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**USING VISUAL METHODS TO DESCRIBE FAMILY CHANGES: DOING AND DISPLAYING MIGRANT FAMILIES IN LITHUANIA**

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The de-bordering of Europe and the development of intra-European mobility are the significant factors giving the rise of the number of family changes in Lithuania. Intensive flows of emigration and increasing returned migration, as well as high mobility of women, transnational networking and growing numbers of parents-children living separately are among characteristic features of the recent family situation in Lithuania. This paper will examine the situation of families who are experiencing family changes due to emigration of one/several family members. As Janet Finch (2007: 72) argues the “... changes in the circumstances of one or more individuals can trigger the need to re-specify and reconfirm family relationships”, families under migration experience times of heightened intensity in the need to convey that they are still families. The paper will draw on the qualitative research of families under migration, carried out in 2014 at Vilnius University. The qualitative research was a part of the two-stage mixed methods research study, supported by the Research Council of Lithuania. The questions were raised, such as, what do we mean by migrant family change? Which way family practices are organized in different lived realities of family change? How family members try to convey that family relationships work and what meanings do they apply to these activities? What are the appropriate methods to do research on lived realities of families under migration?

My decision on the conceptual research model was to a large extent based on the knowledge attained during research studies since 2004 and the analysis of literary sources. The classical Reuben Hill’s *ABC-X model*, constructed while studying families separated by war was chosen to serve as the organizing conceptual axis of the whole two-stage mixed methods research. To this day, the model is widely applied in sociology when researchers seek to analyse family experiences.
across contexts unfavourable to family – experiences of violence, loss, divorce and re-marriage, physical handicap and migration (see, for example, McKenry and Price 2005). The works of Pauline G. Boss and her insights on boundary ambiguity as well as managing stress as the processes of selecting and applying ways of coping got a special attention. By invoking Hill’s stress model Boss has researched families of soldiers who went missing in Vietnam and families of patients suffering from Alzheimer’s disease.

Although the qualitative research, conducted in 2014 is framed by family stress model the author of the article takes the perspective of analysing family change instead of family stress. In adopting R. Hill’s model for the study of families in migration an assumption was made that migratory events do not necessarily lead to the negative impact on the family, since events/situations (factor A) are mediated by family resources (factor B) and by what meaning family members attribute to the event/situation (factor C). In this case, family resources and ability to define the situation in positive way are considered to be indicators of coping with challenges. Coping is analysed as a process, not as a result and refers to it as impact management (factor D), understood as management of family resources and definitions of the situations held by family members (Juozeliūnienė 2013).

In particular, the author of the paper was concerned to focus more precisely on family practices through the lens of managing family resources and emotional attitudes. The challenge was to unpack migrant family change-continuity.

Impact management or managing changes are analysed through the lens of family practices. The concepts of doing family (Morgan 2011) and displaying family (Finch 2007) are considered as important sociological tool kits to study family practices. These concepts are employed to show that family life must not only be ‘done’ but also be ‘seen to be done’, while both family members and external audiences need to recognize and accept these displays. In family sociology the concepts of doing and displaying families initially were introduced both as empirical activities and as analytic concepts (Dermott et al. 2011). The author of the paper focus on the analysis of empirical activities of family members to consider the applicability of both concepts to the situations of family changes in the context of migration.

The paper draw on migrant family doing practices through role-making activities and relationships organized around generation, kinship, gender, friendship while family displays are analyzed by different examples of verbal explanation of family practices, behavioral presentation to the audience and acceptance of displays by multiple audiences.

Eight families were selected for qualitative research. In order to allow the variety of narratives, selected families reflected different lived realities of migration characterized by different social reception of the audience. In order to follow the logic of mixed methods approach the focus was on the actualization of solidarity indexes (developed by Vern L. Bengtson) analysed in the first stage of the two-staged research study. Solidarity relationships were conceptualized as family resources, capable to be accumulated in times of changes. Families selected for interview represented various solidarity based family types. Three members for each family took part in the interview for the purpose to give „voices“ to family members and significant persons of different gender, generation and relatedness to the family.

The author discusses two methods used in interviews with migrant family members – a Role making map and concentric circles to study emotional support. Integration of two visual methods in the interview helped the informant and the researcher narrativize the management of family resources and definitions of the situations held by family members.

The first visual method – Role making map - is modification of My family mapping method, introduced by Irene Levin (1993). Role making map consisted of four steps with partial goals: 1) Forming a list of issues associated with the lived realities of the period of migration. In this step the structure of the family practices according to an informant is determined. 2) Informant groups issues and assigns them into different groups of significance. Colours could be used by informant in order
to associate significance with different colours. The structure of family practices is represented in a hierarchical way according to the informant. 3) Role making map is formed, visualizing how an informant managed different changes appeared in the times of migration. The informant is asked to arrange a map, according to how difficult or easy was to manage the listed issues. 4) In-depth interview – researcher asks an informant about meanings, which he gives to his role making and asks to narrate family practices. This visual method takes its point in “doing” and “displaying” family in the context of migration.

The second visual method takes its point in “relationships” of emotional support. The author of the paper analysed advantages of concentric circles methods in order to choose between the Four field map (Wendy Sturgess, Judy Dunn, and Lisa Davies), Five field map (Margareta Samuelsson, Gunilla Thernlund, and Jerker Ringström) and concentric circles maps, introduced by Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl (2006), while studying friendship. The idea of mapping personal communities by Spencer and Pahl was selected to study emotional support. The informant was asked to place the names of people who provided emotional support on a map of concentric circles or out of the circles in case they did not provide the expected support or were labelled by escalating the boundary ambiguity. The meanings attributed to different practices were examined in a number of ways throughout the in-depth interview by discussing the way the names were allocated to different circles as well as by comparing emotional support by relatives, kin, siblings, friends and acquaintances. Although the author tried to avoid the strict division of space of the concentric circles according to categorical concepts of family members, kin, relatives and relational concepts, such as close friends and acquaintances, however these concepts were applied in the data collecting and data analysis processes.

While the narratives that emerge during the interviews with the members of the eight families cannot be viewed as comprehensive analysis of migrant family change, they provide insights into the family change-continuity situation of families under migration and can be regarded as contributing to a multi-layered picture of family practices. Application and testing of the concepts of doing and displaying family is a valuable contribution to the research field of family and interpersonal relationships.

References


