

SUBJECTIVE DEFINITION OF THE FAMILY IN LITHUANIA: EVIDENCE BASED ON QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

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Annotation

The aim of the paper is to present research results on subjective understanding of family among population of Lithuania. The research objectives are to explore the criteria used in defining family, identify persons named as family members and non-family members based on these criteria. The research hypotheses include the following: (1) the list of family members not necessarily include kin only, persons beyond the nuclear and extended families could be named as family members also, and visa versa, persons from nuclear and extended families could be named as non-family members; (2) registered marriage and blood are not the only criteria in subjective definition of the family in Lithuania any more. The test of the hypotheses was based on 60 in-depth qualitative interviews carried out in June – August, 2012 under the research project “Trajectories of Family Models and Social Networks: Intergenerational Perspective”. The research results showed that blood criteria is still important in the definition of the nuclear family of procreation and the nuclear family of orientation, what concerns children and parents. Marriage criteria is important when defining the nuclear family of procreation and what concerns spouses. What concerns other persons, related to kin and non-kin relationship, other criteria play a more important role: mutual help and support, emotional closeness and attachment, close emotional bonds in a certain period of life (childhood, school years, etc.), common

activities and interests, life under the same roof, living in a nearby place, belonging to a certain formal or informal community and/or other investment into relationships, etc.

Keywords: *concept of the family, criteria of definition of the family, family members, non-family members.*

Introduction

The aim of the paper is to present research results on subjective understanding of family among population of Lithuania. The research objectives are the following: (1) to explore the criteria used by the population of Lithuania in defining family; (2) to identify persons named as family members and non-family members based on these criteria.

The need to explore the concept of family in Lithuania is evident, first of all, because of the transformation of family institution in the past decades. Official statistics (Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania, 2013) show that in 2011, the number of marriages registered amounted to 19.2 thousand, that of divorces – 10.3 thousand; there were 6.3 marriages and 3.4 divorces per 1000 population; in the period from 2001 to 2011 divorces increased by 11,9%; singles (never married) increased by 4,1% in the same period; illegitimate live births reached 30% of total live births in 2011 (in 2000, it amounted to 22,6% of total live births). Sociological and demographic studies have also proven dramatic changes of family (Stankūnienė, Maslauskaitė, 2008; Maslauskaitė, 2006; Juozeliūnienė, Leonavičiūtė, 2009; etc.), e.g., living together in not married couples/cohabitation has become a widespread phenomenon in Lithuania, etc.

Secondly, the concept of family is under intersection of reality of this social institution and approach to it in social policy. As Hantrais and Letablier (1996) showed in their study, the concept of family differs in various contexts: public policy, institutional sphere, statistics, etc. In Lithuania, discussions among politicians, scientists, population on family concept started in 2001, when the Civil Code (Lietuvos Respublikos civilinis kodeksas, 2000) was approved and in the Family Law Book, attached to the document, the term of consensual union was introduced. The main question of the discussions was whether it is needed to legitimize unregistered partnership? The discussions became even sharper in 2008, when the State Concept of Family Policy (Valstybinė šeimos politikos koncepcija, 2008) was approved by Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas). In this document, the concept of family was legally defined for the first time and was based on the following criteria: registered marriage among men and women and their biological or adopted children. In this document, it was also noted that all other groups of persons of close kinship, relating on mutual help, conducting of common economy but not on registered marriage were protected by the state as motherhood, fatherhood, childhood and not as family.

So, pluralism of family formation and patterns of living together have created evident need to revise the criteria for the definition of the family. The most comprehensive exploration of the research object can provide sociology with its research instruments. Therefore, such hypotheses were formulated in initial research: (1) once presuming that the subjective understanding of the family became more pluralized, it could be expected that the list of family members not necessarily includes kin only, persons beyond the nuclear and extended families could be named as family members also, and *visa versa*, persons from nuclear and extended families could be named as non-family members; (2) once family institution is changed in past decades, understanding of the family and criteria of its definition also should change. So, registered marriage and blood relationship are not the only criteria in subjective family definition in Lithuania anymore.

The first results on the research topic were presented in the paper “The Concept of Family: Subjective Approach of the Population of Lithuania” (Česnuitytė, 2012) and were based on quantitative data. This paper is a continuation of presentation of the research results on the subjective understanding of the family in Lithuania. However, in this case, the test of hypotheses is based on the analysis of qualitative data. Both quantitative survey and qualitative interviews were conducted under the ESF-funded project “Trajectories of Family Models and Social Networks: Intergenerational Perspective”¹ (code No.VP1-3.1-ŠMM-07-K-01-106), implemented by researchers of the Department of Sociology of Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius, Lithuania).

The theoretical background of the initial research was presented in the above mentioned paper by the author (Česnuitytė, 2012). Based on theories described in family sociology classics (Parsons, 1944; Parsons, Bales, 1956; Burgess, 1926) and the modern work of prominent researchers (Berger, 2002; Cheal, 2002; Stacey, 1996; Donati, 1998; 2010; Bengtson, 2001; Morgan, 1996; 2011; Widmer, 2010; Jallinoja, Widmer, 2011), the initial research was conducted (guidelines for the qualitative interviews were created, research hypotheses formulated and data analysis conducted). So, in this paper only research results are presented. The paper consists of two parts: in the first part, research data and methods are described; in the second part, interpretation of the research results of qualitative interviews is presented. At the end of the paper, conclusions and list of references are given.

1. Research data and methods

The aim of the empirical research is to explore the subjective understanding of family among population of Lithuania. The research object is the opinion of population of Lithuania on family concept and criteria of its definition. Such research questions were raised:

- 1) What persons constitute family and non-family according to population of Lithuania?
- 2) On what criteria based family members and non-family members are named by the population of Lithuania?

Following the questions, research hypotheses were formulated: (1) once presuming that the subjective understanding of the family became more pluralized, it could be expected that the list of family members not necessarily includes kin only, persons beyond the nuclear and extended families could be named as family members also, and *visa versa*, persons from nuclear and extended families could be named as non-family members; (2) once family institution is changed in past decades, understanding of the family and criteria of its definition also should change. So, registered marriage and blood relationship are not the only criteria in subjective family definition in Lithuania anymore.

In order to test the hypotheses, texts of the in-depth qualitative interviews were explored. This method was chosen in order to further explore the tested phenomenon, i.e. the concept of family and criteria of its definition. In total, 60 in-depth qualitative interviews were conduct-

¹ The research methodology of the project “Trajectories of Family Models and Social Networks: Intergenerational Perspective” was developed in cooperation with the sociologists of the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon led by K. Wall (Portugal) (Wall, 2006) and sociologists of the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne led by J.-A. Gauthier, D. Joye and E. Widmer (Switzerland) (Gauthier, Joye, Widmer, 2010). More information is available on the website of the project: <http://famo-socnet.mruni.eu/>.

ed. The field-work was carried out in June – August, 2012². The respondents were persons who had previously (at the end of 2011 – beginning of 2012) participated in the quantitative survey. After the first results of the quantitative survey, the sampling for the in-depth qualitative interviews was made. The sampling criteria were age, gender and living place. 30 female and 30 male respondents were invited to participate in the in-depth interviews. These persons were selected in the following way: 15 persons were selected from each birth cohort examined in the project (1950-1955, 1960-1965, 1970-1975 and 1980-1985); 10 persons were selected from each of six different regions of Lithuania (Alytus, Marijampolė, Utena, Klaipėda, Panevėžys, Vilnius). Selection of the regions was based on its geographical location and social-economic characteristics of the region.

All respondents were interviewed individually in face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted in a variety of environments, depending on the requests of the respondents. All interviews were recorded. The average duration of the interviews was 54 minutes (the longest interview was 2 hours and 30 minutes, the shortest one – 18 minutes). Afterwards, the records were transcribed and analyzed. In total, the transcribed texts fitted into 850 pages.

In the study, the principles of ethics were maintained. During the field work, the principle of voluntary participation was applied. The respondents were informed about the opportunity to choose to participate or not to participate in the in-depth interviews. 18 potential respondents used this opportunity not to participate, and other persons instead of them were invited to participate in the interviews. For those, who agreed to participate in the in-depth interviews, the objectives and benefits of the study were explained. Only after these procedures, the in-depth interview was conducted with each respondent. During the processing and analysis of the interviews, the records were encrypted in such a way that it was impossible to identify particular personalities. Therefore, the anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of personal information were maintained. All personal information was used only for its intended purpose and was not transferred to third parties.

The in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted using interview guidelines composed of open questions. The guidelines included questions on friendship, partnership, family development, parenting, life trajectories of education, job career, mutual help, etc. In this research, mostly answers to the following questions were analyzed: *What is family for you? Please name people with whom you associate the term “family”.* *With whom (what people) do you link the concept of closeness, intimacy?* The answers of the respondents were grouped according to the following keywords: family members, not family members, criteria of the family definition (registered marriage, not registered marriage, blood, closeness, intimacy, friendship, mutual help, etc.), family practices (communication, traditions, common activities, etc.).

² The field-work was carried out under the ESF-funded research project “Trajectories of Family Models and Social Networks: Intergenerational Perspective” (code No.VP1-3.1-ŠMM-07-K-01-106), implemented by the researchers of the Department of Sociology, Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius, Lithuania). The research methodology of the project was developed in co-operation with the sociologists of the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon led by K. Wall (Portugal) (Wall, 2006) and sociologists of the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne led by J.-A. Gauthier, D. Joye and E. Widmer (Switzerland) (Gauthier, Joye, Widmer, 2010). More information is available on the project’s website: <http://famo-socnet.mruni.eu/>.

2. Findings

In this part, the results of the analysis of the interviews on family concept are presented. The primary analysis of the interview records showed that birth cohort and gender dimensions should be taken into account in the interpretation because of the impact of historical time, individual age and stage of family formation on the subjective understanding of the family.

Further, in order to explore how blood relationship and marital relationship relate with the subjective definition of the family and what criteria additionally describe the family, the answers on family members and not family members were grouped into three separate tables accordingly (Tables 1-3). Next, the interpretation of the results is presented.

2.1. Blood relationship as the criterion of the family concept

Respondents' attitudes concerning children, parents, siblings, grandchildren, grandparents, siblings' children and other kin, based on blood relationship, are illustrated in Table 1. The question is whether these persons constitute the family. It was presumed that if these persons are named as family members, it could be stated that blood relationship is an important criterion in the definition of the family concept.

Table 1. *Blood relationship as the criterion of the family concept. Answers to the question "Please name people with whom you associate the term "family""*
(Yes = family member; no = non-family member; grey cells = not mentioned).

Birth cohort and gender	Children	Parents	Siblings	Grand-children	Grand-parents	Siblings' children	Other blood kin
Men							
1950-1955	Yes			Yes			
1960-1965	Yes	Yes					
1970-1975	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
1980-1985	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes/No
Women							
1950-1955	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	
1960-1965	Yes	Yes	Yes				
1970-1975	Yes						
1980-1985	Yes	Yes	Yes				

Among all the mentioned blood kin, according to the qualitative data, firstly and without doubt, children constitute the family. This statement is true according to the respondents representing all birth cohorts, both men and women. Moreover, there is no difference where children live, e.g., a very typical answer to the question on family members was similar to the following: "...daughters. Even one of them live abroad with her own family. And family of other daughter, the older one, who lives here, with us." [a woman, born in 1950]. The importance of the children in the family illustrates two different situations told by the respondents. One

respondent told that her boyfriend's mother did not want that her son would marry her [the respondent], but when she got pregnant, the boyfriend's mother accepted the situation: "*A child for her meant, that is even worse, it means that son bogged down even further into the relationship. Child is child.*" [a woman, born in 1954]. Oppositely, when relationship in the family is good, members of nuclear and extended family, as well as people around, expect and are waiting for a new-born child, and they are upset if a couple does not have any children: "*We were first childless family, so all relatives were waiting for child...*" [a woman, born in 1961]. In the first situation, pregnancy meant that people around were waiting for the marriage of the couple, in the next situation – people around were waiting for a child because of the marriage of the couple. So, marriage, family and children are directly and closely related with the subjective understanding of the family of Lithuanians.

Also, according to the research results presented in Table 1, parents usually were named among family members. The respondents underlined that parents were very important: "*Children need their parents what ever they are.*" [a woman, born in 1950]. Blood relation, expressed through closeness between children and parents, is very important for both children and parents. For adults, it could mean compensation of the lack of attention from their parents and they are willing to give this attention to the next generation – children. One respondent said that he was invited to go abroad to work, but he decided not to go: "*I don't want to leave, because the child is still young, probably, too small... I did not get that from father. That friendship, that all, now, I can give to another person. This is important to me.*" [a man, born in 1972]. Parents not only give life and support, but they also unite the family, even adult children: "*Husband's family, which had nine children, were united by their parents; when parents passed away, children gather in the homeland, but there is no that... something in common. They are trying to keep homeland, but the homeland is now empty.*" [a woman, born in 1950]. There were cases, when the respondents, whose parents passed away, did not mention them. On the other hand, there were respondents, who mentioned parents as family members, even if they had already passed away, e.g., one respondent told: "*...mother, even though I have nothing, neither mother, nor father yet, they - also family*" [a woman, born in 1961]. In this case, it can be said that the relation with parents is so strong that it continues beyond the boundaries of life. Similarly, few respondents mentioned grandparents (more often, grandmothers) as members of their family. In most cases, the respondents said that their grandparents were so important in their life that they still were family members, even if they had already passed away.

Meanwhile, sometimes other kin, including siblings, were named as family members and sometimes – not, e.g., in a description of her relations with her sister, one respondent told that they were never very close. Only now, in older age, they became closer, the reason of which were common interests: "*...sister can be assigned to a circle of friends again, as her husband also passed away. When he passed away, our relationship became different. Now relationship is not so super-close, but pretty close. We are together, hobbies... and dances she also likes – we now go to the dances for older people... to the concerts, we like jazz, well, a lot of things, and coincides our views, the quest of spiritual road... so, she like a friend.*" [a woman, born in 1954]. In this case, blood relationship was and still is mostly formal. The relation between these sisters was formal even when they lived together in their parents' home (in the nuclear family of their parents). As the respondent indicated, the reason of distance was a big difference in their age – the sister was older ten years. Now, in older age, common interests got sisters together, but only as friends, not as family members.

Other respondent told about the role of a distant relative in his life in such a way: “*Relative is my employer. So, well, he is as a friend and as an older brother, and an employer, and a relative, well, there’s four in one.*” [a man, born in 1983]. In this case, a distant relative became rather close to the respondent because of support and advice given in difficult situations in his life. In other words, help and sensibility created the relationship that distant blood-kinship transformed into such a close relationship that the respondent named this person a brother.

Distinct inter-relation is with children of siblings, e.g., a man, who described himself as “*so called “single”, and that is all*” [a man, born in 1973], told that his family constituted a mother and a nephew, his sister’s son. At the same time, the respondent did not mention a sister, nephew’s mother, who was alive, but lived in another city. In this case, life under one roof and maintenance of the child created a closer relationship in comparison to a formal concept of the family. Furthermore, in this case, the subjective understanding of the family did not meet the formal definition of the nuclear or extended family; it proved that even blood relationship exists.

Another situation was told by a woman, who raised her sister’s children (son and daughter) from small age to adulthood: “*There are two sister’s children whom we together with husband raised. It was after our wedding... Actually, not after marriage. I worked according to appointment these days, and afterwards we came back to live here, to my mother. Well, those two kids grew up. They are like our own children. Even in their weddings they presented us as parents. They come, for example, for Father’s day or birthday. So... and they also are nephew and niece.*” [a woman, born in 1950]. In this case, the woman experienced difficulty to name who these two children were to her and her husband. Formally, they are distant relatives, members of extended family. Although the couple raised these children together with their own (biological) children, relationships became so close that from both sides – children and the respondent – they treat each other as one (nuclear) family.

In summary, blood relationship as the criterion of the family concept, without doubt, is most important, what regards children and parents. Sometimes, this relation goes beyond the boundaries of life. Meanwhile, what regards persons connected to each other through blood relationships, additional conditions are needed in order to admit the fact that they would be recognized as part of the family, e.g., mutual help and support, emotional closeness/attachment, life under the same roof and/or other investment into relationship. Lack of these additional criteria can create distance even between very close blood relatives, such as brothers and sisters.

2.2. Marital relationship as the criterion of the family concept

In order to explore marriage as the criterion of the family concept, attitudes concerning spouses, parents-in-law, children-in-law and other relatives-in-law were examined. The author tried to find out how the respondents treated these persons: were they family members or not.

Analysis of qualitative interviews showed that spouses were usually treated as part of the (nuclear) family (Table 2). Few respondents indicated that relations with their spouses sometimes experienced tension, conflicts arose, but this person was still treated like a family member: “*...my family, as it may be, there are sometimes disputes or something, still they remain my family*” [a man, born in 1972]. One respondent in such situation followed her mother’s statement: “*Mom often says: “Will not be in another way, still need to live together.” Well, will need to live together, and you look how you live, because you can anger and then you will be miserable, though still will need to live together, so, maybe, let’s solve the problems and continue live. Like that. The family is important.*” [a woman, born in 1980]. For her, family created through marriage was above everything – emotions, conflicts, suffering, etc.

In contrary, emotions and conflicts among more distant relatives-in-law became the main reason to exclude them from the family, e.g., one respondent told that his father-in-law never recognized him as a son-in-law and as a family member. Relations in this family were so complicated that the father-in-law did not even recognize a grandchild born to this son-in-law: *“Father from wife’s side was very much against [our marriage]. Her father did not recognize me. Because I was in conflict with his son, with my brother-in-law. And... he did not recognize me until he passed away. Our daughter was born and he did not recognize even his granddaughter. He was a “nail”, tough man.”* [a man, born in 1950]. So, the conflict between the respondent and the spouse’s brother became the main reason to be rejected from the wife’s family of orientation.

Similarly, conflict between one respondent and her sister-in-law became the main reason to reject the sister-in-law together with her own brother from the family members:

Interviewer: *And with brothers until now communicate, isn’t it?*

Respondent: *With one of brothers – yes, with other – no.*

Interviewer: *Why you not communicate?*

Respondent: *Eee... when he married, we not agreed with his wife, and he...*

Interviewer: *With his wife?*

Respondent: *With his wife, yes.”* [a woman, born in 1971].

Table 2. *Marital relationship as the criterion of the family concept. Answers to the question “Please name people with whom you associate the term “family””*
(Yes = family member; no = non-family member; grey cells = not mentioned).

Birth cohort and gender	Spouse	Parents-in-law	Children-in-law	Siblings-in-law	Other relatives-in-law
Men					
1950-1955	Yes		No		No
1960-1965	Yes	Yes/No			
1970-1975	Yes				
1980-1985	Yes				
Women					
1950-1955	Yes	No	Yes		
1960-1965	Yes		Yes		
1970-1975	Yes			No	
1980-1985	Yes	Yes			

Qualitative interviews also showed that attitudes towards parents-in-law were very contradictory, e.g., one respondent from the oldest birth cohort (1950-1955), among other family members named parents, even grandparents, underlined that her husband’s parents were not treated as members of the family [a woman, born in 1954]. Also, one respondent from 1960-1965 birth cohort named parents of his wife as family members and added a phrase *“my parents”* [a man, born in 1965], which implied the meaning that his wife’s parents were treated as closer family members than simply his spouse’s parents. At the same time, another respondent from the same birth cohort named his parents-in-law as his family members, even taking into consideration the fact that he was divorced with their daughter [a man, born in 1964]. Parents-in-law usually were named as family members by the respondents from the youngest birth cohort (born in 1980-1985).

Children-in-law were named as family members only by women. They usually mentioned sons-in-law and explained why, e.g., one of the respondents said that in emergencies, such as break of a car, etc., she asks her son-in-law for the help. According to the respondent, this is the reason why she can name her son-in-law as a family member [a woman, born in 1954]. However, this is not the only case, when children-in-law are treated as family members. Sometimes, close relationship is enough for children-in-law to be included into the understanding of the family: “*Son-in-law... he is like child, so saying, we communicate very closely, really is not that he is stubby or etc.*” [a woman, born in 1950].

In summary, it could be stated that marriage as the criterion of family definition, first of all, is important in the cases of spouses. Tension, conflicts or other unfavourable situations in marriage keep spouses together more often in comparison to more distant relatives-in-law. Similar situations, which happen to parents-in-law, children-in-law, siblings-in-law and other relatives-in-law, can mean restriction in communication or even rejection or exclusion from the family.

Attitudes towards parents-in-law as family members are very contradictory: they could be named as family members, as well as non-family members. Based on qualitative data, it could be stated that the youngest birth cohort is more tolerant towards their parents-in-law.

Children-in-law were named as family members only by women. This opinion of the respondents was based not only on the criterion of marriage of their children, but also on the help provided by their children-in-law (usually, sons-in-law).

2.3. Non-kin relationship as the criterion of the family concept

As it was hypothesized, pluralization of the family institution determines the inclusion of persons from beyond the nuclear and extended families into the subjective understanding of the family. In the explored qualitative interviews, friends were named as family members (Table 3). Moreover, friends were named as family members more often in comparison to other non-kin.

Table 3. Non-kin relationship as the criterion of the family concept. Answers to the question “Please name people with whom you associate the term “family””
(Yes = family member; no = non-family member; grey cells = not mentioned).

Birth cohort and gender	Friends	Colleagues	Neighbours	Members of a particular community	Other non-kin
Family members					
Men					
1950-1955	Yes/No	Yes	No		
1960-1965	Yes/No	No			No
1970-1975	No	No		Yes/No	No
1980-1985	Yes/No	No			
Women					
1950-1955	Yes/No		No		No
1960-1965	No	No			
1970-1975	No	No			
1980-1985	No	No			

A widower from 1950-1955 birth cohort named friends as his family members. Common positive memories created long-lasting close relationships with his friends – former colleagues. Also, common activities and interests in gardening created his very close relationships with the neighbours of the collective garden. These former colleagues and neighbours of the collective garden were named as his current family together with their own children [a man, born in 1950]. The respondents from the younger birth cohorts also named friends among their family members: “*Well, what... wife, children, parents, probably. With parents... well, friends could also be, most close friends, can be told so.*” [a man, born in 1962]; “*These two friends are like family for me, and I communicate with them much more in comparison with my sister or mother or someone else*” [a man, born in 1983]. For these men, friends became family members because of common interests and common activities.

In contrast, women usually told that colleagues were not the people with whom it was possible to be too open, so they could not be very close or treat them as family members: “*In the workplace... you know, work... Work is work. Good or bad, or is okay for you – always with a smile.*” [a woman, born in 1954]. Meanwhile, women, who mentioned friends being among their family members, stated that these persons are from their childhood or school years, e.g.: “*What concerns these long-term friendships, there is the one... over thirty years has been the very close, my mother called her “third daughter”, “stepdaughter”. Very close long-term relation...*” [a woman, born in 1954].

Geographical location was often mentioned as an additional criterion for friends, when they were named in the list of the family. Closer distance created closer relationship and, oppositely, larger geographical distance usually meant termination of the relationship. This was a very common feature, what regards relationships with friends met in later adulthood, but it was not so common with friends from childhood or school years. Also, this rule was more common for women than for men. Here, it also should be noted that neighbours, even if they lived in a short distance, were not automatically included in the list of the family members, e.g., a respondents told the following: “*...the closest people, well, family, well... the neighbors are still further, ... neighbors, you talk with them, but even... are further.*” [a man, born in 1955]. In order for a neighbour to be called a family member, there should be something more, such as spiritual closeness, etc.

Few respondents mentioned persons, belonging to some particular, formal or informal, communities, as their family members, e.g., one respondent mentioned persons, with whom he grew up in the state child care home. Taken from a biological but disadvantaged family in the childhood, till late adolescence he knew the only family – state institution with many children having a similar fate. Many of these children became a family for him in the adult life [a man, born in 1980]. Another respondent told about his problems with alcohol for a long time and his active membership in a Community of Anonymous Alcoholics (AA) in recent years. Together with his wife and his daughter, he participates in the meetings, camping and other activities of this Community. Its members became a part of his own family: “*AA is a very strong community, almost like a family. In other circumstances, we would not have met. This is due to the fact that we are united only by alcoholism.*” [a man, born in 1972].

So, common activities and interests, close emotional bonds from a certain period of life (e.g., childhood or school years), living in a nearby place, belonging to a certain (formal or informal) community are additional criteria to the understanding of the family nowadays in Lithuania. According to these criteria, friends, colleagues, even neighbours and other persons beyond the nuclear and extended family may be named as the family members.

Conclusions

1. The qualitative interviews with Lithuanians from four birth cohorts showed that blood relationship is still an important criterion in defining the nuclear family of procreation and the nuclear family of orientation. It could be stated that the relationship between parents and children are most important for Lithuanians when discussing the family, even taking into account birth cohorts of parents or children.
2. At the same time, the results proved the research hypothesis that blood kinship not necessarily united members of the nuclear and/or extended family. Differences in age, geographical and emotional distance and other additional criteria can separate the closest blood relatives, such as brothers and sisters. In such situations, it could be stated that blood kinship is only formal and has nothing in common with the reality of an individual's life.
3. Marriage as a criterion of the family concept is not always valid. The research results showed that registered marriage could create such strong relationships, that tension, conflicts or other unfavourable situations could not interfere into relationships created through marriage. But usually, such strong relationship is between spouses only. Meanwhile, the same criteria (tension, conflicts or other unfavourable situations) can interfere and separate other relatives-in-law, e.g., one and parent-in-law, son/daughter-in-law or brother/sister-in-law. The research results allowed proving the hypothesis that registered marriage not necessarily unites members of the nuclear and/or extended family.
4. The research results also proved the research hypothesis that nowadays in Lithuania other than blood and marriage criteria impact the understanding of the family concept. Among such criteria, the following could be listed: mutual help and support, emotional closeness/attachment, close emotional bonds in a certain period of life (e.g., childhood or school years), common activities and interests, life under the same roof, living in a nearby place, belonging to a certain (formal or informal) community and/or other investment into relationships, etc. These criteria may be the cause that distant relatives or non-kin become part of one's family. Thus, in such cases, blood and marriage are not necessary criteria in the definition of the family.

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SUBJEKTYVI ŠEIMOS APIBRĖŽTIS LIETUVOJE: KOKYBINIAIS INTERVIU GRĮSTOS IŠVADOS

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Santrauka

Straipsnio tikslas – aptarti Lietuvos gyventojų subjektyvios šeimos sampratos tyrimo rezultatus.

Straipsnyje pateikiama kokybinio tyrimo, atlikto įgyvendinant ESF finansuojamą mokslinį projektą „Šeimos modelių trajektorijos ir socialiniai tinklai: tarpgeneracinė perspektyva“, duomenų analizė. Kokybiniais interviu su 60 respondentų atlikti 2012 birželio–rugpjūčio mėnesiais. Tyrimo duomenys atskleidė, kad kraujo ir santuokos ryšiai vis dar svarbūs apibrėžiant branduolinę prokeacinę ir branduolinę orientacinę šeimą. Šie kriterijai ypač reikšmingi nusakant tėvų ir vaikų ryšius, neatsižvelgiant į tėvų ar vaikų gimimo kohortą. Nusakant tolimesnių gi-

minaičių ryšius, svarbesni nei kraujo ryšys kriterijai gali būti amžiaus skirtumas, geografinis ir emocinis atstumas, kt. Atskirais atvejais šie kriterijai tokie svarbūs, kad gali atskirti net tokius artimus kraujo giminės kaip broliai ir seserys. Tuomet kraujo ryšiu susiję asmenys giminėmis lieka tik formaliai. Santuoka kaip šeimos apibrėžties kriterijus taip pat ne visada pasiteisina. Santuoka gali sukurti ryšius, kurie atlaiko atsiradusią įtampą, konfliktus, kitas nepalankias situacijas. Tačiau tokie stiprūs ryšiai dažniausiai susiklosto tik tarp sutuoktinių, o tolimesnių giminaičių atžvilgiu santuoka nėra svarbiausias jungiantis kriterijus. Tyrimo duomenimis, šiuo metu Lietuvoje subjektyviame šeimos apibrėžime galioja ir kiti nei kraujo ryšio ir santuokos kriterijai: tarpusavio pagalba, emocinis artumas, prisirišimas, bendros veiklos, bendri interesai, gyvenimas po vienu stogu, netolimas atstumas tarp asmenų gyvenamųjų vietų, priklausymas tam tikrai formaliai arba neformaliai bendruomenei bei ir kriterijai, per kuriuos investuojama į tarpusavio ryšius. Šie kriterijai gali lemti, kad tolimi giminaičiai arba net formaliais giminystės ryšiai nesusiję asmenys taps šeimos nariais. Tokiais atvejais kraujo ryšys ir / arba santuokos ryšys nėra būtinas šeimos apibrėžime.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: šeimos samprata, šeimos apibrėžties kriterijai, šeimos nariai, ne šeimos nariai.

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