

REPORTS



20th Annual Conference of Croatian Psychologists

7th -10th November 2012, Dubrovnik

The Psychological Aspects of Contemporary Families, Marriages and Partnerships

The 20th Jubilee Conference of Croatian Psychologists was held from 7th-10th November 2012 in Dubrovnik. The psychological aspects of contemporary family, marriage, and partnership were the main interests of the professional and scientific programme. The conference was intended for psychologists and other professionals who deal with issues of marriage, family, and partnership in order to enable exchange of their expert opinion and scientific knowledge as well as achievements at this conference. The Honourary President of the Conference was Professor Dr. Josip Obradović. The Programme Committee included Andreja Brajša Žganec (president), Marina Ajduković, Irena Bezić, Gordana Buljan Flander, Mira Čudina Obradović, Slavka Galić, Ljiljana Kaliterna Lipovčan, Željka Kamenov, Gordana Keresteš, Katica Lacković Grgin, Maja Mamula, Zvezdan Penezić, Sanja Smojver Ažić, and Dubravka Svi-lar Blažinić. The Organisational Committee included Josip Lopižić (president), Teuta Barušić, Hrvoje Gligora, Nanda Kalafatović, Ana Karlović, Nikica Kličan, Katarina Krile, Ljiljana Mikuš, Edita Mucić Šutić, Martina Ožanić Jukić, Milena Pavlović, Anita Prizmić, Tanja Rončević, Suada Salčić, Joško Sindik, Darija Stanić, Marija Stojanović, Nikica Stražičić, Petra Sulić, Lana Šegotić, and Jadranka Zlošilo.

Today, the family is seen as a complex and interrelated whole; a system that consists of several subsystems, which together are a part of a broader system. A number of factors determine whether a family is functional or dysfunc-

tional or more or less successful. It is important to consider the following: how problems are solved in the family, what communication is like between members of the family, are there clearly defined family roles, satisfaction among family members, the kinds of support that members give each other, and the degree of autonomy that exists among family members. This family system may serve as a protective and as a risk factor in child development. New models and concepts in psychology study parent child relationships precisely in the context of different systems that directly or indirectly influence the development of the child. It is therefore important to look at how family relationships are related to the development of the child from the perspective of complete families, single parent families, and extended families. Relevant topics include fatherhood, motherhood, family life cycle, foster care, adoption, as well as issues such as domestic violence, child abuse in the family, etc.

For all these reasons, the themes of partnership, marriage, and family were the main focus of interest at the Annual Conference of Croatian Psychologists in Dubrovnik, 2012. The main aim of the Conference was to unify, compare, and confront the work and results of psychologists working in this field or those who are seriously interested in anything that we could consider as the psychological aspects of contemporary partnership, marriage, and family in Croatia.

The conference theme was oriented towards contemporary knowledge in the field of family, marriage, and partner-

ship in the world and in Croatia. Accordingly, the work of Croatian psychologists as well as some eminent scientists and experts from around the world were conveyed through plenary lectures, presentations, posters, roundtables, discussions, etc. The goal was to bring together psychologists and other experts from other fields who deal with issues of marriage, family, and partnerships. The purpose of the conference was to exchange new experiences and knowledge, scientific knowledge and professional work in the field of contemporary families, marriages, and partnerships. The plenary lectures were given by eminent scientists in this field from around the world and from Croatia. Scholars such as Paul Amato, Thomas Bradbury, Cigdem Kagıtcıbaşı, Josip Obradović, and Ninoslava Pećnik spoke on the determinants of marital quality and happiness in marriage, on the research of understanding and improving marital quality, about the consequences of divorce for adults and children, and about contemporary parenting and child rights. The psychological aspects of contemporary family, marriage, and partnership in Croatia were the main theme of the conference but themes from other areas of psychology were also encouraged.

Paul R. Amato is the Arnold and Bette Hoffman Professor of Family Sociology and Demography at the Department for Sociology at Pennsylvania State University. His research interests include marriage and marital quality, the causes and consequences of divorce and psychological well-being over the life course. He gave a very interesting plenary lecture titled *The consequences of divorce for adults and children* at the conference. Thomas N. Bradbury, a professor at the Department of Psychology at the University of California in Los Angeles and an associate professor since 2006 at the Department of Psychology at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland also had a very interesting plenary lecture *Understanding and improving marriage: Scientific foundations* at the conference. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı received a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of California, Berkeley, USA and continued her academic career in Turkey at the Technical University in the Middle East as well as Boğaziçi University and Koç University. Her lecture on the topic *Family and child development in the socio-cultural context* was presented at the

conference on her behalf. In addition, we had two plenary speakers from Croatia. They were Josip Obradović from Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb, who spoke about *The determinants of marital quality: What makes us happy in marriage* and Ninoslava Pećnik from the Department of Social Work at the University of Zagreb, who spoke about *Modern parenting and child rights*.

Some of the topics that were presented at the conference included: Partner relations in the context of gender, gender roles, and sexual orientation; Importance of commitment in close relationships; Challenges of introducing psychosocial treatment for perpetrators of domestic violence in Croatia; Family stress and children's experience of violence; Violence in the family - the other side of the coin; Role of the family in treatment; Role and importance of the parenting experience in research and practical work of psychologists; Transition in parenthood and changes in the family; Effectiveness and challenges of professional support for parenting in early childhood; Adolescent relationships with parents and peers; Partnership and parenthood today; Parents and sports; Relationships between adult children and their parents: mothers and daughters; How do I look, how do my pants look? Determinants of dissatisfaction with their own bodies; Psychological adjustment and academic functioning of students; and Foster care and other forms of institutional care.

Finally, the aims of the 20th Annual Conference of Croatian Psychologists were realized. A wealth of professional and scientific knowledge, views, and developments in the area of marriage, family partnerships, but also from other areas of psychology were exchanged at this conference. The participation of experts at the conference was considerably large. There were five plenary sessions, 20 thematic symposiums with 105 sessions, 24 roundtables, 66 oral presentations, 26 posters, 6 workshops, 4 banquets, and 12 new book launches on the topic. The conference really brought together psychologists and experts in related fields that deal with marriage, families, and partnership and gave them an opportunity to exchange their rich experiences.

Andreja Brajša-Žganec