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HOW TO PUBLISH RESEARCH ON OFFENSIVE FAMILY NICKNAMES? SOME ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN ANTHROPONOMASTICS

This article discusses ethical considerations regarding the publishing of research on family nicknames. Family nicknames function, unlike surnames, as indices which have not completely lost the transparency of their semantic background and are used as labels which refer to a salient feature or a memorable episode from the history of a particular family. They reflect how the community perceives a specific group within the community. Some of the family nicknames are considered to be offensive to the persons and groups that bear them and are consequently not used by members of the community in direct communication with them. The question of whether it is ethically justified and responsible to publish such family nicknames needs to be considered. An overview of the main principles in research ethics is presented, and five possible courses of action are described and discussed.

1. Introduction: What are family nicknames?

Family nicknames are informal anthroponymic units used in many Croatian rural communities. Although considered to be products of a bygone traditional naming process, even today they are used in many communities more often in everyday communication than surnames and still have greater recognizability in the community among older and younger generations alike (Frančić 2002: 14).

This anthroponymic category is present in rural communities throughout Croatia and has been investigated in Međimurje (Frančić 1994 & 2002; Virč 2008), Dalmatia (Bjelanović 1979; Čilaš Šimpraga 2006), the islands off the Dalmatian coast (Vidović 2011), Podravina (Znika 2001) and Slavonia (Sekereš 1973/1974), and was also recorded among the Šokci living in western Bačka in Vojvodina (Radičev 1944).

Family nicknames are often derived from the nickname of an individual who is a significant member of a family, which in time becomes the symbol for a whole group of persons, mostly connected through family ties.

Surnames and family nicknames differ from each other in several aspects. Surnames are legal and institutional categories, whereas family nicknames occur as a phenomenon of spoken language and are rarely written down. Furthermore, surnames are inherited patrilineally, through male descendants, in Croatian ethnic communities, whereas the inheritance of family nicknames has more heterogeneous patterns, and is not strict. It often goes beyond the borderline of family ties: it can cross over to in-laws and, in some cases, to other families who settle on a property previously owned by bearers of a family nickname. The members of a family have no control over the spread and usage of the family nickname. It is the community that keeps making the “decisions” (Frančić 2002: 16).

Family nicknames have many different semantic motivational patterns. Aside from a surname or the nickname of an individual, a family nickname can also be derived from a profession, the name of family property, a salient common social or physical attribute, the physical appearance of one or more individuals, a memorable episode from the history or the physical environment of the family, or even the name of some remarkable object or animal owned by the family.

Consequently, family nicknames have not completely lost their semantic transparency, unlike most surnames. Jäkel (1999: 211) states that the semantic function of a surname no longer lies in the categorization or descriptive conceptualization of persons or groups, but solely in their naming and identification. Surnames came into being largely because of the fact that several people bore the same personal name in the same community.

Taking the aforementioned heterogeneous semantic motivational patterns into account, it can be claimed that family nicknames can function as identity markers which reflect how the community perceives a family, or a group of people within the community, and that they can be symbols of a positive and emotionally warm disposition towards a group, as well as symbols of a negative disposition, in which case they function as pejorative or deprecatory terms.

For this reason, we believe that investigating such naming phenomena and the actual use of family nicknames can not only be interesting from an anthro-

ponomastic viewpoint, but can also provide valuable insight into the dynamics and sociocognitive principles of the formation of discursive practices in small rural communities.

2. Digression: Do names have meaning?

In general, ethical issues concerning the publishing of research in onomastics arise from the fact that it is not possible to replace names with pseudonyms or initials, because names are the very objects of research in such investigations. We argue that the problem gets even more complex when it comes to family nicknames, because most of them refer definitively to a specific person or group while reflecting the general attitude of the community towards that individual or group. But is this only a problem with family nicknames?

It seems that contemporary onomastics (see Batoma 2009, for example) calls for a redefinition of the traditionalist concept based on the notion that names are terms which denote or refer to objects (individuals) without signifying any attributes of those objects. According to such a concept, onomastic meaning would have nothing to do with lexical meaning. If we consider family nicknames to be a type of name, they prove otherwise, because their semantics crosses that imaginary line. Batoma (*ibid.*: 219) suggests a framework in which the onomastic meaning of a name consists of three layers – a linguistic layer (literal or denotative meaning), a cultural layer (linked to the socio-cultural and philosophical precepts of a linguistic community), and a pragmatic or interpellative layer, linked to the context of its use, in an interpersonal, a situational or a social context.

Furthermore, even authors who maintain that »names do not have meaning« (Dobrić 2010: 214) stress their presumption that, originally, meaning was an essential aspect of personal names were first used. Dobrić emphasizes the process of metaphorization, that is, the transfer of semantic and conceptual structure from one conceptual domain to a different domain.

Jäkel points out that, in the context of describing the semantic motivation of surnames, there are many metonymic strategies of naming besides those based on genealogy and profession. Some surnames, for example, are equivalent to nouns, being semantically linked either to the animal or plant kingdom, or even to concrete or abstract entities (1999: 214).

Family nicknames have even stronger semantic links because they are contextually anchored. To the members of small rural communities, the motivation of most family nicknames are transparent.

3. Research and its ethical dilemma(s)

This article discusses some aspects of research ethics regarding the publishing of data gathered in a research project on family nicknames in two villages in Međimurje, in the northernmost part of Croatia. The investigations took place in 2012. and 2013., and were conducted in both Sveti Martin na Muri and Držimurec and Strelec by means of semi-structured narrative interviews with small groups of domestic informants (three informants in Sveti Martin na Muri and nine in Držimurec and Strelec. In total, 245 family nicknames were collected. Although the morphological, semantic and pragmatic analysis is still in progress, provisional findings indicate that the family nicknames used in the two villages are formed by adding suffixes which are otherwise used in Kajkavian dialects for the derivation of possessive adjectives (e.g. *Cilini*, *Celajovi*). The nominative case suffixes when the base word is a masculine noun are as follows:

- ov (masculine, singular)
- ova (feminine, singular)
- ovo (neuter, singular)
- ovi (masculine, plural)
- ove (feminine, plural)

The nominative case suffixes when the base word is a feminine noun are listed below:

- in (masculine, singular)
- ina (feminine, singular)
- ino (neuter, singular)
- ini (masculine, plural)
- ine (feminine, plural)

Family nicknames are used to refer to whole families, collectively and plurally¹, but also to refer to individuals, in combination with personal names or nicknames (*Celajov Joža*). According to preliminary results of the analysis, in Sveti Martin na Muri, family nicknames are predominantly used antepositionally in such contexts (*Celajov Joža*), whereas in Držimurec and Strelec they are predominantly used postpositionally (*Joža Celajov*). In rare cases, a family nickname can even be used to refer to the property on which the family resides.

Approximately 70% of all family nicknames are semantically transparent; others are semantically opaque. They are often derived, as mentioned above, from

1 Many formal surnames in these communities are used situationally in derived forms, similar to family nicknames (*Perčić* → *Perčićovi*), but are not considered to be family nicknames in the narrow sense of the word (Frančić 1994). Family nicknames are derivatives whose base words are phonologically different from the surname of the respective family.

individual nicknames, from words that describe some salient features of members of the family, from objects or animals owned by the family, or from a memorable episode in the family's history. It seems that many of today's family nicknames were first used as allusive pseudonyms. Further analysis of the data will contain detailed morphosyntactic characteristics, socio-pragmatic aspects of usage, and semantical (metaphorical-metonymical) motivational frameworks.

The ethical dilemmas arise from the fact that some of the family nicknames, whose motivation is still transparent in the community, are considered offensive. According to the informants, they are, never used in direct communication with persons who bear them. A further signal that it is a problematic matter is the fact that the informants were reluctant to share information on deprecatory family nicknames still in use in the villages. Assuring them that the informants' personal information would not be disclosed in any public presentation of the data and that the official family surnames may not be published proved to be of no real significance to their attitude. The researchers also pointed out that the data would be presented in academic journals, which have a smaller circulation and impact on the general public in comparison to newspapers. This proved to be an important factor. Confidentiality seemed to be outranked by expected impact of the data among the general public.

Evidently, a carefully thought-out decision needs to be made on how to responsibly publish such sensitive data. By publishing offensive family nicknames, researchers risk causing distress to someone who is considered to be a »third party« in the investigation – that is, someone about whom researchers obtain information from informants but who themselves have no interaction with the investigators.

Since we know of no comparable precedents to this issue in Croatian onomastics, we have extensively studied contemporary ethical research principles, taking into account the ethical guidelines and recommendations of good practice of prominent scientific institutions such as the (US) National Science Foundation, the American Psychological Association, the American Anthropological Association, the American Association of University Professors, the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL 2006), the Modern Language Association (MLA 2005), the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics (NABRE 2009), and the National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway (NESH 2006), as well as non-institutional publications dealing with similar topics (Assiter 2005; Godfrey 2006; Hedgecoe 2012; Israel & Hay 2006; Jennings 2012; Resnik 2011; Schrag 2011; Tamin 2010; Walker, Holloway & Wheeler 2005; Williams-Jones & Søren 2005).

It seems that, when it comes to anthroponomastic research, the criteria described in the above-mentioned publications are not specific enough, whereas not

a single ethical dilemma presented in them resembles our case. The guidelines and recommendations of good practice mostly call for responsible conduct towards other members of the scientific community and towards informants. Third parties in research (in our case, the bearers of offensive nicknames) are mentioned secondarily. The rule of thumb when publishing personal content in research could be summed up as follows: »If you think it's risky, use initials or pseudonyms.« Needless to say, this guideline is not applicable when publishing anthroponomastic research. Unlike in other fields of research, it is not possible to anonymize references to real names by using pseudonyms or initials.

That this is in fact an ethical puzzler, one can see in the report of the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka on the case presented to them by the researchers. The Ethical Committee requested the opinion of the Honour Council. According to the Council's Statement (30 April 2013, document class 114-01/13-01/01, registry number 2170-57-01-13-14), »The question you raise is a precedent to us as well, and we do not have a practice which would set a further course of action (...)«² and »(...) the researchers should be advised that issues regarding research ethics are to be solved prior to the beginning of the investigation, not after it is done.«³ We argue that, in general, a researcher cannot predict what kind of data he or she will obtain in the course of an investigation, hence not all ethical issues can be foreseen prior to the study.

In what follows, we will briefly present the main principles of research ethics, in order to ensure a solid foundation for further discussion of this issue. Our specific dilemma can be defined as follows: Is it justified to publish offensive family nicknames in the name of researchers' integrity and face the risk of hurting someone's feelings, or should such family nicknames be withheld from publishing in order to protect third parties in the investigation?

4. Research ethics and anthroponomastics

Ethics is defined in its broadest sense as norms for conduct that distinguish between proper acceptable and unacceptable behavior (Resnik 2011; Israel & Hay 2006).

Research ethics refers to »(...) a complex set of values, standards and institutional schemes that help constitute and regulate scientific activity. Ultimately, research ethics is a codification of ethics of science in practice.« (NESH 2006).

Research and the evolution of science and methodology are likely to bring un-

² »Pitanje koje nam postavljate i za nas predstavlja presedan, te ne raspoložemo praksom koja bi usmjerila naše opredjeljenje (...)«.

³ »(...) valjalo bi istraživače uputiti na potrebu da dvojbe oko etičnosti istraživanja i objavljivanja rezultata riješe prije početka istraživanja, a ne nakon dovršavanja istih.«

foreseen new methods, possibilities and insights, and often take completely unpredictable courses. That being the case, research ethics is not a precise and strict set of rules, with definitive answers at hand (Walker, Holloway & Wheeler 2005: 95). Research ethics is a field that is forced to react to the dynamics of research progress in all branches of science, because it cannot be expected to have ready answers to questions that haven't even been asked yet. Because of that, every University has an Ethics Committee, to review issues as they come up.

Nevertheless, there are some basic rules and principles. Godfrey (2006: 15) states that the basic distinction in research ethics is between two types of ethical issues:

1. Is it ethical to conduct this investigation at all?
2. How can this investigation be conducted in an ethical way?

Summarizing the ethical codes obtained from analysing ethics rules by leading US government agencies,⁴ as well as other influential ethics policies,⁵ Resnik (2011) lists the following main principles: honesty (zero tolerance towards fabricating, falsifying, and misinterpreting data, and deceiving), objectivity (avoiding bias in all phases of research, disclosing personal or financial interest that may affect research), integrity, carefulness (avoiding errors and negligence, critically examining one's own work and the work of one's peers), openness (sharing data, results, ideas, tools, resources; being open to criticism and new ideas), respect for intellectual property (honoring patents, copyrights, other forms of intellectual property; giving credit and acknowledgement for all contributions to research; zero tolerance for plagiarism), confidentiality, responsible publication (avoiding wasteful and duplicative publication), responsible mentoring, respect for colleagues, social responsibility (promoting the social good, mitigating social harms through research, public education, and advocacy), non-discrimination, competence, legality (knowing and obeying relevant laws and institutional and governmental policies), animal care, and human subjects protection.

Ethical dilemmas arise because these principles cannot cover every imaginable situation, and they often conflict with each other (Resnik 2011). In our research, the ethical dilemma does not relate to any of Godfrey's questions, because it

⁴ National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

⁵ *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals* (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors), *The Chemist's Code of Conduct* (American Chemical Society), *Code of Ethics* (American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science) *Ethical Principles of Psychologists* (American Psychological Association), *Statements on Ethics and Professional Responsibility* (American Anthropological Association), *Statement on Professional Ethics* (American Association of University Professors), the *Nuremberg Code* and the *Declaration of Helsinki* (World Medical Association).

is not about conducting the investigation, but rather about the presentation and publishing of the data. As for Resnik's main principles, the principle listed last may be at stake – human subjects protection – because, besides minimizing harm to human subjects, this principle includes the respect for human dignity, privacy and autonomy.

The term »human subject« reminds us more of clinical investigations than of research in the humanities, or, more specifically, onomastics. It seems that research ethics in fact began primarily as a matter of biomedical research and, in general, research activities dealing with living creatures, where special care and rigor in this area are stressed (Williams-Jones & Hølm 2005: 39). The question of whether the same rules and principles are applicable in the humanities and social sciences as in biomedical research is still a subject of debate.

Williams-Jones & Hølm (2005: 39) acknowledge that there is no system of formal ethical review in the humanities that is comparable to the divergent histories of medical and social science research, but they stress that research ethics should be taken more seriously by researchers in the humanities and social sciences, because they are »(...) not immune to the conduct of unethical research« (ibid.: 39). The authors reflect negatively on the situation in the UK and estimate that many teams of social science researchers, and even whole universities, seem to disregard (or not fully understand) the need for ethical review, or how it should be managed.

Moreover, the authors seem to believe that there is a kind of resentment towards ethics committees, and explain it with the notion that many university researchers do not even realise that their work could raise any ethical issues, because there is very little tradition of formal research ethics review in the social sciences and humanities (Williams-Jones & Hølm 2005: 43). In other words, fields in which there is little or no tradition of ethical awareness tend to be characterized by inertia. Considering that this is, to our knowledge, the first article ever written on ethical issues in Croatian onomastics, a field with a long tradition in Croatian philology, we can say that there is need for ethical awareness in Croatian humanities as well.

Another plausible reason for resentment is the division and distrust between scholars and regulators that Israel & Hay (2006: 1) attribute to the general opinion among researchers that there is no need for the social sciences to comply to »biomedically driven arrangements.« Simply put, many researchers believe lives are not at stake in the social sciences and humanities. Although that may be true, one must consider the fact that harm can be done without putting someone's biological existence at risk. Or, as Israel & Hay put it (Ibid.: 2), while social scientists try to make the world a better place, ethical behaviour is there to help them avoid doing harm to individuals, communities and environments.

In his overview of complaints and major critiques of ethics review by US scholars in the social sciences and humanities, Schrag (2011: 120) mentions that ethics committees are perceived as bureaucratic hurdles that impose silly restrictions that consequently block, delay or in other ways inhibit research. Moreover, it is a common belief that ethics committees can be constituted of non-experts in the field, who therefore might apply inappropriate principles to specific cases and in time could turn out to be »a solution in search of a problem.« He suggests that social sciences retain the basic forms of ethics review while liberating them from the assumptions of medical ethics, which he considers the main cause of resentment and misunderstanding (Ibid.: 127). Simply put, incomparably fewer potential dangers are associated with social science and humanities research than with biomedical and clinical research, and therefore, different standards should apply for the humanities and social sciences.⁶

In order to address this issue, the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics published *Ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioral sciences and proposals for ethical review* (NABRE 2009), which includes detailed guidelines for the establishment of national research ethics committees. Ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioral sciences are divided into three areas (Ibid.: 5):

1. Respecting the autonomy of research subjects (obtaining informed consent);
2. Avoiding harm;
3. Privacy and data protection.

Avoiding harm includes treating subjects with respect and reporting findings in a respectful way in research publications (NABRE 2009: 8). Ethical committees are expected to estimate the risks that may arise in any aspect of the research process and to determine if the risks are morally acceptable (Ibid.: 14-15). However, moral acceptability is not treated as a matter of making a binary decision. The risk, according to this document, is more acceptable when the scientific value of the research is higher. Hence, ethics committees are expected to also make decisions on the value of a research project in order to recommend the best course of action.

Since the ethics committee to which the researchers in this particular case turned failed to provide guidance in terms of a specific course of action, we are forced to consider several options in order to come to the most acceptable solution.

Our detailed analysis of the above-mentioned guidelines provided us with basic insights into the principles of research ethics and helped us to determine to which category our problem belongs. Several guidelines inform that caution is required especially when an individual or a group is identifiable in research re-

⁶ Cf. Jennings' (2012) and Hedgecoe's (2012) responses to Schrag's article.

ports (NESH 2006: 11). However, some crucial aspects of anthroponomastics seem to be left out. Even the most prominent professional ethics guidelines for linguists (e.g. MLA 2005) do not give sufficient input regarding anthroponomastic research.

When facing an ethical dilemma, researchers have to make a responsible decision and take action appropriately. It is recommended by a great number of ethical guidelines that the decision be made based upon as much information as possible, and only after different options have been explored and other ethical rules and precedents have been considered. Since we know of no comparable precedents, we will explore five different options and briefly discuss the pros and cons of each.

5. Discussion: Finding the proper way to go

Possibility 1.

The first possibility would be to publish the research, listing and analysing all of the collected family nicknames, except those considered to be offensive. In this way, some new knowledge would be presented to the public, while the bearers of offensive family nicknames would be protected and we would avoid hurting someone's feelings. However, we believe that this would fall into another category of ethical misconduct, violating the principle described by Resnik (2011) simply as "honesty." Withholding a portion of one's collected data is considered falsifying. As a consequence, the analysis would have to circumvent some very important sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of the use of family nicknames with pejorative semantics. Therefore, this procedure is ruled out.

Possibility 2.

The second possibility is to partially publish the results of the study and to declare that certain offensive family nicknames have been left out in order to protect the dignity of the third parties in the investigation. This option would not fall into the category of falsifying data; however, it seems possible that such a course of action (not mentioning family nicknames considered offensive) has a similar potential of causing a disturbance in a small community, and that it could lead to greater discrimination against the bearers of such family nicknames than publishing the nicknames would. Such a practice could lead to tabooization through overprotectionism. Of course, no outcome is foreseeable with certainty (see, for example, Tamin 2010: 79), but in any case, we are dealing with this issue with caution and under the presumption that the publishing of such research could cause all sorts of reactions among the members of a small community and consequently could very well damage someone's dignity.

Considering that the risk is not eliminated by taking this course of action, and at the same time, the scientific value of the research presentation is impaired and deprived of in-depth sociolinguistic analysis, we rule this option out as well.

Possibility 3.

The third way would be to present and analyse the family nicknames that are not considered offensive. The offensive ones would be mentioned, would not be presented directly, but rather described in semantic and derivative terms. For instance, in this procedure, the authors would describe that the base word from which the nickname is derived refers to a memorable episode from the 1950s in which a member of the family was committed to a mental institution.⁷ He or she was given a nickname commonly given to persons perceived as odd or to mentally ill individuals. This personal nickname broadened its semantic field in time and was subsequently used as a family nickname. Because mental illness is perceived in many parts of the world as embarrassing for the family of the ill person, this family nickname is considered offensive and is never used in direct communication with the bearers. Neither the base word nor the family nickname would be mentioned in such a description.

With this procedure, researchers would avoid falsifying the data as well as narrowing down the basis of the philological analysis, in terms of both structural and semantic aspects. On the other hand, the same problem exists as with the second possibility. Researchers cannot be certain that with such a procedure a heightened negative disposition towards the bearers of offensive nicknames would be avoided. One has to bear in mind the possibility that for some of the family nicknames the semantic link has meanwhile been disconnected, and that most members of the community are not aware of the connotation while using them, and are, simply put, not mentally processing the semantic motivation of the nickname while using it. In this case it would be possible for the semantic motivation to be re-activated in the minds of the informants because the main topic of the interview was the meaning of different family nicknames. Perhaps, precisely by not presenting the nicknames perceived by informants as being offensive, the forgotten negative connotation could be activated again among other members of the community. We argue that by such a descriptive procedure researchers are facing the risk of encroachment into the dynamics of interpersonal relationships within the community, and that this risk is not smaller than it would be in case of presenting all of the family nicknames in their usage variants. If brought to the readers' attention, even the most abstract descriptive presentation of semantic motivation could be recognized and linked to the group in question by any member of a small community.

⁷ This example is fictional, and has no resemblance to any of the nicknames collected in Sveti Martin na Muri, Držimurec and Strelec.

Possibility 4.

The fourth possibility would be to directly present all of the collected family nicknames, including those considered offensive, in their confirmed usage forms. In order to provide an »ethically clean« research paper, the researchers would obtain informed consent from all parties involved. From the aspect of ethical committees, this would probably be the most acceptable way to go, because it would formally relieve the researchers involved from any hazard of ethical misconduct. Paradoxically, it is an option we are not in the least inclined to choose.

Although these communities are considered small, they consist of several hundreds of individuals, of whom the vast majority bears some kind of family nickname. Several dozens have family nicknames that are considered offensive. Obtaining informed consent from all family nickname bearers would be quite an invasive and noticeable action in a small and transparent rural community. So, although formally this solution is designed to get an ethically clean sheet, it is ethically controversial because it contradicts the general principle that all research work should only minimally change the phenomenon or community it observes.

Moreover, based on the detailed analysis of several research ethics guidelines and codes of conduct, we believe that in this case there is no obligation to obtain informed consent. This obligation exists for informants and/or participants (BAAL 2006: 4; NESH 2006: 12), yet bearers of family nicknames cannot be treated as participants nor as informants in the study, but as third parties.

Certainly, any research procedure has to consider and anticipate unintended effects on third parties that are not directly included in the research (NESH 2006: 16), but consideration for the suffering of third parties should be weighed against, on one hand, the consideration for the study's quest for the (sometimes inconvenient) truth, and on the other, the possible damage that obtaining informed consent from an entire community can do.⁸

Possibility 5.

The fifth possibility we will describe in this article is the complete publication of data without informed consent of third parties. In its presentation, the rese-

⁸ In the contemporary literature on research ethics, several cases are mentioned and described in which informed consent is contraindicated (i. e. Assiter 2005; NABRE 2009). The Finnish National Board on Research Ethics holds that research is allowed to be conducted without obtaining informed consent if (NABRE 2009: 16):

- it would not be possible to conduct the research if subjects were informed of the study;
- the data collection does not involve risks to participants;
- if possible, research subjects will be informed afterwards of the nature and purpose of the research;
- adequate attention is paid to the privacy of the research subjects and data protection issues.

archers would mention the negative/offensive connotation of the family nickname only if the pragmatics falls in the scope of the article in question. If that be the case, offensive nicknames would be described and elaborated as a specific form of naming, and patterns of semantic motivation would be presented in detail. Formal surnames of families would not be revealed, so no direct identifiers are to be disclosed. Thus, the identity of third parties is protected to a certain degree, more than which would be difficult to attain in any study that first and foremost deals with names.

There are several arguments in favor of this procedure, some of which have already been described in this article. Additionally, family nicknames in anthroponomastic research are considered to be, and are described as, elements of a naming system within a community. Bearers of offensive family nicknames themselves use (and possibly generate) other offensive nicknames. The anthroponomastic researcher does not deal with persons or even with interpersonal relationships and attitudes. He/she deals with how the naming system reacts to and reflects interpersonal relationships and attitudes. Because of that, we argue that he/she needs to be allowed to publish research without being accused of regenerating or extending hatred or prejudice.⁹

Secondly, we hold that the principle of preventing any damage or harm to subjects caused by publication of data should be honoured, but we believe that it need not in all cases prevent the publication of research findings, especially in cases where the possible impact cannot be foreseen with certainty.

6. Conclusion

In summary, it can be said that the ethical dilemma we have presented does not relate to the process of conducting the research, nor with the informants and the protection of their rights and identity. It is a question of ethical acceptability in publishing data that can hurt someone's dignity.

We have shown that the complexity of the matter derives from the fact that family nicknames have a considerably more transparent semantic background than personal names and surnames, whose use is strictly limited to the identification of individuals and families, without reflecting a positive or negative attitude towards them. Family nicknames, on the other hand, are not used solely as an instrument of naming, but their often transparent semantic motivation reflects the attitudes the community holds toward a group of people, their history or their background.

⁹ Cf. the following statement of the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics: »A researcher's task is to produce new information without having to fear the reaction of authorities or other research subjects.« (NABRE 2009: 9).

We have briefly elaborated on five possible courses of action for researchers who face such an ethical dilemma and declared our inclination towards the procedure we consider to be most acceptable – publishing all of the family nicknames, including the ones considered offensive. Although possible consequences of this procedure can hardly be foreseen with certainty, we firmly believe that the risk of harming someone's dignity is no higher than it would be by withholding those nicknames from the presentation and only mentioning that such nicknames exist. We have completely ruled out the option of presenting only family nicknames that are not considered offensive, and not even mentioning the offensive ones. Besides falling into the category of falsifying data, it would considerably impair the outcome of the analysis, especially from the aspect of pragmatics.

One of the key arguments for making such a decision is the insight provided by many of the prominent international research ethics guidelines, according to which, besides a clearly articulated necessity of protecting any involved parties from any possible negative consequences of the research process, there is also an imperative of presenting the acquired research data to the public. For instance, in their *Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law and the humanities*, the Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics state that

Knowledge is a collective benefit. Accordingly, as a rule, all research results should be published. It is also important that results can be verified. (NESH 2006: 32)

Another, related statement can be found in the *Recommendations on Good Practice in Applied Linguistics* of The British Association for Applied Linguistics:

The right to publish stands as the cornerstone of academic freedom, and should only be relinquished under the most exceptional circumstances. (BAAL 2006: 3)

Onomastics is a discipline with a rich tradition in Croatian philology. However, questions on the disclosure of informants' identities or on protecting third parties from possible negative consequences of publishing their names have neither been discussed nor even considered to date. Since we have declared our inclination towards publishing all data, one might argue that the contribution of our discussion was simply in reaffirming the status quo in the discipline (except our plea to keep the informants' identities undisclosed).

Nevertheless, we believe that it is critical to address these topics, especially due to the fact that, as described above, we make a plea for awareness of the principles of research ethics in the humanities and in social sciences.

We do not argue that we have found a procedure which would perfectly cover both poles – the need to publish research data in their entirety, and the need to protect all parties involved. Damage is a possibility, and there is some risk. Although academic publications do not have as strong an impact as popular media,

today they are easily accessible to any internet user. Therefore, we do not consider this solution to be definitive, or perfect, and consider this paper to be a call for further discussion and exploration of different solutions.

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Kako objaviti istraživanje o uvredljivim obiteljskim nadimcima? Neka promišljanja o etici u antroponomastici

Sažetak

U ovome se radu razmatra etička dvojba pri objavljivanju rezultata istraživanja obiteljskih nadimaka. Obiteljski nadimci funkcioniraju, za razliku od prezimena, kao indeksi koji nisu u potpunosti lišeni semantike te dijelom funkcioniraju kao imena koja se referiraju na istaknuto obilježje ili događaj iz povijesti određene obitelji, a svjedoče i o tome kako okolina i zajednica percipira određenu skupinu unutar zajednice. Neki su od tih obiteljskih nadimaka uvredljivi za one koji ih nose, pa ih članovi zajednice u pravilu ne rabe u izravnoj komunikaciji s nositeljima obiteljskih nadimaka. U radu je predstavljena dvojba valja li i kako objaviti takve rezultate antroponomastičkih istraživanja. Dan je pregled osnovnih načela istraživačke etike te je ponuđeno i opisano pet modusa postupanja.

Ključne riječi: antroponomastika, obiteljski nadimci, istraživačka etika, etika objavljivanja, hrvatski jezik, kajkavsko narječje

Keywords: anthroponomastics, family nicknames, research ethics, publishing ethics, Croatian language, Kajkavian dialect

