The Interim Meeting  
of the Research Network “Sociology of families and intimate lives” (RN13)  
of European Sociological Association (ESA)  

FAMILY: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE  
September 25-27, 2014  
Mykolas Romeris University  
Ateities str. 20, Vilnius, Lithuania  
http://ESA-RN13im2014.mruni.eu

ABSTRACT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2014  
SESSION III: FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY SOCIAL NETWORKS

Rosario POZO GORDALIZA, University of Balearic Islands, Spain  
Maria Antonia GOMILA GRAU, University of Balearic Islands, Spain  
Belén PASCUAL, University of Balearic Islands, Spain  
Marga VIVES, University of Balearic Islands, Spain

THE CHANGING NATURE OF INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS  

Keywords: Intergenerational relations, family solidarity, education, childcare

Description of the theoretical framework
Relationship among grandparents, adult children and grandchildren are built today on solidarity as strongly as they were in the past, but they are also built on expectations, affection, possibilities and opportunities.

The solidarity dimension and caring approach has often overcome other approaches in the study of grandparent/grandchildren’s relationships. Scarce importance has given to subjects such as the educative role of grandparents and the bonding process between grandparents and grandchildren.

Research hypothesis
Grandparents still play a crucial role in the education of the children and through the relational processes, family relations, etc., but they need specific support especially in families experiencing crisis situations or at risk. Despite programmes based on family training are developed, there are very few formative programmes addressing grandparents.

Description of the data and the research methods
This paper presents the results of the qualitative analysis of several discussion groups carried out during a workshop on intergenerational relations and the educative role of grandparents with senior students of the Open University of Senior (UOM) during 2014. Discussion groups are focussed on three main subjects: socioeconomic profile, life conditions and family relations. A previous survey
to 50 senior (older than 55) students of the UOM has been carried out in 2013 and it has led to a qualitative analysis of these specific issues.

A group of 12 senior participates in a methodological experiment aiming at providing support for grandparents caring for grandchildren by promoting intergenerational relations and positive educative patterns. The workshop addresses the adaptation of an evidence-based programme based on training family competences. The aim of the workshop is to know the formative needs regarding childcare and social skills in order to provide support to their educative task. Furthermore, the project aims at promoting the intergenerational relations through the training of positive education patterns that provide them with strategies to cope with childcare and education tasks.

**Most important findings**

The quantitative analysis gave us a sociological profile of a specific group of senior (students of UOM). It provides information about their life conditions, the perception of their own wellbeing and health situation, their care responsibilities and a subjective sight of their family relations. The general profile of the senior is that of: women (65.3%), mainly married or living in couple (90%), with a secondary level of studies (60%), and their economic situation is good (ample). They maintain a fluent relationship with their children and grandchildren. They are not intensive caregiver in general, but occasional carers mainly due to work responsibilities of the parents.

The workshop carried out at the UOM has given the opportunity to know how grandparents define their relationships with the other generations within the family.

The paper show grandparent’s voices about how and what they think their role in the family is, and how their expectations are mediated by external and internal factors that shape family relationships. Some of the external are the economic crisis, the public resources, educative, social and work dynamics, but also cultural elements that define the life styles of the different generations: children, young, adults and seniors. Internal factors deal with educative and socio-economic level, life and health conditions and marital status. A great part of these intergenerational relationships revolve on child caring and solidarity relations, but also on values transmission and education patterns.

**Conclusion/discussion**

The research is still on-going and therefore, not definitive results can be presented for the moment. The analysis of the survey has provided some quantitative information that contributes to provide a general profile of the participant grandparents. However, outcomes from the qualitative analysis of the discussion groups are not ready yet. It is expected that the second part of the analysis will provide us with information about how grandparents perceive their educative role and how intergenerational relationships into the family configure.

**References**


Megías, I., Ballesteros J.C., (2011) *Abuelos y abuelas... para todo: percepciones en torno a la educación y el cuidado de los nietos*. Fundación de Ayuda contra la Drogadicción.