

Habilitation Thesis: "Childhood and parenting. A sociological approach"

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Abstract

The thesis "Childhood and parenting. A sociological approach" presents a synthesis of the main scientific, educational and institutional achievements, as well as plans for future research and development that underpin the author's application for the certificate of habilitation in the domain of sociology.

The topics of interest in scientific research correspond to three areas:

1. Research in the domain of families, childhood and parenthood, started during the PhD study years and pursued later on, research in the domain of public health, an area connected to the postdoctoral study stage in the domain of health policies ethics, and research associated to the evaluation of various social intervention programmes, especially in the domain of children's rights protection in Romania. The research in the domain of families, childhood and parenthood started during the PhD stage and it followed the features of childhood in a specific context, that created by the foster family, the manner in which substitute parenting is constructed and exercised, and especially the particular features of this type of parenting, analysed within the trend towards the professionalisation of parenting; also, the relations between biological and substitute parenthood were analysed within the social mini-arena represented and outlined by the foster family. The research in the domains of childhood and parenthood have included an innovative theoretical, epistemological and methodological apparatus and was an important resource for developing courses in the following subject-matters: family sociology, childhood sociology, the evaluation of social work programmes. The research on parenthood was taken further in subsequent studies concerning the cultural,

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institutional and relational dimensions of fostering in Romania, as well as in research-action studies concerning parenting in vulnerable, disadvantaged families in the rural environment. These studies aimed at first to make an inventory of Romanian parenting programmes and later focused on identifying the factors that facilitate the parents' participation in such programmes, as well as on identifying the impact on attending parents, on their children as well as on the communities they were held in.

2. The second area of interest for research was that of health policies and of ethical aspects of these policies in Romania, and the research focused on a number of aspects related to the care of chronic diseases: the manner in which the chronic patients' autonomy and responsibility for their own health are constructed, on issues of trust between physicians and patients in the context of chronic illness care.
3. The third area of interest was represented by the *evaluation of various programmes of social intervention* run in the area of children's rights protection. Evaluation of parent education programmes aimed at improving school attendance in the rural environment, in areas of priority education (ZEP) and their impact on the relationship between school and community and on the culture of school communities included in these programmes. National evaluation of specialised services provided by county directorates for the protection of children's rights, and of prevention services provided by local authorities in rural and urban communities in Romania. The quantitative analyses made in these domains were accompanied by a qualitative study concerning institutional practices in the system of social services aimed at children and families, which has revealed the need for the system to reform. This study was the first systematic evaluation of these services at national level, and its results were an important input for the reconfiguration and reorganisation of the entire system of services in the domain. The programme evaluation research provided the author with the opportunity to apply various research methods, both quantitative and qualitative, articulated in particular evaluation strategies: participative, naturalist evaluation, focused on objectives, impact assessment etc.

The thesis also includes a presentation of the activities carried out as part of various national and international research projects, having the author as project manager or as

member of the research team, as well as of the significant results obtained and published in journals indexed in international databases.

The thesis ends with a presentation of a career development plan, which includes a description of the directions of action in the research domains in which the author already has started several projects, but also in the area of teaching activities.