



## The Activation of Social Networks within the Social Education Assistance in Family Settings (FamNet)

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## Introduction

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- *No one is an island. Everyone is part of the human continent.*  
 (John Donne; 1572 – 1631)
  - With these simple words the British poet and contemporary of William Shakespeare expressed what characterizes **humans as social beings**.
  - Accordingly, it is very important for professionals not to consider single clients and families with complex needs as small islands alone in the huge, stormy ocean. Instead, their respective **various relationships** to people outside the core family should be recognized and taken into account.
  - Purpose of the project was to train **professionals in valuing these relationships outlined above as social resources**.
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## Theoretical background

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- **Roots:** The methodological origin lies in the **resource-oriented US-American wraparound** concept.
    - **Wraparound:** nearly the whole social network of the family comes together regularly, planning how to support the family (Van den Berg; c.f. Clark).
    - A resource coordinator leads the session.
  - **FamNet (Family Network Activation):** An adaptation of the original concept to the German welfare setting. A family assistant supervises the parents how to activate their social network by themselves.
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## The German Welfare System

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- The German child welfare and juvenile justice system guarantees the legal guardian a legal claim on federal support in the case that adequate education and wellbeing cannot be ensured.
  - Families must have free choice of support options and ownership of the support plan.
  - The legal guardian keeps his/her parental authority.
  - Youth Welfare Department examines conditions and decides about options in type and amount of support.
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## How Much Network-oriented Work Does Occur within the Social Education Assistance in Family Settings?

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- Not much - even though it is demanded by the **child and youth welfare law (KJHG)**.
    - At best, professionals **focus on the social integration** of clients into the community (school, kindergarten, sports club, therapy etc.)
    - but mostly do **not encourage** their **personal relationships**.
  - **Social integration**, without doubt, is very important for everyone
    - because it creates **social identity**
  - But **personal relationships** is an equally important part of a functioning network
    - because they offer various possibilities to receive **social support**.
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## Purpose of Empirical Study

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- to **develop** network-oriented **intervention methods** for the social education work
    - Participating families are those that have complex needs and are actually supported by a social welfare program.
    - For a certain period (9 months), their family assistants focus on the respective families' (either existing or lacking) social resources.
    - Goal is to enable them to extend and use their network on their own.
  - to examine the intervention's **effectiveness** and the actual degree of application of the intervention methods by the trained assistants.
  - to promote **the application's sustainability**
  - to **develop the concept** continually, based on the study's results.
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## Investigation Plan

- **20 family assistants** of eight welfare organizations in Hamburg were trained in **network-oriented intervention methods**
- 26 families with complex needs participated in the nine-month program.
- A comparison group (N=26 families) received traditional assistance.
- The data – collection for **network analysis** took place at the beginning and end of the intervention period via the “Mannheimer Interview on Social Support” (MISU, Veiel 1987)
- Additionally, **qualitative interviews were held**.

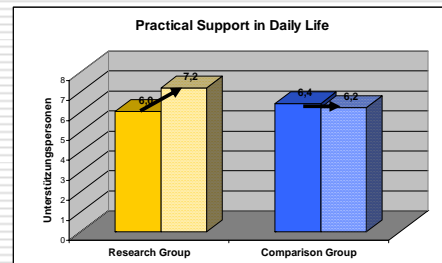
## The Network-oriented Intervention Methods

- different **handouts were given to discuss the respective social network** with the family;
- furthermore **handouts to develop so-called “network goals”** in cooperation with the family. These network goals refer to the establishment and use of social contacts.
- To let families reach their aims, family assistants supervised them how to focus on their resources (personal strengths, experiences, coping strategies, social resources).

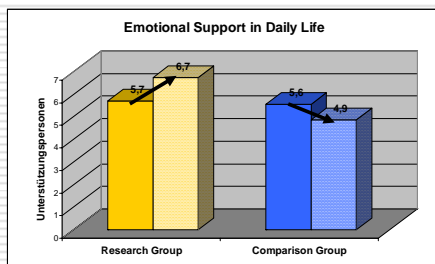
## Research Hypotheses

- Research hypotheses were that the families would profit from the network activation in so far as
  - **social support** from family members, neighbours and friends **would increase**.
  - The **need of further support** was supposed to **decrease**.
- No change was expected in the comparison group.
- The new intervention (network intervention) should be more effective in achieving the goals stated in the support plan

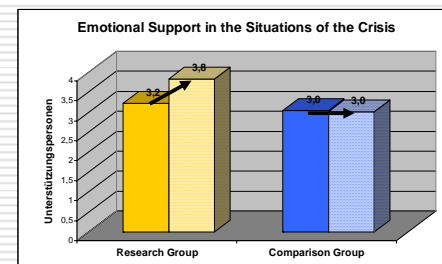
## Quantitative Results



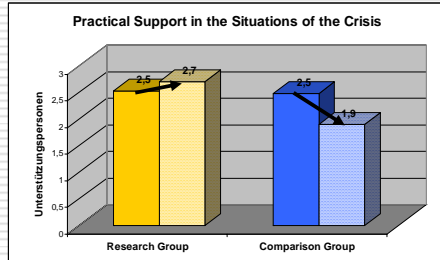
## Quantitative Results



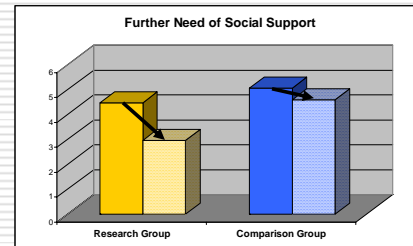
## Quantitative Results



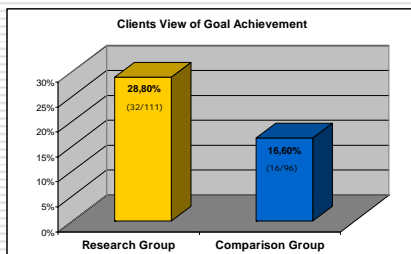
## Quantitative Results



## Quantitative Results



## Quantitative Results



$\chi^2_{(3)} = 12,98, p < 0,01$

## The Most Important Result of the Qualitative Interviews with the Family Assistants (Research Group)



- **Implementation of the concept** has not been satisfactory. The different reasons are:
  - It was **difficult to implement** the network-oriented intervention methods in the daily social education work because of administrative problems
  - Application of **structural methods**, (i.e., documentation of every goal, and every step to pursue this goal), felt strange to most of the participating professionals.
  - To **change professionals' point of view**, so that they consider families with complex needs as being able to organize social support within their own network, is a long way and needs time.

## Further Qualitative Results



- In sum, the family assistants rate the project as a **success**.
  - Because they feel that activation of networks and successful development of clients have taken place in several cases.
  - In addition, a lot of the participating professionals report that they could profit a lot by getting to know new methods.
- For several professionals it was completely **new to focus on the private network** of the clients - instead of understanding networking as sufficient cooperation between different care systems

## The Most Important Result of the Qualitative Interviews with the Family Members (Research Group)



- two-thirds of the participating clients (mothers and fathers) report that their **network has changed** in the last nine months.
- Specifically, they feel **more supported now**.



## Continuing Research

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- April 2004 – February 2005: Pilot project in cooperation with an organization that trains unemployed persons to find a job („Hamburger Arbeits- und Beschäftigungsgesellschaft“ )
    - **FamNet intervention for young single-mothers**  
Analysis and Activation of their Social Networks in order to support them in managing their daily life and finding a job.
    - Improvement of intervention methods (according to the received results of the former study) in order to make methods more applicable.
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## Thank You for Your Attention!

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