child's image in his or hers colleagues eyes and his or hers relationship to the parents, given that the sample's size was too small for a statistical analyses. The results show that each class has children nominated more often than others. Each of the three children pointed out as having good relational abilities characterizes the relationship to the parents as being good, and this result points out to the confirmation of the first hypothesis. As far as second hypothesis is concerned, this is also sustained by the data. Each of the classes has a child pointed out as aggressive by most colleagues and each of these children characterizes the relation to the parents as less than perfect. For the third hypothesis the results hold some nuances. In one of the six grades and the eight grade there are more than one children seen as redrawn. We know about B D, from the vi-th grade that he has daily conflicts with his parents. In order to analyze the relationship between the two variables (the parent – child relationship and redraw), I transformed two variables, obtain variables with two possible answers for redraw and two categories for the quality of parent – child relationship. I tested the hypothesis and the data confirms it for  $p=0,10$ . Like other studies, the present research has strengths and weaknesses. As strengths it can be reminded that researching the effects of divorce throughout the children's colleagues perception is a new one. One of the limits is given by the fact that there the hypothesis are not statistically tested. The reason is the small number of children in the samples. It is my hope that the shortcomings will be improved in other researches.

The connection among the three researches is given by the fact that the defined the domain for the second research, but also by the fact that the results (obtained in three methodological ways) confirm each other: the quality of the parent – child relationship is more important for child's wellbeing than the family type.

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