

THE REAL LIFE OF FAMILIES: THE NEED FOR RESEARCH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FAMILY ORGANISATIONS

William Lay
Honorary Director of COFACE

Respondent Organisations (I)

○ Austria

- *Katholischer Familienverband Österreichs (KFÖ)*

○ Belgium

- *Association des Parents et des Professionnels autour de la Personne handicapée (AP³)*
- *Centre d'Action Laïque (CAL)*
- *Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes (FPS)*
- *Gezinsbond (GB)*
- *Ligue des familles (LF)*

Respondent Organisations (II)

○ Finland

- *Väestöliitto ry, the Family Federation of Finland (FFF)*

○ France

- *Confédération nationale des Associations familiales catholiques (CNAFC)*
- *Confédération syndicale des Familles (CSF)*
- *Familles de France (FF)*
- *Familles rurales (FR)*
- *Union nationale des Associations familiales (UNAF)*
- *Union nationale des Associations de Parents, de Personnes handicapées mentales et de leurs Amis (UNAPEI)*

Respondent Organisations (III)

○ Germany

- *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der deutschen Familienorganisationen (AGF)*

○ Greece

- *Family and Childcare Centre (KMOP)*
- *Supreme Confederation of Multi-Child Parents of Greece(ASPE)*

○ Ireland

- *Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA)*

Respondent Organisations (IV)

○ Latvia

- *Association of Latvian Large Families (ULLFA)*

○ Slovakia

- *Klub of Large Families of Slovakia (KLUB)*

○ Spain

- *Asociación Salud y Familia (SyF)*
- *Unión de Asociaciones familiares (UNAF)*

Respondent Organisations (V)

21 organisations
from **10** different EU Member States

More than **130** research proposals !

Research Areas

- Care
- Life-course and transitions
- 'Doing family'
- Migration and mobility
- Inequalities and insecurities
- Media
- Demography and ageing
- Wellbeing of children
- Consumer issues and taxation
- Crisis
- Health issues
- Disability
- Miscellaneous

Care (I)

- Data & comparative studies on informal care in families
- Impact of ageing as regards care by families vs care by the community
- Care arrangements preferred by care-receivers & care-givers
- Changes during the different phases of care
- Impact of choices for future life-course

Care (II)

- Family solidarity in care for young adults and older persons: chosen ? compelled?
- Consequences on family carers' career, family life, income...
- Family solidarity: informal economy in families (education by parents, time spent, equivalent full time, financial support, leaves...)
- Care for frail older persons

Life-course and transitions (I)

- Changing family unit: stepchildren, half siblings, 2nd marriages with previous children...
- How to keep accurate record of a family within a family?
- How is the family unit affected?
- Analysis of various realities of social parenthood: step-parents, same-sex parents, other adults related to child's education...
Legal developments?

Life-course and transitions (II)

- Legal status of step-parent (co-parenting)
- Family law and parenting: sociological and legal research on the consequences of separations and family reconstitutions (patchwork families): sociology of legal decisions + economic dimension (alimonies, compensations...)

Life-course and transitions (III)

- Place of the child in judicial proceedings (marital, family conflicts): judicial, psychological, sociological dimensions
- Economic study of costs (public & private) of these conflicts and separations
- Analysis of discriminations against large families in the EU

Life-course and transitions (IV)

- Choice of single parenthood today: which parents? what profile? how many? how many children? what impact on emotional life?
- Idea: 1994 (IYF) born children are now almost 20 y.o.: how do they appreciate their standard of living, quality of life, family satisfaction, family formation?
- Idea: 2004 (IYF+10): idem for parents with children 10 y.o.

Life-course and transitions (V)

- Family forms: which make happier and more successful children? What relationship between best interest of the child and family forms? Long-term effects of different family forms on society and the economy?
- Alimonies: comparative studies on alimony calculation. Are there standards in all countries? Non payment of alimonies (cross-boarder EU & non-EU); clearing house system (+budgets)?

‘Doing Family’ (I)

● Statistics:

Improve data gathering on

- Composition of families (each member's position in the group; quality of family relations, norms, dynamics, family as a quantifiable unit)
- Patchwork families, intercultural families, homoparental families (e.g. in Spain data exist on marriages, but not on children)

‘Doing Family’ (II)

● Family Relations:

- Internal arrangements by partners (+support needed in maintaining & strengthening couples through life-course)
- Inclusion of families: barriers experienced by families in EU, because they are a family/ a special family model (sociological, economic, cultural background)
- Parenting: support given to parents, to couples: which? role of family organisations? relations between voluntary & professional workers? family mediators.
- Idea: Parents with children born in 2004 (IYF+10): experience of work-life balance, wishes vs reality, family set-ups in last 10 years, paid work vs family care work + voluntary work, R/S/T + housing: sufficient?

‘Doing Family’ (III)

- Equality between women and men
- Equality & democracy in the family: equality between w/m, generations, family forms
- Equality w/m in family responsibilities: men’s opinions on their role in the family?
- Different roles of partners in a couple: evolution of these roles (doubling, tripling) and impact on stability of couples (role of spouse and of parent are increasingly dissociated)

‘Doing Family’ (IV)

- Equality in families: individual rights in social & fiscal matters for w&m: respect of equal treatment of all in all families
- Benefits to women on having quality affordable childcare?
- Specific issues:
 - Father’s name (patronymic) is important because it links the child to his/her father and is the recognition by man that he is the father. Establish synthesis of literature on the subject in view of research programme
 - violence in the family: need for data on different age groups
 - impact of alternating joint custody with fathers in relation to their work, child’s education, domestic chores, their emotional life

‘Doing Family’ (V)

◉ Work-life balance

- ◉ More research needed on working parents from a company (employer) perspective: good practices, recognition & support of the act of parenting
- ◉ Research on professional situation of women & men having long work interruptions due to maternity: assistance needed, negative effects
- ◉ Childcare facilities as an emerging economic sector: which players, which economic model (e.g. in France, ‘childcare companies’, also associations), geography and sociology
- ◉ How are early childhood services priced (price determinants, economics)?
- ◉ Professional careers in the field of early childhood?

‘Doing Family’ (VI)

- ◉ Impact of flexible working times on employees
- ◉ Preferred solutions by families
- ◉ How do they cope with difficulties?
- ◉ Revisiting parental, maternity & paternity leaves in an equality w/m perspective (distinguishing physical rest and welcome leave, identical leaves for fathers and mothers)
- ◉ Take-up of parental leave and impact on career
- ◉ Employment activation measures (EU2020): comparative studies on impact/taking into account the family situation of workers

‘Doing Family’ (VII)

- ◉ Managers (women & men) tend to have few or no children due to extended working hours, promotions, high positions
- ◉ & in reverse: people with (many) children have less opportunity of high salary: research needed on policies against this distortion (eq.opp. w/m)
- ◉ Companies’ vision on parenthood: family-acquired skills can be helpful for managerial posts (negotiation skills, time management, family planning, financial management, project management...)
- ◉ Role of competition/certification for family-friendly workplaces? Sustainable results?
- ◉ Possibilities of developing ESF investments in the field of work-life balance?

Migration & mobility (I)

- Cost-benefit curve of migration?
- Affordability in times of recession?
- Number of migrants who can be assimilated, at what cost?
- Cheaper to support local fertility or to provide for social inclusion of migrants? Saturation point?

Migration & mobility (II)

○ Specific issues:

- Situation of Hungarians in Finland & Sweden
- Wellbeing of migrant children in Finland
- Finnish born families' housing & school choices in Turku

Inequalities & insecurities: poverty

- Impact on family life?
- Causes?
- Transgenerational?
- Effective measures for families in general and for single-parent families, migrant families...
- New investments to combat family and child poverty
- Feminisation of poverty: families, unpaid work (e.g. women at home), equal opportunities w/m

Media (I)

- Impact of 'screens' on young children's behaviour (ipad, ipod...)
- Racist, homophobic... remarks on anonymous social networks with sense of impunity. How to cope?
- Families gather less around evening meal: less discussion. Also less parlour/board games; less story telling to the youngest. In favour of video games, individual screens. Less profound communication between family members

Media (II)

- Need for psychological/ sociological research (mobile phones/internet)
- How do families try to master these technologies? Good practices + legal regulations (privacy...)

Demography & ageing (I)

- Long-term economic & social impact of low fertility rates in EU countries?
- Can high birth rates help a country out of recession?
- Does incoming migration have a positive impact on the demographic challenge?
- Policies developed in EU MS to support older people? Resources needed?
- Analysis of ageing & economic performance: dilemmas & dichotomies?

Demography & ageing (II)

◉ Approach to longer living:

- how does society integrate longer lives, decrease of death rates at birth, use of robots...as social & economic impact will only be measurable in a few decades?
- benefits to older people of early disease and cognitive decline detection?

◉ Specific issue:

- changes in Russian demographic policy in 2000-2010.

Wellbeing of children (I)

- Impact of parental separation on children
- Impact of parents' behaviour on children: marital relations, mutual respect, benevolence, conflict management + impact on society
- Analysis of difficulties encountered by parents + good practices in view of child's wellbeing/support of parents (parenting)

Wellbeing of children (II)

- Benefits to children of early childhood education in long term educational attainment?
- Benefits to children of having 2 working parents?
- Which family forms 'make' happy & successful children (single parents, 2 parents) + best interest of the child?
- Who is targeted by child protection measures? Action-research with professionals (on young children & young adults)?

Wellbeing of children (III)

- ◎ Global approach to youth: health, education, sport, culture, employment, mobility, values, public policies, families... in view of helping
 - parents as educators
 - policy makers
- ◎ Comparative study on measures taken against youth unrest, troubles

Wellbeing of children (IV)

● Idea:

Children born in 1994 (IYF): analysis of:

- their experience of parents' work-life balance (0-14 y.o.)
- family set-ups they have lived in since their birth
- their parents' working life: full-time or part-time
- availability of financial resources, services, time
- education & career

● Specific issue: benefits to children of being breast-fed until 6 months old?

Consumer & taxation issues (I)

- Impact of public policies (taxation, price setting, market policies...) on families' behaviour as a 'unit'. Who decides e.g. on food, water, energy consumption? Which policies are efficient in encouraging households towards sustainable and healthy consumption?
- More research needed on the impact of radio frequencies, especially on children
- Benefit to all families of financial literacy?

Consumer & taxation issues (II)

- Which taxation systems enable social inclusion and are family-friendly? Effects on fertility rates & ageing?
- From a gender perspective: comparison between EU MS e.g. inequalities such as 'quotient conjugal', quotas exempted according to number of children, encouraging households with one income. Problems for female employment & financial independence?

Consumer & taxation issues (III)

- How to favour reduced VAT rates on children's products & services (incl. school & nursery food)?
- How to deduct expenses for children/elderly care (inside/outside family) from tax burden of vulnerable families?

Crisis

- Impact on families/family policies in EU MS
- Reinforcement of families: prerequisite for solving today's problems?
- Are austerity measures (e.g. Greece) impacting on fertility rates & ageing?
- In times of crisis, relationship between unemployment, family solidarity, social cohesion to be further explored
- Qualitative research on how families and their members cope in times of severe crisis (common conclusions in MS? national specificities?)

Health issues (I)

- Health education and services: situation in EU MS?
- Prevention of HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases
- Prevention of teenage pregnancy, delinquency, violence (against others & oneself (suicide))
- Feminine genital mutilation: data in EU, prevention resources, legislation, protocols of action in EU MS

Health issues (II)

○ Reproductive health:

- abortion wishes/prevention (1950s-1960s)
- services in Russia and CEE (providers 1990-2010)
- voluntary termination of pregnancy:
comparative study of legislation in EU MS

Disability (I)

- How are implemented in EU MS policies of reasonable accommodation for disabled persons in education (schools, high schools...)?
- Develop & implement tools for gathering data on needs
- De-institutionalisation (DI) in education sector
- Issue of polyhandicap, autism

Disability (II)

- How do families with a disabled child cope in daily life: incoherences of different players, capacity of resilience, stress management, risk/protection factors (in families, in environment), resources? Guidelines for professionals in a life-course perspective.
- Further analysis of needs (modern concept): contextualised approach, relativity & evolution of needs of each family member (+interactions)

Disability (III)

- Develop efficient models of partnership between parents & professionals, as soon as disability is announced
- Impact of disability on siblings + role of grandparents
- Improve understanding of role and limits of associations: what aid for families and risk of isolation?
- How to develop leisure activities adapted to family members + accessibility of various touristic resources (hotels, holiday resorts, travel...)

Disability (IV)

- At EU level, improve care provisions ensuring continuity when travelling from one MS to another
- Improve knowledge of syndroms + evaluation tools measuring children's skills & competences in order to help parents in their decisions
- In general, develop evaluation of efficiency of various measures implemented or proposed with complete involvement of families.

Family policies

- Interaction between different national laws/regulations (taxes, economy, possible contradictions and impact on daily lives)
- Cost of children:
 - geographical variations (housing, care facilities, schooling, transport, leisure activities...)
 - comparative studies on support given by authorities in total cost of a child (e.g. tax credits, allowances...) and the influence on children and families in general (e.g. social status, health, level of education...)
- Fiscal advantages e.g. 'quotient conjugal' in France: impact on redistribution & female activity; evaluation of system.
- Access to rights of families as regards social services & social welfare bodies: obstacles, difficulties.

Family organisations

- Comparative studies in EU MS + evaluation of
 - state support
 - membership
 - members of international organisations (incl. financial aspects)
 - ...

Two personal suggestions for research:

1. Families and housing

‘Tell me where you live...’:

impact of housing on relationships;
impact of town planning on social cohesion

2. Bioethics

‘Tell me where you come from...’:

interdisciplinary research on new kinds of kinship (e.g. *baby S in the USA, with 2 fathers and 4 mothers*)

Conclusions (I)

1. Great variety of responses
2. Great variety of organisations
3. Responses often reflect the respondent's ideological, denominational, political position
4. In general, rather traditional research requests (e.g. cost of child, public support of families...)
5. Some more recent concerns: role of men, impact of crisis, 'screens', same-sex couples...

Conclusions (II)

- 6. General need for interdisciplinarity
- 7. Important to involve family organisations in research: many have their own study department and/or work with researchers; all represent a section of civil society
- 8. Research in family issues should be increasingly carried out on a European comparative basis

Wishing you successful
research in the future...

Thank you for your attention!