

# **The History of the Romanian Family and Childhood**

**Dumănescu Luminița**

## **Habilitation thesis**

### **Abstract**

The research I have conducted after I obtained my PhD title in History has mainly had in view two areas: history of the family and history of childhood. These represent the topics around which I have built my entire career beginning with the year 2002, when I started the Master's programme in Historical Socio-Anthropology. Both history of the family and history of childhood have sought to combine the sources and working methods specific to historical demography and social history. As a result, the habilitation thesis entitled *Istoria Familiei și Copilăriei Românești (History of the Romanian Family and Childhood)* unfolds on three directions: research pertaining to history of the family (the Romanian family during the Communist period, mixed families in Transylvania), the historical population database of Transylvania as a tool for studying family life, and history of childhood. The above-mentioned studies regard a vast chronological sample, from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until present times.

In 2008, near the finalisation of my doctoral studies, I became a historical researcher within the Centre for Population Studies, an excellence research unit of Babeș-Bolyai University, where, since 2013, I am a scientific researcher II. In 2009, I defended my PhD thesis concerning the history of childhood in Transylvania between 1850 and 1910. During the 10 years I have worked in research I was involved in 8 research projects, as a director (postdoctoral projects), as a member of the team (most frequently) or as a project manager. Beginning with 2009, the specific coordinates of my activity have centred around two main elements of the research and didactic spheres:

- A) The participation, by means of the research projects taking place within the Centre for Population Studies, in the development of models of the Romanian family during the

modern epoch. The latest project, which I am coordinating as manager, aims to build the first historical population database of Transylvania – a working instrument without which research in the field of historical demography is no longer possible. This direction also presupposes the updating of the course in history of the family and childhood and, implicitly, the development of research pertaining to the field of History of the Family, circumscribed to various chronological periods (19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries).

B) The replenishment of research concerning the history of childhood in Romania, 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

During the period 2010-2015, I have completed two postdoctoral research projects. The first one, a POSDRU project that took place between September 2010 and August 2012, aimed to study the Romanian family within the context of the pronatalist measures enforced by the Communist regime. The pattern I noticed as a result of the 24 months of research contributed to the establishment of the Romanian family's peculiarities during the last century. Because Communism coincided with **redefining the roles of the social categories**, I have proven that, during this period, the family's specific traits are based upon entirely different coordinates than those of the traditional family. This project and the scientific works that stemmed from it have caused a new debate regarding the modernisation of the family during a period of constraints such as that of the Communist regime. Both in the book *Familia românească în comunism* [*The Romanian Family during Communism*], which represented a result of this project, as well as in studies dedicated to narrower issues, I have shown that the modernisation of the Romanian family, defined in accordance with the rigours of the familial modernisation theories used by western historiography, occurred during Communism, even if, epistemologically speaking, Communism and modernisation are by no means synonyms as specific notions. Moreover, my research on this topic has caused a sociological re-evaluation of the main demographic effects of the Communist regime, the chief contribution in this sense being the study published at the beginning of this year (2015) in the prestigious *Annales de Demographie Historique*. This article regarding the demographic effects of dictatorships – in our case the effects of Communism and of its policies on the population – was co-authored with Traian Rotariu, one of the most renowned Romanian demographers and my mentor in the above-mentioned project. The results of this research project were presented at a number of international conferences, the most representative being *European Social Science History Conference*, which took place in Glasgow in April 2012.

Since July 2013, I am carrying out a second project that aims to retrace the peculiarities of the Romanian childhood during Communism. This research continues all my previous endeavours regarding daily life during Communism, as well as my personal research, as it extends my focus on history of childhood to the Communist period. The results of this analysis have put a history experienced directly to good use, as they included psychological aspects that emerged from these feelings and a sociological evaluation of what the Communist period lived as a child meant for the subjects. Childhood during the Romanian Communism represents a research with a powerful interdisciplinary nature: at a first level, I have set the historical frame of childhood during Communism, while, at a second level, I have investigated childhood from sociological and psychological viewpoints. The end result thus consists in delineating childhood's characteristics as a structural age in Communism (the book comprising the conclusions I have reached will be published at the end of this year).

Since 2011 I am involved in a nationally funded project regarding intermarriage in Transylvania that tackles this subject from the moment when civil legislation came into force (1895) until nowadays. Within this project, alongside administrative management tasks, I have given precedence to two issues: the changes in individuals' and families' relations with the state and the matter of children resulted from mixed marriages. In 2013, as part of the project, I have organised an ample international conference whose chief result was represented by the book *Intermarriage throughout History*, published at Cambridge Scholar Publishing in June 2014, having myself, Daniela Mârza and Marius Eppel as editors. In 2014, I was nominated as chair of the Education group of the project *European Historical Population Sample Network (EHPS-Net)*, a research project under Dutch leadership that targets the longitudinal analysis of individuals and families with the help of databases standardised according to *Intermediate Data Structure*. As chair of this group, I am responsible for the supervision and coordination of the 8 summer/winter schools organised in Nijmegen, Amsterdam, Geneva, Lund, Umea, Cluj-Napoca as part of this project. In the proposal submitted by the director of EHPS-Net it was mentioned that my nomination as group leader represented a direct outcome of the exceptional results obtained in promoting historical demography by means of the two summer schools that I have consecutively organised in Cluj-Napoca in 2013 and 2014.

Furthermore, another relevant fact for my scientific career is that I am the scientific and administrative manager of the project *Historical Population Database of Transylvania, 1850-*

*1910*, a revolutionary project that aims to build the first database of Transylvania's historical population, on the basis of which, at a later date, a series of longitudinal analyses can be carried out and thus one could research people's life courses by means of micro-social data.

Since 2012 I teach the course "History of the family and childhood" within the Joint Master *European Network of Masters in Children's Rights* – under the aegis of Frieun Universitat (a collaboration that started in 2008 in the form of a seminar). I was invited to teach courses related to this topic in Moldova – The State University (March 2009), in Bucharest – the Letters Faculty, Department of Social Communication and Public Relations (April 2009) and Istanbul (May 2014). During the school years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, I taught at the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the Babeş-Bolyai University the seminar of Historical Demography, a part of the Population History course. I have coordinated bachelor's degree papers and I was part of committees for guidance and approval of doctoral results, as well as of doctoral commissions.

The creation of the HPDT instrument – the historical population database of Transylvania – allows us to envisage, for the immediate future, a plan of development for research pertaining to population history, history of the family and historical demography within the Centre for Population Studies.

The experience accumulated during these years, from my own research and from the interaction with the research undertaken by younger colleagues, the challenges presented by the new working instruments and the necessity of forming a new group of researchers in the mentioned expertise domains (historical demography, history of the family and childhood) are the main reasons that motivate me to submit this thesis in order to be presented in front of the habilitation committee so as to obtain the permission of advising PhD students in their research endeavours.