



May 17 - 19, 2017  
Zagreb, Croatia



# SYMPOSIUM

**RESEARCHING WITH FAMILIES-  
THEORETICAL, METHODOLOGICAL,  
ETHICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES**

# Presenting papers/ authors

Natalija Lisak

- **Family Quality of Life-Narrative approach through collecting the life stories with parents of children with disabilities**

Jana Rapuš Pavel, Nada Turnšek, Olga Poljšak Škraban, Špela Razpotnik

- **Participatory action research with vulnerable families**

Nina Mešl, Tadeja Kodele

- **Action Research Project as an Opportunity to Co-create New Knowledge with Multi-challenged Families**

Anja Miroslavljević, Ivana Jeđud Borić, Nivex Koller Trbović

- **Researching in family setting- social pedagogic experiences from Croatia**

Valentina Kranželić, Irma Kovčo Vukadin, Martina Ferić

- **Ethical Considerations in Family Studies – the Example of FamResPlan Research Project**



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# Researching with families - social pedagogic experiences from Croatia

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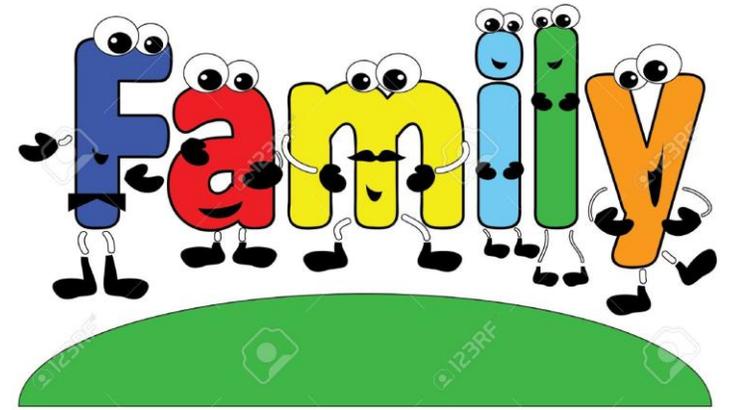
# Content

## Focus on three key topics:

- Family definitions
- Research design
- Methods of data gathering

# Family definitions- who is family?

- Challenges in defining **post-modern families** (at risk)
- **Family pluralism** (structural changes in families)
- Family= **socially constructed, situationally conditioned cluster of meanings** that represents family activity as a constellation of ideas, images and terminology (Holstein i Gubrium, 1995)
- **Family system theory**- family as a dynamic developmental system; functioning of a family as a whole or family as a system



# Different types of families

- ✓ (typical) family
- ✓ Adoptive/Foster family,
- ✓ Single parent family
- ✓ Stepfamily
- ✓ Grandparent family
- ✓ Blended family
- ✓ Same gender parents family
- ✓ Cross generational family
- ✓ Surrogate family
- ✓ Calendar family....



# Definitions of family in family studies-

**criteria** (<http://family.jrank.org/pages/486/Family-DefinitionRelated-Constructs.html>)

- **Inclusive** definitions
- **Theoretical** definitions
- **Situational** definitions
- **Normative** definitions

Criteria for family definitions exist, however **researchers often use practical definitions due** to limited resources and for pragmatic reasons (focus on what/who is easier or available to reach and study (e.g. parents and children) leaving one whole „world“ unexplored.

**Holistic and qualitative approach** needed!



Social network method

# FamResPlan

- How does family defines family?
- How does criterion participant defines his/her family?
- And how those members define family?

# Complexities in studying family as a system and researching multy family perspectives

Greenstein (2006): **five specifities of studying families:**

1. Family is a **system** consisted of individuals.
2. **Defining family** is challenging.
3. Family members have many **different roles and status** at the same time.
4. Many information and data about families is **private and hidden**.
5. We all have some experiences and **assumptions about family** and family life.

# Multi family perspective

Different dimensions:

- *different perspectives* (generations, gender...)
- *differences between individual family members, differences between families...*
- + all of these dimensions are interrelated

# Multi family member study

**Epistemology**- research questions

**Methodological** - data collection (simultaneous individual interviews, separate individual sequential interviews; individual and family interview, family group intervju/conjoint interviews)

❖ **„WE” element, shared and joint experiences in focus**

- What does multi family perspective mean?
- On which dimension to focus and why?
- How to „catch” it?

# Family interview as a primary data collection method

- Type of interview where family members are present together at the same time to find out how they experience the same event or specific theme (Resczek, 2014)
- Qualitatively DIFFERENT DATA than in individual interview (Arksey, 1996)
- TOPICS: „WE” form/experience/group perspective/constructs (e.g. family resilience (family sensitive or threatening topics not convenient))

# Complexity of qualitative family research/interview

- Family interview= **entering the family and their home** (private life and space, everyday living which can be uncomfortable for family members- researchers socialize with families (Žižak et al, 2012, Sinčić, 2013)

MacDonald i Greggans (2008) challenges:

- 1) multiple **interruptions of interviews**,
- 2) difficulties in **building trust**,
- 3) issues in **consent giving and confidentiality of data**,
- 4) issues of **power and control** during the interviews

MacLean (2014)

- *Go there*
- *Be there*
- *Come back*

# Family interview?

- METHOD OR APPROACH?

(as a specific research and methodological approach)

- A METHOD AND INTERVENTION FOR **STRENGTHENING FAMILIES?**

- Family study methods must be flexible, sensitive and practical
- Develop new and creative collecting data methods as well as data analysis methods

# Benefits of family group interview as a method of data collection

- More balanced and complete picture of researched phenomena
- Getting more complete data because participants supplement “holes in memories” of another
- Gaining insight in common and/or different understandings
- Provide ability of participants’ reflections on other’s statements
- Gives voice to silent participants
- Enables observation of family dynamics and interactions
- Participants interactions enriches data and provides additional insight into relationships of participants
- Enables deepening of content during interview
- Makes it easier to create a relationship and trust between researcher and participants
- Enables discovering different knowledges/information each participant has
- Easier and faster to organize than individual/separate interviews with each family member

# Disadvantages of family group interview

- Domination of one participant over the other
- The presence of others may lead to anxieties in expressing one's own opinion
- Unwanted discovering of certain information of some participant in joint interview
- May provoke disagreement or conflict between participants
- Revealing of family myths, secrets and taboos
- The question of anonymity as the participants belong to the same family
- The issues of confidentiality between family members during analysis and case studies
- Lack of participant's concentration
- Researcher's affection to specific participant

# Possibilities of using creative methods and techniques as a complementary data collection methods

- Expresive, creative methods and techiques
- Enables thinking „out of the box” and reflections of participants
- Gaining deeper/different/holistic understanding of researched phenomena
- Enables easier talking and sharing experiences about sensitive and hard topics and convient for children and young people
- Participative methods
- **More resources (time!) needed**

# Creative complementary methods

- Observation (video, audio recording, observation logs...)
- Self- assessment methods and techniques (metaphores, autobiography, essays, visual methods, drawings, self-portrait, timelines, genogram, eco maps, emotional maps, drama techniques, family sculptures, vignettes, photographs...)

# Many questions...

- Family interview= **specific approach** that goes beyond method and includes new quality through connections of different data collection methods, entering to complex world of family relations and everyday living

*Which reserach competencies regarding data collection- family interiewing are needed?*

*How to develop family interview as a intervention for family strenghtening?*

*Participatory (action) research with families?*

*How to analyse data in family researches (individual vs. family data)?*

# Experiences so far....

- Research with foster families
- Research with families in risk

