

Married Couples' Perception of Faithfulness

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ABSTRACT: The dynamic character of the marital interactions often guides the marital couple either towards stability, cohesion, and progress or towards instability, discord and sometimes, even dissolution. The biological, physical, and spiritual forces ensure matrimonial faithfulness. Starting with the internal and external factors, we have analyzed the progress of the individual from realizing his psycho-sexual identity to entering the marital couple, and therewith emphasizing, from a sociological and psychological viewpoint the numerous theories that highlight the marital option. When establishing the different marital typologies, we took into consideration only the relationships between the partners of marital couples, analyzing the marriages through the criteria which define the family life: cohesion, stability, tension, belligerency, adjustment, integration, and development.

KEY WORDS: couple, marriage, fidelity, traditional, modern, erotic behavior, marital typologies

Introduction

This article represents a subchapter from the Dissertation titled *Married Couple's perception of infidelity*, unpublished, presented in front of the Evaluation Committee of The University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, in June 2011, in Bucharest. This article is meant to enrich the reader's understanding regarding different particularities of the functional marital couple, seen from a traditional and modern viewpoint, accentuating

aspects which relate to sexual identity, such as choosing the partner, all in the context of marital fidelity. In addition to this, we have proposed to elaborate a short analysis of the different marital typologies such as they are presented in the published literature, therewith capturing directions and changes in the sexual initiation behavior.

1. Defining the notion of “couple”

In general, the notion of **couple** describes the frame within which a man and a woman “communicate, know each other, perform self and inter evaluation, grow, and become complete and mature human beings, one with, for and through the other” (Mitrofan & N. Ciupercă 1998, 246-247). In many cases, the relationship between the partners becomes permanent and there are chances to transform into a marriage, involving multiple aspects that clearly differentiate it from a simple couple relationship.

Therefore, **marriage** marks the beginning of the first sequence of the family life cycle and appears as “a fundamental experience of psychosocial coming-of-age, developing at the intersection between the tendencies and needs of fusion and autonomy” (Mitrofan & N. Mitrofan 1996, 105-106). From a legal viewpoint, marriage represents the freely consented union between a man and a woman, according to the legal provisions, with the purpose of starting a family (Mitrofan & N. Mitrofan 1991, 66). Since it is the starting point for the existence and functioning of the family, the marriage must be contracted based on some strict conditions regarding the legal consent of the two spouses, different sexes, legal age for marriage, physical and mental health, none of the spouses being involved, at the moment of marriage, in another uncompleted marriage and having sexual relations that “consume” the marriage. From a psychological perspective, marriage represents the psychological transformation of the personality, it represents personal growth through the matrimonial and parental experience. Also, from a sociological and demographic point of view, the act of marriage represents the union between two families which have no consanguinity, in this being comprised of a biological side (procreation and raising children) and a social dynamic one (legal and ethical regulations, economic and educational aspects)

(Voinea 1996, 7). Not in the least, from a historic viewpoint, marriage can have two forms: polygamy and monogamy. In other words, the two spouses are united by ethical rights and obligations, legal, economic, religious, and social regulations, including sexual rights or prohibitions.

In short, **the marital couple** represents “a generating core of the family micro group, expressing structurally and functionally the way in which two opposite sex persons model each other creatively, after they get married, growing, motivating, and determining each other through adjusting and assimilating each other, simultaneously on a biological, psychological, and social plan” (Mitrofan & N. Mitrofan 1991, 97). The dynamic character of the marital interactions often guides the couple either towards stability, cohesion, and progress, or towards instability, discord and sometimes even dissolution.

2. Particularities of the couple

2.1. *The couple – between traditionalism and modernism*

Traditionalism and modernism represent two concepts that cover a very extended period in history, symbolizing two stages of evolution, particular through their values, manifestations and manner of understanding and explaining social reality. To highlight them we shall analyze the two concepts from the perspective of lifestyles and family types characteristic to these two large stages.

The **traditional** society was a rigid one when it came to the stability of values, family type or lifestyle. Since supreme value was given to family and community, conservatism was favored, the family lifestyle being a very authoritarian one. Hierarchy, conformism, repression, immobilism and localism were defining a lifestyle which was giving parents superiority over their children, elders superiority over youngsters and men over women. The hierarchy was very well established, and those who would not obey could become a target for repression in any form of its manifestation (Mitrofan & Ciupercă 1998, 186). Traditional monogamy was legitimated by religion and customs, “the women often being a trade object on the marital market” (Kontula & Haavio-Mannila 2004, 79). The husband held the power and responsibility when it came to decision making as he was the one responsible

with earning and administrating family's incomes. At the same time, the crucial distinction between the modern and traditional family was given by the primordality of its obligations and affection (Iluț 2005, 87). Historically speaking, in the traditional societies, the woman was a birth giver "machine" and an "object" for a husband's pleasure with almost no rights and almost no participation in the spiritual and social life. In other words, the woman was just a sexual being, but who had no power to dominate through her sexuality because she was obedient to her husband, her sexuality being more of a matrimonial duty (Kontula & Haavio-Mannila 2004, 79). When talking about intimate relationships, the woman was attributed the role of seductress, a representative of sin and sensual pleasures. The unfaithful woman was undoubtedly socially condemned when her infidelity was discovered, the mother of an illegitimate child was despised and an outcast. The man was enjoying a totally different treatment. Although he accepted the ethical and sexual norms of his time, publicly declaring his marital fidelity, he could bend the rules without losing the respect of the others. The father of an illegitimate child would never be socially punished, but he would remain an honorable man (Stekel 1997, 228). All these led to a double ethical measure, one for men and one for women. Applied as such both socially and legally, the ethics made that the battle between the sexes be, in fact, an uprising against this double standard. Thus, the feminist movement was a far-reaching social phenomenon, which had the merit to liven up a society patriarchal in general (Buțureanu 1921, 217-235), the national versions being of great diversity and originality (Stiger 2002, 43). In the inter-war period, women had proven their indispensability by practicing some manly professions, they won their right to vote, even becoming a social phenomenon: "the unfaithful woman". In the post-war period, the most numerous divorces were provoked by women. For many of them the adultery was not a social need, but mostly a weapon used in the battle between sexes to declare their own personality.

The modern couple is on the opposite side, this couple emerges against the background of failure of old structures and marital motivations and in the context of the battle between sexes and the changes generated by it, which accentuated the equality between sexes, sexual liberty, celibacy over marriage, all around women's rights (Collins 1988, 3).

When talking about family values, being modern implies a great openness to change, to new experiences, to risk, to being dynamic and flexible. The modern couple is profoundly marked by the freedom of choice, more than anytime, the notion of “couple” being actually based on considerations regarding feelings and sexual affinity (Mitrofan 1989, 22). The marital lifestyle changed, cooperation took the place of authority being fueled by equality, change and communication. By equalizing the roles, both partners won the freedom to express their own interests, without being tributary to the social demands specific to the sex-role. So, the modern man shares the household chores and child caring activities with his wife, the woman performing tasks which in the past were strictly a man’s job. The modern woman is strong, she is educated, she has a job and represents an important source of income for her family (Voinea & Apostu 2008, 222). No one finds it odd today that a woman votes or that a man expresses his feeling and fears.

Relationships are more rarely based on external, formal obligations, and more often on love and mutual trust, being more dependent on feelings and sexuality. Both sexes start to express their love through sexuality. Women emotionalize their sexuality, transforming their sexual feelings into verbal communication, while men sexualize their emotions, sexuality becoming a channel through which a large spectrum of emotions is being expressed, emotions such as stress, anger, sentiment, frustration, and love (Træen & Stigum 1998, 52).

Socially, a lot of options appeared in terms of marital relationships, diversity taking over the uniformity of the past. The present society imposes different types of man-woman relationships. Therefore, today one can be married, divorced, widow(er), single, we can live “together with someone”, “around someone” or “amongst someone’s relationships”. We can choose a lifestyle without children or we can stay with the child renouncing the partner. In the contemporary society, more than ever, the problem of marital fidelity is present, and all this against the background of multiple extramarital temptations. The occasions to meet someone (work, holidays) are now many, the temptations are more and more explicit (clothes, make-up) and, even more, the entire society lives under the sign of sexuality. Besides all these, the moral constraints are gone (religious and laic) and the legal ones that

somehow managed some time ago to plant in people's minds the concept of sin, shame or offense regarding adultery are also gone. Contraception and abortion are no longer taboo. So, it seems like nothing in the society forces one to be faithful (Leleu 2003, 12). In the West, sexual tolerance has grown very much, becoming "more hedonistic, pleasure and leisure-oriented as the reproductive role in the sexual life has diminished" (Haavio-Mannila, Kontula and Rotkirch 2002, 194).

Starting with the internal factors (the psychological, individual, and interpersonal dimension) and continuing with the external factors (the sociological, social, and intergroup dimension) we shall present the evolution of the individual from becoming aware of his psychosexual identity to his entering the marital couple

2.2. Sexual Identity

By **sexuality** we understand "the ensemble of psycho individual and psychosocial phenomena related to the dynamic of sexual life" (Cristea, 417). Sexuality is, also, an "act of intersexes relational culture", an "act of knowledge and self-knowledge, an act of discovery and confirmation of self through the other sex, an act of identification and growth of the masculine and feminine role" (Mitrofan & N. Mitrofan 1996, 37).

Every individual's **sexual identity** is not an optional issue. Although, initially, the sexual differences are a result of biological processes determined by the role of chromosomes and hormones, the society acknowledging the individual as being part of one of the two sexes based on the exterior aspect of his/her genitalia, achieving a sexual identity implies the interaction of psychological, psychosocial, and cultural factors. The individual's sexual identity does not form by itself, but it requires a process of assimilating experiences, of learning some habits and a capacity to live up to the role of man or woman (Rădulescu 1996, 41). This identity is formed gradually, under the influence of the environment, entourage, and name, but also through the roles and experiences every individual integrates in a cultural-educational context. Sexual identity also implies that the individual is aware of his belonging to a sex or the other, based on his own perception of this belonging, and confirmed by the interaction with other individuals. At the

same time, the biological-sexual component of the identity is formed easier and earlier than the vocational, ethical, or religious identity.

The process of distinction between masculinity and femininity was and still is interpreted differently, within two main concepts. On the one hand, the Freudian concept that mostly accentuates the importance of parents' presence in the first years of a child's development, and on the other hand, the concept that gives the social learning process the main role in assimilating the characteristics of masculinity and femininity (Rădulescu 1996, 42). In our society, because of the changes in the social optics, and the permissiveness or restrictions imposed by family, religion, and ethic, we are now witnessing an identity crisis, a blending and even erasing of behavioral differences between sexes, aspect which sometimes creates ambiguity and discomfort when assuming the sex-role by the adolescents. Today, the traditional masculine/feminine roles have changed a great deal compared to the past, the new marital ideal relates to equality between sexes in all aspects of life, including intimacy. These changes have modified both marital and premarital relationships (Mitrofan & Ciupercă 1998, 207). However, harmonizing the personal and social life implies, mostly, assuming the sexual role.

2.3. Choosing the partner and marital faithfulness

The choosing of a partner represents the starting point in creating the couple, it is the result of a long and complex process, not always understood, based on being aware of one's own feelings, but also, a great deal influenced by parents, friends, circumstances, and society. From a historic perspective, the choosing of a marital partner has traversed big transformations, the criteria for a marital option have changed from the relational-institutional ones to the socio-emotional types, sexual-emotional, communication, self-fulfillment through intimacy. In traditional societies, marriages were contracted for the financial status of the family, the control of the elders over the youngsters being profoundly serious. "Arranged marriages" dictated who should marry whom, the purpose being to increase the fortune and to ensure the survival of the family lineage. Today, the choosing of a marital partner is, in general, a decision of the individual, any "arrangement" regarding the marriage being considered shameful by the society. The modern family places first the

persons' intimacy, affection, and marital fulfillment, with equal rights in sexual satisfaction, socialization and children caring and financial involvement in the family life.

Sociological and psychological research, meant to highlight the motivations that explain the choosing of a partner, has been highlighted in numerous theories of the marital choice.

One of the most renowned theories is **Stimulus-value-role Theory** of B. Murstein, according to which have been distinguished three successive stages in the marital decision. **The Stimulus stage** states the ways in which people feel attracted to each other, underlining the power of first impression, based on physical attraction. When in the **stage of values**, the persons involved discover that their attitudes and beliefs are compatible. As many values are, to a large extent, personal and closely related to the view of self, rejecting these values is perceived as factually rejecting the person. Not in the least, **the stage of roles** indicates the period of testing the compatibility in roles, establishing how well the two spouses match each other (Mitrofan & N. Mitrofan 1996, 90-91).

Another theory that concerns the marital choice is **the theory of Davies and Kearckoff**, which claims that the marital decision is the result of a selection in five steps. A minimal condition to become someone's beloved is to meet that someone. Nevertheless, **the space proximity filter** tends to work when choosing a partner in a traditional manner. It is difficult for people who live in closed communities, mainly the rural ones, where the sphere of choice is reduced, to choose a partner (Iluț 2000, 139). In the **similarity-complementarity filter** there are called into question factors such as: age, religion, race, social class, beliefs, shared interest, purposes, or values. Similarities can be physical, intellectual, geographical, social, cultural, and psychological. It has been frequently noticed that people with disabilities marry each other (deaf-mute people marry amongst themselves) or even people with the same marital situation (marriages between widowers or divorcees), between people with similar experiences and situations during their childhood or with similar financial problems. Basically, the individual looks for a partner like himself (Voinea 1996, 10). Complementarity is the opposite phenomenon which defines the choosing of a partner as a result of

the way in which people manage to mutually satisfy their complementary needs. **The personal attraction and compatibility filter** does not follow an objective evaluation, through verifiable criteria. Irrespective of the related preconceptions, the physical attraction remains still an essential condition when choosing a partner. We want our partner to be intelligent, sociable, wealthy, well mannered, only after what he/she is first – attractive (Mitrofan & Ciupercă 2002, 28).

Besides all this, we can also note **the need for affiliation** as a main factor that can explain the interpersonal attractions. C. Hazan and P. Shaver described the types of adults' attachment in their relationships with their life partners as follows. There are **adults sure** of their love attachment, they very quickly come to close relationships with others. Very rarely manifest the fear of being abandoned, and their love experiences are based on mutual trust. On the other hand, there are **anxious/ambivalent adults** who are eager for an extremely high affection and intimacy with their partner, but, at the same time, are always consumed by the thought that the partner will not answer in the same manner. Not in the least, **the familiarity criterion** is founded on the idea that, when facing the unknown, the natural reaction is of discomfort, caution, or restraint. As the contact with the said stimulus is repeated, the anxiety vanishes. Therefore, the familiarity enhances the possibility that two people get to love each other, although the repeated contact itself does not automatically generate a stronger attractivity, on the contrary, it may generate the opposite effect, of rejection (Iluț 2000, 132-133).

A particularly important criterion, one considered both by men and women, when choosing the partner, is the partner's faithfulness. Consequently, it is necessary to approach **the marital faithfulness**, by which we understand the strict observance, in the couple, of the rules of monogamy (Rădulescu 1999, 54). It also represents "a constancy in beliefs and feelings, the permanence of devotion and fidelity, of positive attitudes towards the marital partner" (Mitrofan & Mitrofan 1991, 147). Being faithful means having only one partner sexually, emotionally, and psychologically. In other words, it means to have sexual relations only with one person, to love only one person and to have intimate exchanges and confessions only with the one who is your marital partner. By definition, sexual relations are a symbol,

a sign of the marital relation. Faithfulness can be a state of grace in which the two spouses love each other deeply, are happy and overwhelmed, not wishing for someone else both emotionally and sexually. In this case, faithfulness comes naturally. Such feelings of love, reciprocal desire and exclusivity usually characterizes the relationship at the beginning, and this could stay the same for the rest of their life. Nevertheless, faithfulness can be chosen based on a spiritual approach. From a secular perspective, the spouses make a commitment to live their couple relationship as a means to fulfill themselves and to help each other to reach this fulfillment. In addition, on a religious level, faithfulness appears as a commitment related to sacred and it can be reached within a religion (Leleu 2003, 52).

The couple is the result of the direct interaction between the cohesion forces, which tend to consolidate the relationship, and the discord forces which tend to break the connections between spouses. The forces that ensure the marital faithfulness are the cohesion ones, and they can be biological, physical, and spiritual. On the biological plan, we can say that there is an attachment instinct inside every one of us, a need to be connected to other people, this instinct is the one that keeps the couple. Moreover, there is, in every individual, the drive to cling, by which we understand that irresistible need for contact, the need to be close to our fellows on an emotional level. On a physical level, both man and woman feel a legitimate need for security and fulfillment, a need for a stable and exclusive relationship, that forms an optimal space for growth (Leleu 2003, 42-45). Love can lead to spirituality, spiritual, in this case, meaning not part of a religion, a belief in a deity. Moreover, spirituality inspires faithfulness, on this level faithfulness reaches a new dimension, that of metaphysical recognition of the other. By believing in a deity or adhering to a set of moral principles, the spouses can make commitments to remain faithful, spirituality being both the source and the means through which it survives.

It may happen that the spouses lose the feeling of unity, the faithfulness becomes just a routine. In the case of ordinary faithfulness, feelings survive, but they cannot maintain the spouses' faithfulness, but the emotional, sexual needs, the pleasure of routine, lack of ambition, obedience towards social and religious norms or the attachment to money. The couple does not reach

dissolution because the spouses fear complications, fear of change or a bad reputation. This is the most common case of faithfulness amongst domestic persons, psychologically rigid, or repressed persons. Or the spouses may end up not loving each other anymore, or being indifferent to each other even hostile, remaining together only for fear of consequences (Leleu 2003, 51-53).

2.4. Types of erotic behavior display

The erotic behavior is a complex one, having different expressions, with extremely different and unpredictable reactions and expressions. Basically, love is not measurable, and this brings a great deal of problems in the way of investigating it. **Passionate love** is that type of love “predominantly esthetic and of opinion, a physical love” (Evola 2002, 41), characterized by a tumultuous emotional state, a mix of affection, sexual attraction, exaltation, pain, anxiety, relaxation, altruism, and jealousy. As is predominantly emotional-affective, reason is overwhelmed, the behavior escaping the control of reason. The partner is idealized, possible flaws are turned into qualities (“blind love”). If the relationship between the erotic couple is long-standing and more permanent, still guarding a great emotional weight, it shall take the form of **long-lasting love**, true or companionate, as is also known. This type of love is that type of affection felt by those who have a very interconnected life, and it manifests itself as a more settled, rational, practical relationship, based on trust, care and mutual support, understanding and tolerance. Although with a less “noisy” erotic display, the companionate love is not opposed to passionate love, the attenuation of passion makes way for other factors: a system of values, attitudes, preferences” (Mitrofan & Mitrofan 1996, 118). The reason imposes itself over uncontrolled passion, generating steady relationships.

Apart from these, the published literature, mentions other types of love, in which we can find, in different proportion, parts from the two main categories. **Romantic love** is characterized by that “love at first sight”, the physical attraction being essential. Should the couple be characterized by jealousy, the two being excessively preoccupied and dependent on the partner, we can talk about “**possessive love**”. **The love between best friends** is often generated by friendship and founded on comfortable intimacy, confidentiality,

harmony, care, mutual respect. When talking about **pragmatic love**, we must mention the fact that, when looking for a life partner, the most important are aspects such as: functionality of the relationship, meeting the needs of one another. **Selfless love**, in exchange, implies care, unconditional giving to the partner, it means giving, understanding, forgiving. There are also persons who **play for love**, in such a relationship one or both spouses like “to play” and win, just like playing a simple game (Iluț 2000, 148-149).

The psychologist Robert Sternberg envisioned love as a triangle whose edges, with different lengths, are passion, intimacy, and obligation. By making different combinations of these dimensions, it results more forms of manifestation of love, namely: **associative love** (intimacy/obligation), **romantic love** (intimacy/passion), **complete love** (intimacy/passion/obligation), and **empty love** (just obligation) (Mitrofan & N. Mitrofan 1996, 115).

Not least, sociologist John Alan Lee identified six primal style of love display that can be combined, just like the primary colors, resulting in secondary styles: **eros** (passion), **ludus** (game – „busy bee”), **storge** (friendship, tenderness), **mania** (compulsive love), **pragma** (pragmatic style of love – economic) and **agape** (selfless love) (Dinu 2004, 132-136).

2.5. Trends and changes in sexual initiation behavior

Looking at the last century, we can easily notice major changes in the relationships between men and women when it comes to sexual initiation. Up until the middle of the last century, both girls and boys had clear boundaries regarding the limits of sexual exploration. Until marriage, girls were, usually, virgins, and would never “go all the way. A girl would allow a boy to have sexual relations only if, prior to this, they got engaged, and very rarely would expose this fact. Girls’ social reputation was mainly based on their capacity to withstand the sexual advances of boys, sexually active girls were despised both by the other girls and by the men who took advantage of them. Also, the boys, as future husbands, were actively participating in observing the same ethic codes related to sexual rights and prohibitions. Today we see a clear tendency in the sexual initiation behavior, noticing that there is a separation between love and sex, participation of young people in premature and libertarian sexual relations, without emotional background. From being

prohibited and taboo, sexuality became mandatory and necessary. More often and at earlier ages, both boys and girls expect that, through psychosexual initiation, to confirm their identity, autonomy, maturity, trust in themselves, to eliminate their anxiety and to free their sexual tensions. Even though it is still used the distinction good girl/bad girl, girls today believe they have the right to have sexual activities and relations at any age, not refraining from these until marriage. On the other hand, boys are also content that girls have become more available sexually speaking. Most people, men and women, have, at the moment of marriage a significant baggage of sexual knowledge and experiences. Even inside the marriage both spouses expect, on the sexual level, more than the older generations (Giddens 1992, 13-16).

2. 6. *Marital typologies*

When establishing the marital typologies, we take into consideration only the relationships between spouses, analyzing marriages using the criteria that define family life: cohesion, stability, tension, conflict, adaptation, integration, and growth.

Every couple is unique, with the spouses having specific ways to prove their trust inside the relationship. Depending on **the expression of trust**, there were highlighted some themes in the styles in which the spouses do this. **“Strong hand” relationship** is mainly characterized by anxiety related to the spouse’s faithfulness. When losing confidence in one’s spouse, in despair, a person can accompany the spouse everywhere, can take safety precautions that the spouse is where he/she said it would be, can call the spouse to check on him/her. For those who have such a spouse, the situation is intolerable, becoming incapable to live a normal life. Those who are perceived as untrustworthy persons can decide to act as such, since they are unjustly accused (Cole & Relate 2005, 64-65). **The “ostrich” relationship** is similar to the behavior of these birds. When a couple knows they have delicate problems concerning their mutual trust in the relationship, they ignore them, hoping they will disappear. Unfortunately, this approach leads to difficulties up to a moment when they cannot be ignored (Cole & Relate 2005, 69). **The “level of trust scale” relationship** is specific to couples in which each spouse constantly measures both his/her own capacity to have confidence and his/

her partner's capacity, all this leading to a constant battle on who has more confidence (Cole & Relate 2005, 74).

Looking at the types of marriages analyzed by F. Kunkel, it can be revealed both the dynamic of **marital adjustment** and **the dysfunctional dangers** which the couple faces. **The tempestuous marriage** is characterized by the alternation of affection and fusion moments with those of distancing. Couples like this do not have the courage and the strength to change the course of their marriage. The spouses continue to live their life as a couple through emotional hostilities with a great deal of tension. **The idle marriage** is based on the mutual selfishness of the spouses, each of them putting the difficulties of life on the other's shoulders, without being responsible for them. **The tough marriage** is characterized by almost no communication, given the fact that the spouses see and valorize each other as potential aggressors to the other's intimacy, this behavior hides the inner fragility (Mitrofan & Ciupercă 1998, 193).

A more complex typology of marital lifestyles was given by F. Cuber, who wanted to present **the concept of marriage** rather than the spouses' personalities. **The marriage of those used to conflicts** is a type characterized by the frequency of conflicts, unconcealed from children, but poorly externalized to people outside the couple. Although the conflict is permanently amplified, the couple rarely reaches dissolution, after the crisis the marriage re-enters normality. The main constant of the **devitalized marriage** is the erosion of harmonious, communication and love relationships, now in strong contrast with the images of "the first years". Little time spent together, and unsatisfactory sexual relations are just a few of the coordinates of this type of relationship. The only thing that keeps them together is the shared interest for raising and educating children. However, it is rarely concluded by ending the marriage, the spouses just indulging in this atmosphere of indifference. In the case of **passive-cordial marriage**, the passivity has characterized the relationship from the very beginning. These persons just do not want to get emotionally involved in a man-woman relationship, this family model facilitating a minimum of inconvenience against the spouse when it comes to personal independence. **The vital marriage** is based on an authentic relationship between the spouses, relationship that become essential for their

life. Any activity makes sense and is important only if the spouse takes part in it, they find satisfaction by living one for the other, the spouse dominates their interests, thoughts, and actions. **Total relationship marriage** is similar to the vital relationship, the mutuality points being more numerous. The spouses never lose their unity or the sense of their relationship's centrality, this being the main source for preserving the marriage (Mitrofan 1984, 69-71).

Helmuth Schelsky gave a historical classification of the most common types of marriages depending on the sexual freedom or constraint imposed to spouses by ethical or legal regulations and he distinguished several marital types. In the case of **relative polygamy**, the husband seems to have more than one wife, and the wife has the right to leave her husband, none of the spouses being forced to live together for life. The main characteristic of the **absolute polygamy** is that the woman is the one forced to dedicate, sexually speaking, exclusively to her husband while he has the legal right to have more legitimate sexual partners. Within a marriage founded on **moderate monogamy**, both spouses are forced to subordinate to monogamic sexuality, but they have the right to change their partners by divorcing. This is not the case with **absolute monogamy** when both spouses are forced to live their entire life within the couple. However, unlike his wife, the husband enjoys more sexual freedom and has more chances to remarry in case his spouse dies (Rădulescu 1999, 302-303).

Conclusions

Although within the married couple, time may wear out the feelings, diffusing the euphoria from the beginning and slowly, but surely, bringing the crisis, there still remain, in both spouses, immutable wishes. In every human being we can identify the need to have a faithful spouse, who can intercept the need to love and to be loved unconditionally, the desire to form a whole, to be inseparable, to share emotions, events, and projects, to understand and be understood. Regardless of the changes proposed by the modern and postmodern society, these have been the premises from which people entered the covenant of marriage, physical intimacy being the climax of the union between the two spouses, and these should still be the fundamental values for starting a functional marital couple.

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