

Contemporary understandings of ‘family’ among socially vulnerable families and social workers in Lithuania

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ABSTRACT

Each person's definition and perception of his or her family varies. Previous research has argued that the answer to the question of what is a 'good' or 'bad' family cannot be found, because we all have a distinct set of values that are incompatible. Each family is unique in its composition and practices. However, the theoretical aspects, the expectations and legal aspects of society may not correspond to everyday family life. This discrepancy leads to some families, for instance traditional, being considered more natural than others (Bourdieu, 1996).

This study explores socially vulnerable families' and social workers' perceptions and experiences of family in contemporary Lithuania. More specifically the study aims to increase our understanding about how socially vulnerable families and social workers define 'family', perceive 'ideal family' and 'do family'. Given this, the study attempts to broaden a concept of 'family'. Additionally, in order to understand how the child is positioned among the families of the study participants, and based on intergenerational interdependencies and intergenerational practices, the thesis rests on the premise that adults' perceptions of family is valuable within childhood studies and for understanding children's position and experience of family life.

The study has found that the research participants define their family based on the strength of emotional relationships and family practices. In this way, they broaden the concept of 'family' by including people outside the biological and legal families. Furthermore, research data revealed that the traditional family model can no longer be defined as dominant as most of the participants live in cohabitation and other types of family forms. This included single parents, divorced or widowed. However, the nuclear family still remains an important aspect while meeting the societal demands for the family. Married heterosexual couple and their children were identified by the participants as one of the most important criterion in defining the ideal family model set by the society.

The results of the study also showed that intergenerational communication and assistance to each other is an important value in Lithuanian society. Amongst the other findings, it also emerged that attitudes towards children as active rights holders and active participants in constructing their own lives and those of their families are still relatively 'new' among the participants in the study.

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1. Introduction

I was born in Lithuania in 1989. After 2 years, in 1991, Lithuania had restored its independence. My generation is called the 'first free generation' or 'the first generation of restored independence'. Even though I grew up in a country which was already free from occupation, the consequences of it continued to be felt in social, cultural, and political sectors. Sharing my childhood memories I can recall that children were clearly perceived as 'becomings'. Adult phrases such as "This is not a child's business", "You can tell your opinion when you grow up", "Do not listen, this is not children's conversation" were common in many families. Children were seen as incompetent in many spheres, such as schooling and health care.

As a child I have never heard of the existence of a child's rights or that my rights as a child are protected by law. Although Lithuania ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, it did not receive enough attention in educational institutions, nor in the media or public sector. It is important to note that apart from that, gender roles were fixed. Men's and women's works were distinguished, masculinity and femininity were highlighted even in kindergartens - "Boys do not cry" and "Girls should play with dolls and wear dresses". Women were perceived as obliged to assume the greatest responsibility for child care and housework (Cinikiene, 2011). Lack of tolerance for different races, sexuality, and vulnerable people was also noticeable. Nearly thirty years since the country's independence, many changes have taken place. Many families have become more liberal, society has given more attention to the rights of the child and human rights in general. Having said that, it is hard to tell which part of the society has grown more liberal and which has held onto its conservative ideals.

In this thesis, I will explore contemporary understandings of family and family life among socially vulnerable families and social workers.

1.1. Problem Statement

My choice of the topic was inspired by all the aspects mentioned below, as well as it has been greatly influenced by the fact that I can imply my Lithuanian cultural knowledge.

There is a significant lack of research among Lithuanian academics that would be conducted within the discipline of childhood studies. This discipline is still hardly available for Lithuanian students because no educational institution in the country offers a Childhood studies program. In the Lithuanian context scientists tend to study vulnerable families mostly within the sociology, psychology and social work. They also focus more on the problems and the potential consequences of being 'in social risk', and it seems like there is a lack of empirical data about how practitioners and social service users construct their perceptions of different family definitions, social acceptations and practices of 'doing family'.

Thus, due to lack of research within the childhood studies in Lithuania, there is a deficient in knowledge on how the child is situated within the family context. There is also lack of knowledge whether the personal perceptions to the family corresponds with the described family definition in legal acts in Lithuania. In addition, I want to emphasize that Lithuania is not only experiencing a huge short of research within the childhood studies, but also a lack of international research on Lithuanian family and children, and publications in English or other languages. As a result, access to knowledge about the Lithuanian family becomes complicated internationally.

In order to improve the understandings and work of social workers and other practitioners in Lithuania, it is important to reveal both employees' attitude towards the family and the child, and the attitude of the families with whom they work. This is important, because children and adults are interrelated by generationing practices (Alanen, 2009) making their relationship intergenerationally interdependent (Wyness, 2013). This thesis is an intersection between childhood studies and family sociology, thus exploring the chosen phenomenon from a broader perspective, believing that frameworks complement each other. In addition, the analysis, based on several perspectives, creates a space for a critical approach.

As it is stated by Thorsdalen (2016), the period between 2004 and 2014, 138,600 immigrants from Eastern Europe immigrated to work in Norway. During the same period, 40 200 people immigrated from the same countries due to family ties to labor migrants and 23,300 children have become family reunited with a labour immigrant in Norway. Most family immigrants, 58 percent, are children aged 0-17 and people of Lithuanian origin made up 22 percent of all

immigrants from Eastern Europe. In 2010, I came to live in Norway due to my family ties as my parents were labor immigrants.

In 2014, only 39 percent were married when they arrived. Those who married after immigration, in 80 per cent of the cases, found a spouse from the same country they come from. Only five percent married one with a non-immigrant background. In total, 16 100 children were born in Norway, where either mother or father are labour migrants or family reunited from EU-8, EU-2 or Croatia. Overall, this means that close to 40,000 children who have lived in Norway a period between 2004 and 2014 have a family connection to a labour or family immigrants from Eastern European countries. (Thorsdalen, 2016).

According to the statistics, it can be assumed that the emigrated Eastern Europeans tend to build families with people from the same countries of origin, suggesting that families can have their own country-specific traditions and values even when living in Norway. It is therefore important to look into the experience of these families, understand their traditions, values and attitudes so that they can be applied in social, political and other contexts in Norway. This could serve to promote the integration of these immigrant families and to strengthen the interpersonal relationships between immigrant families and Norwegian natives. All the above-mentioned aspects could also improve the living quality of children who have immigrated with their families. However, in Norway, the researches that reveals Eastern Europeans', in particular the Lithuanians', approach and understanding of the family, are greatly lacking. Robila and Krishnakumar (2003) stated that there is a great lack of empirical data and scientific literature on the East European family in general.

In the media, nationally and internationally, much of the conflict around immigration and child welfare institution is linked to people from new EU countries and Eastern Europe. They make up a large part of the immigrant population. While looking at the statistics, the families of eastern Europeans are not the leading among the families most likely to receive social services, nor are leading among the families who has lost their custody rights in Norway (Berg, et al., 2017). The occurred debates has shown that there is a misunderstanding between both parties. Derviskadic (2013 cited in Berg, et al. 2017) points out that this is because the minority families' lack of knowledge of the Norwegian system mean that the processes take longer and can cause various misunderstandings. While Bø (2008) claims that minority families may find that their views on child rearing and gender roles are disqualified by social workers, they may

feel deprived of power and control of the children and that their understanding of the parenting role is not emphasized or understood by the child welfare service (Aadnesen and Hærem 2007, cited in Berg et al., 2017). When two cultures clash, it is of benefit for both sides to understand one another and in effect, explore common ground which eventually would form a mutual dialogue. According to Kriz and Skivenes (2010a) there is, therefore, a clear need from several teams to improve the ability of child welfare workers to reach and create trust among ethnic minority families (cited in Berg, 2017).

1.2. Research Questions and Purpose of the Study

This study makes an effort to investigate the socially vulnerable families' and social workers' perspectives about what is a family, based on their thoughts and experiences. The main purpose of the study was to find out how the family is perceived by the research participants, what differences, if any, occur when disclosing the views of socially vulnerable families and social workers, and whether the theoretical aspects, the expectations and legal aspects of society correspond to everyday family life. The main question of the research to which this study seeks to answer is:

What are socially vulnerable families' and social workers' perceptions and experiences of family?

In order to answer the question raised in detail, additional research questions were selected to help reveal the desired aspects of the study:

- How do vulnerable families and social workers define 'family'?
- How do vulnerable families and social workers perceive 'ideal family'?
- How are vulnerable families and social workers 'doing family'?
- How do vulnerable families and social workers perceive the intergenerational relations within the family?

1.3. Structure of the thesis

This study is structured as follows: Chapter one presents a brief introduction to the study including problem statement, research questions and purpose of the study. Chapter two gives an overview of the context on the country and study area. Chapter three provides the theoretical basis of this study along with the relevant concepts. Chapter four presents the methodological framework of the study. It aims to justify the choice of study type, explains the selection criteria of the research participants, methods for the data collection, data analysis strategy, together

with the ethical considerations and the limitations of this study. Chapter five, six and seven reveals and interprets the main findings of the study. In Chapter five, the family composition and perception of the family concept of the participants is presented. Chapter six explores the participants' perceptions of what the 'ideal' family is, and then Chapter seven shares the revealed family practices. Lastly, chapter eight provides an overview of the findings in conjunction with the concluding reflections. In addition, several recommendations for the further researchers, social workers, and the policy makers are provided.

Part I.
Context, Theory and Method

2. Background information on country and study area

This chapter intends to give a basic introduction on the country and community where study has taken place in order to provide the necessary contextual information. The purpose of this section is to familiarize the reader with the information that is relevant and necessary to fully engage while reading this study. Some main characteristics of Lithuania, including its historical and social changes, will be provided in relevance to family life in Lithuanian society.

2.1. Demographics

Located on the Baltic Sea, Lithuania is bordered by Latvia to the north and Belarus to the east and south. Poland is situated to the southwest of the country. Lithuania is a democratic republic. According to data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics (2018), there were 2 808 900 inhabitants in Lithuania – 1 884 700 in urban areas and 924 200 in rural areas.

The country is predominantly Lithuanian, with the natives making over 84 percent of the country's population. Other represented nationalities include Polish (6.6 percent), Russian (5.8 percent), Belarusian (1.2 percent), and other (2.3 percent). The official language of the country is Lithuanian. Lithuania is highly literate, with 99.8 percent of the population (15 years old and over) possessing the ability to read and write (CIA , 2015). Official statistics show that in 2017, the number of birth registered in 2017 amounted 28 696 and 40 142 thousands deaths (Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania, 2018). Natural population change is 11 446 thousands. The number of marriages registered amounted to 21 187 per year, that of divorces 8 518. According to Lithuanian Department of Statistics (2018), 24.4 percent of Lithuanians are affected by material deprivation.

2.2. Historical overview

2.2.1. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) occupation

Lithuania used to be powerful state in its own right in 14th – 16th centuries. However, the country subsequently disappeared from the map in the 18th century and only reappeared briefly between wars until Lithuania regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 (Eidintas et al., 2012). Occupation had a significant effect on Lithuanian society. In Lithuania, about 33% of the population, suffered repressions during Soviet and Nazi occupations (Kuodytė, 2005 cited in Vaskeliene et al., 2011, p. 93). For over 50 years of the Soviet occupation, people were deported, imprisoned, and persecuted for political or social reasons (Vaskeliene et al., 2011).

Soviet morality, which prevailed in everyday social practices, was not a standard moral in

relation to the basic moral requirements. Even though the Soviet state claimed that it protected many basic norms of morality, eventually in daily life, practices such as stealing, lying, betraying and distortion of other values were considered as normal thing (Putinaite, 2007). The totalitarian rule has forced people to adapt to this reality and seek for moral reasons and practical ways to live in it. In late Soviet Lithuania, people mastered various strategies to make the abnormal look like 'normal' (Landsbergis, 1997). In order to compensate for the shortage of products and services, and the absence of free speech, many illegal and immoral practices emerged. One of them was *Blat* or 'buddy-system' - getting products and services through acquaintances as a form of corruption. The term appeared in the Soviet Union, and is still in use in the former parts of it. A social security system was adapted to strengthen control over the workers. According to Guogis and Bogdanova (2012), no other country in the world has used its social security system for the purposes or as a tool for propaganda. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union and the Lithuanian SSR did not follow the reforms in the social security system, proposed by the Western societies. In 1940, after being occupied, Lithuania had to comply with the established social insurance and social security system. The main role of the Lithuanian SSR was devoted to the social insurance system, and the taxes that the citizens were paying was not disclosed to them, thus the illusion that the state was taking care of the society by itself was magnified.

One of the main features of the 'abnormalities' of Soviet life was the inevitability of duality. Duality arose because of the total recognition of common standards of behaviour, speech and lifestyle (Putinaite, 2007). Their changes could only be caused by political party decisions, not by individuals' initiatives, feelings, and ideas. There was no direct link between the individuals' attitude and the dynamics of the change of life and social order. Individuality and distinctness were intolerable and 'illegal' in terms of officially established procedures and lifestyles. It was a system that pushed a person into a difficult psychological state, because those who publicly expressed their criticism towards the regime remained suspicious from an ideological point of view. They were not allowed to work in public institutions and there was no private work (Landsbergis, 1997). The very existence of an autonomous personality was perceived as an illegal act against the regime. In the last decade of the regime, the vanity of the Soviet existence, as well as the unexpected 'truth' of Soviet propaganda, became evident (Putinaite, 2007, p. 265).

2.2.2. Lithuanian families

According to Stankuniene, Jonkaryte & Mitrikas (2003), the demographic characteristics of the Lithuanian family have changed considerably during one decade. The most noticeable changes of 20th century were: reduced amount of marriages, marriages of later age, lowered fertility, postponed birth of the first child, increased amount of couples living in cohabitation, and increased number of children raised in cohabitation. Maslauskaitė (2010), defines a ‘normal’ Lithuanian family as a family created by marriage, relationships of romantic love, connection between marriage and sexuality, and asymmetric gender roles (Maslauskaitė, 2010, p. 310). According to Stankuniene et al. (2003) and Maslauskaitė (2010), nowadays, the Lithuanian family shares unique qualities, but its structure is approaching the Western family model.

During the last two decades, the dominant Lithuanian family form, has complemented by new family types and forms – single parent household, families without children and families living in cohabitation. According to Stankuniene & Maslauskaitė (2009), cohabitation emerged in the last decade of 20th century. Cohabitation began to spread as a stage in family formation strategy, i.e. trial marriage. Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a sharp increase in couples starting their life together in a cohabitable environment, as opposed to an only a decade earlier, where couples married young or even chose cohabitation as alternative to marriage. In parallel, this process extends not only among young people, but also in the older age after the divorce or the death of the spouse.

2.2.3. Migration

In the mid-1990s, new factors influencing the family institution began to operate. Increasing unemployment and visa-free travel to many European and non-European countries created and opportunity to enter international labour market, albeit more often than not illegally. Those changes generated flows of temporary and short-term migrants, most of whom were young people. Young people who were seeking for employment abroad, were less likely to settle down and create a family back home. However, they became additional carriers of information about widespread lifestyle, values, priorities, diversity of family forms in the Western countries. It promoted the adoption of Western values or the imitation of marital behaviour (Stankuniene et al. 2003). Since 1990, as a result of migration, the number of Lithuanian inhabitants has decreased by 706 739 thousands, which is around 23 percent of population (EMN, 2018).

In 2004, when Lithuania joined the European Union, the short-term and long-term emigration intensified. In many families, one or both parents travelled abroad leaving children in Lithuania, guarded by relatives or the state. Emigration became family survival strategy, adjusted

interpersonal family relationships and suggested new transnational family structures (Juozeliuniene, Kanapieniene & Kazlauskaitė, 2008).

2.3. Legal definition of Lithuanian family

According to Cesnūtytė (2013), Lithuanian discussions about family definitions, among scientist and politicians began 2001, when Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania (2000) approved and introduced a legal term of the family. The main debate was influenced by the consideration of whether unmarried families should be included in the law by establishing partnership. She states that the debate became even more pronounced in 2008 when the Lithuanian Parliament approved the National Concept of Family Policy. In this document, the family concept was legally defined for the first time. Family was described as registered marriage between different sexes, raising their biological or adoptive children. This document also noted that all other groups of blood relatives involved in mutual assistance and conducting joint economic activities, and couples who have not registered their marriage, were protected by the state as maternity, paternity, childhood, and not as a family. Cesnūtytė (2013) states that “pluralism of family formation and patterns of living together have created evident need to revise the criteria for the definition of the family” (p. 241).

Lithuanian State Policy on the Concept of a Family (2008), defines family as:

- The family is the essential public good that stems from the human nature and is based on the voluntary paternal commitment of the husband and the wife to devote his life to creating family relationships, ensuring the welfare of the family members - men and women, children and generations, and the development of healthy society, the people and the state's vitality and creativity [...].
- The complementarity of the differences between the sexes and generations in the family ensures the fullness of the relationships. Equal cooperation between men and women, close relationships between generations, which determine the mutual interpenetration of cultural values and constructive behaviors, have an impact on public solidarity, democracy and citizenship. Gender differences, increasingly re-affirmed in the study of neurobiology and neuropsychology, do not in themselves create unequal opportunities and do not lead to discrimination, but are a prerequisite for differences in expressions, attitudes, talents, and experiences that allow creativity to work in every area of society.
- Gender complementarity, which is manifested and educated primarily in the family, means not dividing areas of life or division of labor into male and female, but equal participation of men and women in all kinds of activities (both of which are responsible for family life and child upbringing), recognizing both peculiarities are different and thus contributing to each other's expression, which ensures the dynamics of human creativity and interpersonal relationships.

It can be assumed that the law highlights the importance of marriage while describing what family is and supports traditional model of it. Lithuanian law clearly emphasizes that parents must be of different gender – ‘man and woman’. Modern family model (cohabitants, caretakers such as grandparents, etc.) is barely mentioned. Single parent families, extended families or partnership (unmarried household) is mentioned while talking about governmental support and are included in subjective family definition, but same gender families are not included in any law. In Lithuanian State Policy on the Concept of a Family (2008), Articles 1.8.5. and 1.8.5.1., which highlights ‘values’ of Lithuanian family, can be understood as homophobic and discriminating non-heterosexual families.

Another similar law is a Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information (2010). This law states that public information that has a negative impact on the development of minors is one that promotes homosexual, bisexual or polygamous relationships and distorts family relationships and defies its values. The law was criticized by Amnesty International and other international organizations, including the European Parliament, for containing homophobic and discriminatory provisions. “*This law is an anachronism in the European Union*” (Amnesty International, 2010). The law classifies information about non-traditional sexual orientation as ‘destroying family values’, and harmful to children (Amnesty International, 2010). Despite international and local criticisms, the law is still in force.

In Lithuanian Law, Article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania defines a family as “*the foundation of society and the state*”, and also defines the family’s rights and some responsibilities. In addition, it is evident that this law presents family as a married couple with children:

The state protects and cares for the family, motherhood, parenthood and childhood. Marriage is made by free agreement between husband and wife [...] The state registers marriage, birth and death. Spouses have equal rights in the family. The right and duty of parents is to educate their children to be good people *and loyal citizens*, until they reach the age of maturity. *The duty of children is to respect their parents, to guard them in old age and to preserve their inheritance* (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992).

It is important to note that above mentioned Law not only highlights children’s rights, but also their responsibilities, which are not common in many Western societies. These assigned responsibilities are similar to those presented African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child Article 31, particularly in the part a. of this Article – “*to work for the cohesion of*

the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and assist them in case of need” (Organization of African Unity, 1990).

Article 2.2. in Lithuanian State Policy on the Concept of a Family (2008), specifies demographic issues concerned families. However, Article 2.2.4. can be assessed ambiguously.

It says that:

More and more couples live together, unregistered marriages. According to the data of the Institute of Social Research, nearly half (44%) of respondents aged 18 to 24 are in favor of being unmarried. Life as an unmarried person increases--as shown by many studies--the tension in relationships, the inclination to sexual immorality, the reluctance or delay in having children, the potential for violence against women and children; the mortality of cohabitant infants is higher than that of married, cohabiting children with more behavioral problems, greater predisposition to alcohol, drugs, early sexual intercourse.

It can be emphasized that the importance of ecclesiastical marriage in the law differentiates families living in cohabitation and those who affirm marriage not in Church but in the registry department. Although legally, both marriages have the same rights and recognition.

The article also claims that this is proven by many studies, however only one study is indicated.¹ It would be difficult to decide why such information is included in the law, it remains only to consider that this way attempts to support religious ideas. Such a law, which is clearly against the cohabitation, can be associated with the influence of the church and the values it cherishes. Some academics in Lithuania, as Perkumiene (2005), emphasizes the connection between the church and the family. She states that the family is a permanent union of husband and wife. Marriage is an established external form of a man-woman agreement recognized by public institutions. Marriage is a social phenomenon that is subject to certain conditions, it is not only a matter of spouses, but also of the relevant society, state, nation, and the Church. Perkumiene (2005) also claims that the Catholic Church teaches that marriage is not just a union of human beings. Marriage is believed to be the creation of God and awarded by nature, for its purposes and for its essential qualities. No ideology can deprive the human spirit of the certainty that marriage is only between two different sexes. In this way, they are mutually improving to cooperate with God in giving birth and developing a new life. These ideas are closely similar to those set out in the law. According to Jancaityte (2011), it can be concluded that Lithuania is characterized by a lack of patriotic participation and poor involvement of the non-

¹ Garrison M., „Is Consent Necessary? An Evaluation of the Emerging Law of Cohabitant obligation“// UCLA Law Review, February, 2005, p. 815–896; Wilcox W.B. et al. Why Marriage Matters: twenty-six Conclusions from the social Sciences. N. Y.: Institute for American Values, 2005; Wilcox W.B. and Nock S.L., „What's Love got to Do with it? Equality, Equity, Commitment, and Women's Marital Happiness“// Social Forces 84: 1321-1345.

governmental sector, the dominance of Catholic organizations and the Church, implying a disproportionate representation of interests in the formation of family policy.

As shown above, it can be concluded that Lithuanian law emphasizes the importance of marriage, and married heterosexual couples with children are described to be the value of a state. Such laws not only raise serious doubts about the impact of public attitudes on the concept of the family, but also the interference in shaping a tolerant attitude towards persons of different sexual orientation. It can be assumed that these laws do not correspond to the actual situation in society and that changes are needed.

2.3.1. Parental authority and the implementation of the rights of the child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed by Lithuania in 1992 and ratified in 1995. However, according to Kairiene & Ziemeine (2015), the change in the child's legal status does not ensure the adults' attitude towards the child. How the child is perceived is a crucial factor directly related to the adults' behaviour towards the child, the satisfaction of his/her needs, the opportunity of self-realization, and the child's role in the society. UNICEF (2018) states that children are not the property of their parents. The Foundation for the Protection of The Rights of The Child Law (1996) in Lithuania indicates that the child has a right to be heard on all matters concerning him or her and his or her opinion shall be taken into account (Article 11, paragraph 1). However, parents also have quite few legally defined rights and responsibilities for their children. They are responsible for the well-being of the child, based on the best interest of the child, but its assurance is complicated. Especially when making decisions that describe what would be best for the child in particular situation. It remains confusing and indefinite for anyone to decide. Who should know the best - the child, his or her parents, or institutions? One such example can be made on the basis of Article 33, paragraph 4, in the law just mentioned: *“The child has to grow up in his or her biological family - it is best for him/her, despite the short-term or even long-term problems of the social and other biological family”*. This article reflects that it has been decided in advance what is in the best interest for the child. This article also emphasizes that it is best for a child to grow up only in his or her biological family without considering or mentioning contextual circumstances. The aspects that are not established are when children lose their biological parents in the event of disaster or illness, parents may remarry several times, thus creating a joint family, children often grow up in one-headed parent's family and etc. In this way, irrespective of the causal aspects, it is emphasized that children who grow up in a non-nuclear

family are more unfortunate than those who have both biological parents. Lithuanian laws dictate that a child can only be removed from his or hers biological family only when and if they are situated in an unsafe environment. This criteria only looks to the obvious and the extreme situations, not accounting for the emotional support for the child, and instead, it is predetermined that it is for the best that a child grows up with their biological family.

The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania states: *“The right and duty of parents is to educate their children as dignified people and faithful citizens, until they reach the age of maturity”* (Article 38, Paragraph 6). In the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania (Article 3.155, paragraph 2), parents’ rights and obligations are recognized as parental authority for children:

Parents have the right and duty to educate and care for their children, to keep their children in good health, to keep them in line with their physical and mental condition, to create favourable conditions for the development of a comprehensive and harmonious way. A child would be prepared for independent life in society.

In cases where the parents, for one reason or another, cannot ensure the implementation of the rights of the child, this obligation is taken over by the state. Although a child is recognized as an active legal entity taking advantage of his or her rights, the rights of the child can only be exercised through the rights and duties of other persons - in particular parents or other authorities (cited in Kairiene & Ziemeine, 2015, p. 44).

2.4. Socially vulnerable families in Lithuania

In Lithuania, vulnerable families are seen as a societal problem. Media is full of headlines such as „ *Social risk families are one of Lithuania’s biggest eye sores*” and *“Social risk families are unwilling to change”* (Latvenaite, 2017). According to data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics (2017), by the end of 2016, there were 18 756 children living in families who were defined as being in the social risk. When one is defined as being in ‘social risk’, one can easily feel stigmatized and experience to be labelled in a negative way. It might increase the possibility of being bullied at school, also that the whole family will be socially segregated (Ivanauskiene, 2012). Since this year, in order to reduce stigmatization, it was decided to abandon the concept of a social risk family and replacing it with family who are facing problems, but there is no definitive name change at the moment in the legal framework. In the Republic of Lithuania Law on Social Services that was adopted in 2006 the social risk family is defined as:

A family with children under the age of 18 and in which at least one of the parents abuses alcohol, narcotic, psychotropic or toxic substances, is dependent on gambling, lacks the social skills or does not properly supervise children, use psychological, physical or sexual abuse against them, use state support for non-

family interests and therefore endangers physical, mental, spiritual, moral development and security of children. The family of a social risk also includes a family, which, in accordance with the procedure established by law, is a temporary guardianship

Republic of Lithuania Law on Social Services (2006), defines social risk as:

[...] the factors and circumstances which individuals (families) experience or are at risk of experiencing social exclusion: the lack or absence of appropriate care and education of minor children (including adopted children), lack of social skills of adult family members; neglect of the full range of physical, mental, spiritual, moral development and family safety of the minor children (including adopted children); psychological, physical or sexual abuse; violence; exploitation, human trafficking; involvement or inclination to engage in criminal activity; abuse of alcohol, narcotic, psychotropic substances; dependence on alcohol, psychotropic substances, gambling; begging, homelessness; lack of motivation to participate in the labor market.

In order to become defined as family in social risk, they must have experienced crises or difficulties of some sort. What constitutes these kind of crises or difficulties may vary. The most common causes are domestic violence, addictions, poverty, unemployment, lack of social skills, ‘problematic’ children behavior. As stated by a social worker in this research, ‘lack of social skills’ is a loose term. Child neglect, ‘incorrect’ use of family resources, lack of cleanliness, lack of hygiene, lack of communication, all such different factors can be perceived as lack of social skills when defining ‘risk’ factors working with vulnerable families in Lithuania. Although families with various difficulties are defined as ‘risk families’, Lithuanian laws distinguish different levels of risk. Order On the Approval of the Code of Conduct for Working with Families (2016) presents three stages of social risk:

- High risk - when the family is unable to function independently and needs permanent support for social workers and other professionals;
- The average risk is when the family is able to function independently, but in order to ensure the full safety of the family members and emotional, psychological well-being, there is always a need for certain social workers and other professionals;
- Low risk - when a family is in crisis, it can function independently and is able to ensure the security of all members and emotional, psychological and material well-being.

The criteria provided in the statutory framework are not entirely accurate to define the ‘proper’ conditions for ‘adequate’ care, supervision, and education of children. All of these elements can be perceived differently depending on the context, values, background, and similar aspects in the family and social life of each family. What can be perceived as a ‘wrong’ way of living for some, can be understood as ‘proper’ by others.

Another important aspect is the poverty that families face. The Observatory for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, observing the complaints received from the Children’s Rights Ombudsman’s Office (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 2007), directly communicating with families and children and representatives of the society and evaluating the information in

the media, noted that the often large families are identified with ‘social risk’ families. It is believed that children living within a large family are poorly cared for, growing up in poverty, parents with substance abuse, with a lack of social skills; children in these families tend to receive only the basics of their financial support and/or privileges. It has been noticed that often, due to the public attitude of large families, the children growing up under such circumstances potentially avoid receiving any governmental support, i.e. free school meals, due to peer pressure and fear of bullying (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 2007). Based on these assumptions, we can raise the question, whether being poor automatically places a family as being ‘at risk’?

2.5. Physical punishment of the child

Until the 19th century, physical punishment of children was considered an effective educational method (Useckiene & Alisauskiene, 2004). From the middle of 20th century, the benefits of such a nurture was called into question. Nowadays, physical punishment of the child is sharply criticized, and prohibited by law. However, Miksyte (2004) and Trakinskiene (2009) argue that some families in Lithuania still apply physical punishment as an effective rearing and educating method. According to their studies in Lithuania, half of the parents sometimes employ physical punishments. Similarly, 49% adults agreed that physical punishment should be prohibited by law (Mikšytė, 2004; Trakinskienė, 1999 cited in Jusiene, 2015, p. 65). Slightly more than half of the respondents, 52%, were physically punished in their childhood. Similar data in Lithuania was presented in a survey carried out by Majauskiene & Paulauskiene (2007) in which 100 respondents participated. It was found that the majority of the parents used physical punishment (52% of males and 78% of women respectively). Almost half of the respondents (58% of men and 48% of women) believed that physical punishment makes the child become a better person. According to Didziokiene and Zemaitiene (2005), children having poor living conditions are more likely to experience emotional, physical or sexual violence.

Based on the data of the Children and Rights Protection Divisions of cities and districts, in 2016, there were 2681 cases registered, at which 2,474 children (0.5% of all children living in Lithuania) were potentially affected by domestic violence. Compared to 2015, the number of cases of violence has increased. As stated by the Statistics Department of Lithuania (2018), in 2017, 5625 reports on violence against children were recorded.

2.6. Social work with socially vulnerable families in Lithuania

The concept of social work may differ in certain countries, both from theoretical and practical aspects. In each country, social work reflects upon social, cultural, political, and historical norms and factors. According to Lorenz (2001, p. 12 cited in Sewpaul & Jones, 2005, p. 2):

It is its paradigmatic openness that gives this profession the chance to engage with very specific (and constantly changing) historical and political contexts while at the same time striving for a degree of universality, scientific reliability, professional autonomy and moral accountability.

The Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania (2008), describes social work as:

[...] a professional activity that enables people, families, communities and society to deal with interrelations and social problems, promoting social change, improving quality of life, and strengthening solidarity and social justice.

Social workers provide families with social skills training and support services to promote and, where necessary, restore their self-sufficiency by performing various functions that are necessary for social or personal life (help in managing cash accounting, purchasing goods, paying taxes, supervising children, doing household chores, etc.). Families are informed and consulted on social support issues. A lot of attention is also paid to the supervision of the use of financial support received by the family, as well as the visits of families whose children are accommodated in childcare homes. The social and psychological assistance provided to socially vulnerable families is also aimed at helping families to solve their problems constructively and improve their parenting skills. The assistance includes identifying a family, which is in need of assistance, assessing its situation, designing and implementing an assistance plan, evaluating the results and planning the follow-up (Aperavičienė, 2009 cited in Ivanauskiene, 2012, p. 88).

In order to improve the quality of social work with families and vulnerable families situation, several changes have been made. From July 1, 2018, after the change of the Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania came into force, definition of ‘social risk families’ is abandoned by changing it to ‘families who are facing social problems’. However, none of social workers participating in this research knew about the change of this definition and admitted that it is not going to be easy to get used to a new definition, even though ‘social risk’ or just ‘a risk’ is stigmatizing. Terms as ‘being in risk; risk list; being listed in risk; risk family’, is

widespread and used not only between practitioners, but families also use those terms by talking about their situation.²

The second change in social work with families in Lithuania is case management. The case manager's position is one of the innovations in the reform of the system of protection of the rights of the child, in order to strengthen the support for families and children and to focus more on prevention, expanding community services. Order Regarding The Approval Of The Management Procedure (2018), specifies the following key functions of case managers and social workers. Some of the case manager functions are:

- to form and strengthen the skills and motivation of the family members to use the existing help system to solve the problems independently
- they are social service providers in planning and providing assistance to the child and his/her family
- to coordinate the activities of social workers working with families, team building, organizing regular joint meetings, providing methodological assistance, etc., if necessary
- to initiate social work with the family social environment in order to enable the family to integrate successfully into society, coordinate, as needed, the preventive assistance through the family social environment, community, social workers and other practitioners

Some of the functions of the social worker:

- to work social work with the child and the family by consulting them (individually and in groups) by providing emotional and social assistance and increasing the motivation of the family to participate in the process of providing complex care or preventive care, positive parenting training, family enhancement programs, non-violence behavioral training programs, treatment of addictive illnesses and other programs
- Providing information and knowledge necessary for the family, developing parental skills, social skills, promoting a closer family relationship with the social environment

It can be noted that although the law emphasizes that family support is focused on all its members, there is no particular emphasis on working with children, the services offered to them, and methods of ensuring their welfare. It may seem that the well-being of a child depends on the general well-being in the family, or more precisely on the welfare of the parents. Based on the observations from the study, it was noted that social workers devote most of their supervision time to the parents rather than children. During more than a half of my home visits, parents asked their children to leave the room and to not interrupt their conversation with a social worker.

Social workers and child protection services also follow more laws while working with vulnerable families.³ The purpose of these laws is to ensure the implementation and protection of the rights and freedoms of the child, to strengthen the responsibility and opportunities for the

² Originally in Lithuanian: būti rizikoje, įrašyti į riziką, socialinė rizika, socialinės rizikos šeima.

³ Such as the Order On the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for the Provision of Coordinated Educational Support, Social and Health Care Services (2017) and the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Protection of the Rights of the Child (2017)

parents and other children's representatives in accordance with the law to take care of the child, and to ensure 'the best interests of the child'. Furthermore, to establish the basis for the assistance to the child and his or her family members, according to the law. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and the UNCRC define the mechanisms for the assurance and protection of the rights of the child, the institutions for the protection of the rights of the child, the legal basis for their activities and the general provisions for liability for violations of the rights of the child (Article 1. The purpose of the law).

However, by following these changes it can be assumed that social work with socially vulnerable families in Lithuania tend to become more interdisciplinary than before. Group of practitioners going to be responsible for identifying social risk level and making aid plan for the family. Nevertheless, all the changes are new, so it is too early to analyze their practical effect.

3. Theoretical concepts and framework

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the key concepts and theories of the study. In order to answer the research questions it is crucial to clarify some of the concepts, that I find relevant for my study. First part presents the framework of childhood studies and relevant approaches within it, including a re-discovery of the adult perspective, childhood as a generational order, intergenerational and interdependent relations, and agency and structure. Then relevant theories and concepts within family sociology theories and the concepts are presented, including structuration theory, structural functionalism and the changing family, whole family approach, family practices, concept of vulnerability and vulnerable families, and the concept of stigma. Lastly, normative family discourses and relevant findings from previous research in Lithuania are described.

3.2. Introduction to Childhood Studies

James (2009) states that in scientific literature, children as social actors, were first identified in 1970. Until then, social science was dominated by the attitude that children are 'human becomings' rather than 'beings' (Qvortrup, 2009). Children were studied and observed, but not as individual social actors. According to James and Prout (2015) and Lee (2001, 2008), the history of childhood research in social sciences has been marked not by little interest in children, but their silence. Children have been actively researched since the 19th century, but the aim of these studies was not to find out what it means to be a child or explore their everyday lives and

experiences. Children were interesting in studying the phases of child's development and psychological/physiological differences between children and adults (James & Prout, 2015). This approach originated from developmental psychology, which was the dominant paradigm for studying children in the early 20th century. According to Kehily (2009), developmental psychology documented the stages and transitions of Western childhood as a universal norm of how children should develop in the rest of the world.

However, developmental psychology was not the only branch of science depicting children as passive 'human becomings'. In sociology, much attention was paid to children's socialization, in which children are depicted as passive recipients of adult behaviour and therefore is closely connected to developmental psychology (James & Prout, 1990).

Based on criticism of mainstream child development and socialization theories, researchers established a new paradigm. A major contribution in creating this new approach at that time was provided by James and Prout (1990), identifying the following as key features of the paradigm (James & Prout, 1990, 2015; see also Jenks, 2004; Kehily, 2009):

- Childhood is understood as a social construction.
- Childhood is a variable of social analysis.
- Children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right.
- Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives.
- Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood.
- Childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present.

This emergent paradigm can be seen as the basis for defining current childhood studies. Christensen & James (2008) argued that the paradigm shift had implications for the ways children's researchers undertake their work within their own particular field of study, professional expertise and practice. This shift has involved repositioning children as subjects, rather than objects within the research; recognizing children as social agents, worthy studying on their own right; children as active participants in the society, even though they are exposed to various structures, yet at the same time, they contribute to the reproduction of those structures.

3.2.1. Re-discovering the adult perspective in Childhood Studies

Wyness (2013) states that the change in childhood studies, when children have become key actors in research, shrink adults in the marginal zone in terms of research. Adults, just like children, have to rely on others to gain their knowledge. Their understanding of the world is always determined by other people, objects, and structures. The search for an adult opinion, which has not been affected by the context surrounding that person, is considered an ineffective task, thus the search for an unmediated voice of the children should be interpreted similarly (Lee, 2001). The child has become a central force in the public space, at least in richer countries. In politics and in professional areas, children have acquired a more autonomous status of rights-holder, creating a more complex relationship between children and adults, rather than merely separating children from 'natural' adult reference points (Lee, 2005 cited in Wyness, 2013). For this reason, based on the intergenerational interdependence approach, Wyness highlights the importance of bringing adults back to the field of study. In addition, it should also be added that in childhood studies, adult perspectives on family are also important because children and adults interact with each other and are affected by intergenerational practices (Alanen, 2009) and also are structurally related to each other (Qvortrup, 1985, 1987). It is said that children tend to experience interdependent rather than independent social relationships. In this interdependence, relatives, families, spatial and livelihood systems are linked by a variety of relationships and expectations, indicating the ways in which children position themselves and negotiate this position in various circumstances (Punch, 2002 cited in Abebe & Kjørholt, 2009, p. 178).

It should be added that adult opinions in terms of research can serve in gaining knowledge about how children are positioned in a particular society. The nature of attitudes towards the child can be used to describe how the child will be treated, both in the legal acts of the society and in the family or institutions. The attitudes of the social workers towards the child may explain the formation of the nature of the assistance they provide.

3.2.2. Childhood as a Generational order

Generation is not a new term in many scientific fields. Within the framework of demography and family studies, intergenerational relationships were long ago described by Burgess (1926), Shanas (1982), Hoyert (1990), Bumpass (1990) amongst others. They noted that most parents and children interact with each other on daily basis, throughout their lives. That includes household tasks, baby-sitting, emotional support and financial exchanges. Those aspects create interdependency, which links generations together.

However, the ideas they described differ from those used in sociology, especially in childhood studies. Qvortrup (1985, 1987), was one of the first who assumed that childhood and adulthood, as generations, are structurally related to each other (cited in Alanen, 2009, p. 159). His structural definitions of childhood and adulthood were different from the ones mostly used when these terms define two separate life stages, both in everyday life and social science discourses. According to Qvortrup, the concept of generation has gained a wider meaning in industrial society than in previous social formations, because children and adults have assumed structural features in relation to each other. Therefore, he perceived childhood and adulthood as an interactive structural elements and childhood as a particular social status (Qvortrup, 1987). This proposed idea emphasizes the relational nature of childhood and adulthood.

The theoretical approach, which is interested in studying the situation of children within a generational order, is focused on social processes that help to create, reproduce and change intergenerational relationships, including childhood. However, the conceptualization of the dynamics of historically different generations is not enough to analyze the social structural situation of childhood or children and adulthood or adults as separate social categories. On the contrary, there is a need for a relative understanding of the generations and exploration of the relationship between all generations and the evolution of these relationships over time (Olk, 2009).

Alanen (2009) argued that childhood ought to be acknowledged as a social structure, rather than only viewed upon as a transitional life stage all individuals find themselves in at a certain point. She also proposed a structural analysis where a 'child' and an 'adult' are seen as distinctive categories and dimensions of difference, but at the same time each category presupposes the other. There is an important relational dimension of this theory, because both adults and children develop and improve their generational identities through routine interactions with each other. For social practice, the implication is that childhood and adulthood are produced and reproduced in the interactions taking place between members of existing generational categories – in other words, in intergenerational practices. According to Alanen (2009), new concepts have been proposed for further development of generational approach. One of them was *generational order*. The main idea of this concept is that in modern society, there is a system of social ordering that specifically perceives children as a social category and restricts certain social places from which they can operate and thus participate in the ongoing social life.

Children are part of everyday life constructions. Within the set of complex social processes, while some people become socially constructed as children, other are constructed as adults. These constructions also shape and are shaped by the generational practices. Alanen (2009, p. 170) states that “These practices of generationing may be ‘childing’ practices through which people are constructed as children or ‘adulting’ practices through which a distinct adult position is produced”. Alanen (2009, p.161-162) summarized that generational order is “a structured network of relations between generational categories that are positioned in and act within necessary interrelations with each other”. Based on statements above and according to Mayall (2002), child-parent relations shape and are shaped by generational processes together with other structural and contextual aspects.

Lee (2001) argued that one of the most important criteria for distinguishing children from adults as adults as 'beings' and children as 'becomings' is the age that defines the maturity. It is believed that once you became an adult, your journey towards ‘being’ is complete. However, the definition of adults is based on the criteria of a 'normal' adult, such as work or intimate relationships describing human stability. Lee emphasizes that in a changing society (changing social and economic context, changing 'normal' family perception), what he calls the 'age of uncertainty', adulthood is no longer self-evident and stable. If adulthood is treated as a fixed form, then what happens to the question of whether adults themselves match up to the image of the ‘standard’ adult. According to Lee, this question is more often than not, forgotten.

3.2.2.1. Children and adults intergenerational and interdependent relations

Over the past 200 years, social movements and conflicts have contributed to extending the rights of political and social citizenship to various adult groups by reducing inequalities in occupation, gender, ethnic origin, and so on. However, the same cannot be said about children whose political and social citizenship rights have been ignored by the belief that they are strongly dependent on their parents and their households (Olk, 2009).

According to Mayall (2002) children depend heavily on the parents’ material resources. In the countries with high socio-economic inequality, child dependency can be very evident. Based on the Neighbourhood Risk Assessment in the UK, wealthier parents and parents with more cultural and social capital had better access to services, and in particular the choice of secondary school for children, while poorer parents, immigrants and their children end up in a more disadvantaged position (Mayall, 2002). Mayall’s study revealed that young people depended on their parents for money to meet their basic needs and also have leisure opportunities with

their friends (Mayall, 2002). The study's findings also reveal that many children not only received love from their parents, but also gave it to them. The protection and provision of parents was balanced by the contribution of children while sharing domestic work. Children were involved in daily tasks, thus adding to the family's well-being and construction of family relationships. Children's help contributes directly to family business and indirectly by freeing their parents' time. Young people in these families expressed gratitude to their parents for their hard work and caring, and clearly realized their obligations to their parents. These ideas were less commonplace for young people in well-educated English families. Mayall (2009) adds that perceptions about intergenerational relations may be structured by family cultural and religious traditions and beliefs in addition to children's own understanding of their childhoods.

Abebe's (2013) study revealed that for the children in rural Ethiopia, contributing to the family welfare is an important aspect of their lives (see also Abebe & Kjörholt, 2009). These children are valued for their socio-economic roles and for taking various responsibilities in creating and maintaining a diverse family relationship. For many families, children's contribution to family's income, their participation in shared domestic work while combining it with their education is a vital livelihood strategy (see also Kjörholt, 2007). They are neither independent citizens nor independent individuals with individual rights, but interdependent beings whose daily lifestyles are inseparable from the family collective. These children present a different model of how childhood can be, than ones assumed in the Western world, where childhood is thought to be free from work and as care-receiving phase of life course. Abebe argued, that this is not because rural Ethiopians are unable to distinguish the child's individuality, but because western ideas have become universally accepted and an attempt to apply these hegemonic ideas around the world as ideal and most appropriate, regardless of all the different contextual, cultural, economic and other conditions which varies from country to country.

According to Robson and Ansell (2000) children and young people have always been involved in caring for others, whether they are older family members or ill parents, brothers/sisters, household or community members. Children in Zimbabwe carry a lot of unpaid work. Their role as unpaid workers include caring for siblings, domestic work and farm production reflect the prevailing social and cultural construction of childhood there. They argue that this may reflect common practice, but not all such 'cultural' practices should be accepted uncritically, it must be important to consider the possible consequences of such work for the child's future life. However, it would also be inappropriate to look at all children's involvement in 'work' as exploitative, as sometimes provided by international development institutions seeking to

introduce Northern normative concepts of childhood in very different social and cultural contexts comparing to the South. Abebe, Robson and Ansell suggest that child labor, including domestic work, is one of the survival strategies in difficult living conditions. In addition, many children say they feel good when they help their relatives and family members, it also helps in maintaining a strong emotional bond between family members.

3.2.3. Agency and structure

Agency and structure, as proposed by Qvortrup (2009), are twin concepts. He stated that social change is the result of the interaction of structural conditions and conscious human intervention. The relationship between these two forces determines the direction and speed of social change, so in order to find the balance there should be a constant interest to look for the relationship between structural forces and the human agency. However, Qvortrup mainly focuses on macro level. He suggests that childhood is the result of strength relations between diverse parameters that could be called structural forces. Those are economic, political, social, cultural, technological, ideological, and discursive parameters that are representing perceptions and understanding, not only about children and childhood, but also produces all societal configurations. Almost half a century ago, Mills (1959) noted that human life was characterized by the fact that they could not perceive the connections between their personal life and the structural forces that shaped their lives (cited in Brannen & Nilsen, 2005) According to Qvortrup, existence of structural forms does not depend on particular members of society, even though they may have some influence on it. People react to new shapes of economic, social and technological conditions, and based on that, social groups are starting to create new interrelationships at the societal, local and familial levels. Childhood, he suggests, is both constantly changing and a permanent structural form. As a permanent form, it is a social space, where if one child grows up his or her childhood comes to an end, but childhood as a form does not end - it receives new generations of children. Speaking of childhood as a changing form, he emphasizes that the above-mentioned parameters, which produce structural forms of society, are historically changing, thus affecting childhood as a form. Ansell (2009) proposes the importance of socio-spatial differences in the construction of childhood. Children perceive and engage with the world around them differently depending on diverse societies they live in. Such factors as gender, ethnicity, race and caste also plays important role in shaping children's lives, together with other structures, like political-economic and social-cultural norms.

The fact that every child is moving towards adulthood does not change, however the conditions under which they do it has changed increasingly. Qvortrup (2009) called this notion the

development of childhood, it is a concept whose dynamics lie in the parameters of society and not in individual arrangements. There have been major changes in computer technology over the last two decades. These changes have led to a dramatic increase in the advantage of children in this area, where the old generation may have difficulties. These changing macro-level parameters leave the question how this development will turn out at societal and family level (Qvortrup, 2009).

As a structural form, childhood is separated from individual children, therefore, the historical and generational approach to child perception does not necessarily require children to be directly observed or questioned. What this approach aims to explore is the system in which children live. Perhaps the most powerful parameters affecting the lives of children, are systematically established, without even having children or childhood in mind. Just as social class distribution, Qvortrup argues, that it does not depend on a few people leaving or joining the group, based on their individual mobility. Same could be said about gender and generational groups, as they have its permanence in these suggested structural terms. In fact, the stories that some people say about their lives can be extended by emphasizing the agency and reflexivity, which describes so many discourses of contemporary society, instead of talking about structural forces that are more difficult to understand. Therefore, individualization, according to this, presents meaning and usage that can also be understood as an ideological goal of shaping life prospects. Brannen and Nilsen (2005) illustrates this with an example: If you think you can choose, then you also believe it is up to you to decide; and you are seemingly not at the mercy of forces beyond your control. For example, young women may think that they have equality and choice but ignore the ways in which gender continues to structure opportunities (p. 423). The individualization approach is widely used in children, youth and family studies. In families, Western education models have long emphasized the need for individuality and the importance of child's unique identity. The fundamental conception of the agency and individualization is reflexivity - the ability of individuals to reflect on themselves and their situations. This approach presents children as social actors, who can participate in actions and decisions, concerning their welfare, and shape their own identity. Smart (2007) argued that the 'individualization' idea must be understood as different from the idea of the individual, because it is 'self-reflective and also related to others, rather than a certain notion of autonomous person who carries free choices and exercises without restrictions' (2007, p. 28). Evidently, family-based activities are also the main experience of a person's life, a means by which people insert their own unique family-life experience through cultural 'ways of responding and ways of knowing' (p. 51 cited in James &

Curtis, 2010). Such concepts were revolutionary to social scientists, while thinking about children. However, individualization theory has been criticized, because of recognition that opportunities to choose still remains limited, because it is affected by structures such as race, ethnicity or class, etc. (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002 cited in Järventie & Lähde, 2008).

Although Qvortrup emphasizes the relationship between agency and structure, agency is less identified as essential compared to structural parameters. Alanen and Mayall share a slightly different position while emphasizing connection between human agency and structures. According to them, actor and agency, according to them are twin concepts. Mayall (2002) stated that the agent is someone who acts in relation with others and in doing so contributes in wider processes of social and cultural reproduction. Alanen (1988) stated that children are participants and constructors in the processes that make both their and our world. This derives from approaching social life as a dynamic field of confrontations and struggles between social forces. The approach then allows for viewing even children as a structural ‘class’ in relation to other classes and capable of collective action and therefore capable of engaging in social struggles (p. 65).

People do not always use the agency for their own best interest. Having said that, it mostly affects those whose competence and volition are often questioned. Individual trauma and structural oppression can have certain effects on the agency so that people act as ‘their own worst enemy’ or act in order to resist power, and, of course, resistance to power can be interpreted as self-defeat (Valentine, 2011). Similarly, in their research on children’s experiences of abusive families in Australia, Mason and Faloon (2001) revealed that children exercised their agency in the form of ‘choice’. They ‘chose’ not to reveal their experiences about certain events in their family life. This ‘choice’ reflected the child's perception of family concern, which helps to balance unequal power distribution and control. Children felt that their parents ‘care’ for them and this provided, although to a very small extent, the space for negotiation and agency on the child’s part (cited in Alanen, 2009, p. 43). Valentine (2011) used the concept of social model of agency. She argues that agency is the achievement of the subject and the result of power, and therefore it is a problematic concept of ‘free choice’ or ‘autonomous activity’. This does not mean that the ‘choice’ is illusory or that agency is only an environmental product. Nevertheless, the agency's activities and provisions, including ‘choice’ and ‘competence’ are not politically empty or neutral. Instead, the agent's actions and dispositions become changeable, conditional, and meaningful in this approach. Uncovering the

role of an individual agency in reproducing social norms and the ability of an individual agent to disrupt them.

3.3. Family sociology theory and the relevant concepts

3.3.1. Structuration theory

New interpretative and interactive approaches to social sciences emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, leading to a critical attack on the structural functionalism agenda. Structural functionalism, emphasizing the role of social structures and institutions in shaping society, has left little room for reflection on the role of the agency in society (Alanen, 2009). One theoretical approach to agency was the theory of structuration, proposed by Anthony Giddens. This is a theory of creation and recreation of social systems, bringing into analysis both structure and human agency. According to him, structure and agency are mutually related and dependent on each other (Giddens, 1984). Giddens argued that “The basic domain of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experiences of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time.” (Giddens 1984, p. 2)

As he refers that to be a human being means to be a purposive agent who has reasons to support his or her activities and equally, if necessary, be able to develop these reasons in a discursive way, including lying about his/her purpose and actions. Giddens claims that there is no distinction between discursive and practical consciousness, there is only a difference between what can be said and what will be done. The agency refers not to the intentions on which people do things, but to their ability to do those things. That's why the agency includes power. The agency touches on actions for which the individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual would have done otherwise in a different sequence of behavior. But no matter what happened, it wouldn't have happened if the individual wasn't intervened. Consequences could be intended or unintended, depending on what was intended to do and what actually was done (Giddens, 1984). It can also be assumed that vulnerable families that are often portrayed as passive under the influence of unfavorable structures actually have their own operational strategies, causes and explanations of actions. Linked to the Giddens statement that structure does not exist, regardless of the knowledge the agents have about what they do in their daily activities. However, their actions and reasons of actions do not comply with the norms and rules of society, therefore sometimes it can be called ‘inappropriate’.

Bryant & Jary (2014) presented a critical appreciation to structuration theory and stated that on one hand, Giddens introduces structuration theory as approach to social science, which avoids

the dualism of subject and object, agency and structure and structure and process, which had influenced other social theories. On the other hand, he does not make exclusive claims, and he does not explicitly want to impose it to anyone. He believes that this is the basis of good sociology, but does not believe that it is the only basis. According to Bryant & Jary, Anthony Giddens is too big to be ignored, but too singular to be labelled with confidence.

3.3.2. Structural functionalism and the changing family

Functionalism emerged in North American sociology in the 1950s. According to Kingsbury and Scanzoni (2009) functionalism has made a historical impact on family studies, and functionalist assumptions remain at the heart of family sociology and family studies, despite opposing arguments. Functionalists argue that society should be understood as a system of interconnected parts. They believe that there are specific requirements - functional assumptions - that must be met in all social systems and that they can be the basis for comparing social institutions. Individual meaning cannot be understood independently of the broader collective practice and belief system in which it is established. These collective actions must be explained by the functions they serve as a system of social life of the whole. Different elements of social life depend on each other and perform functions that help maintain social order and its reproduction over time. (Holmwood, 2005).

Talcott Parsons (1971) identified what he called a 'normal American family'. This 'normal' family was based on a marriage between a man and a woman and is expected to continue until one or the other partner dies. Adults of this stable unit lived together, shared their income and raised children. According to Parsons (1971), this way of organizing family life has been developed from the previous standard of the middle class and has spread throughout the US society due to the rise of prosperity in the twentieth century. The decrease in mortality rates and the increasing prevalence of stable male employment conditions meant that when a couple lived in such a 'normal' family, the only significant changes in their lifestyle would be related to the birth and maturation of their children. Thus, this normal family could be regarded as a stable environment in which the instability and incompleteness of growing children can be safely and comfortably accommodated. Parsons (1971) stated that successful stability of adult intimate relationships in a normal family, enables successful socialization of children (Lee, 2001). He highlighted the importance of family functions by highlighting two of them. First, the primary socialization of children so they can 'truly become members' of the society. And second, "the stabilization of the adult personalities of the population of the society" (Parsons, Bales & Olds,

1998, p. 16). In the 'normal' case, every adult is a member of the nuclear family and each child has to start his socialization process in the nuclear family. Parson et al. (1998) stated that if family functions in a highly differentiated society must not be interpreted as functions directly related to society but to personality, as some psychologists believe, the essentials of the human personality have been biologically determined irrespective of their participation in social systems, then families would no longer be needed. Reproduction as such does not require a family organization. It is precisely because the human personality is not 'born' but must be 'done' through the process of socialization, which primarily requires families. They are 'factories' that produce personalities. Ideally, each generation should transfer roles and norms to another. In Parson's society, the approach to traditional past patterns was restored through the family. Families were not only stable in themselves, based on traditional government relations, but also a major source of social stability, as they helped to rebuild traditional government relations (Lee, 2001).

Robert Merton stated that it is possible that what works for the public as a whole is not suitable for all individuals or for certain sections of society. Similarly, what is functional for a person or a group may not work for the wider public. This suggests that the concept of function requires the concept of dysfunction. This is where the objective consequences are negative for some individuals or groups. For example, inequalities can encourage individuals to perform different tasks, but a high degree of inequality can lead to alienation of certain individuals and groups. (Holwood, 2005).

3.3.3. The changing family

According to Hantrais (2004), it can be assumed that the disagreement over the definition of the family is still sufficiently large. Some sociologists deny that the family has become more fluid and more diverse, while others argue that the 'traditional' model of the post-war European family is undergoing 'a crisis of modernity' (Cheal, 1999 cited in Hantrais, 2004).

A number of studies have shown that the traditional family structure prevailing in the 1970s is no longer typical for all families and that the family structure has changed dramatically over the past few decades (Belch & Willis, 2002). These changes include an increased divorce rate, increased cohabitation, reduced birth rates or young people delayed marriage and having children, changes in family structure and household structure, as a single-parent family or step family (blended), and changed gender roles (Belch & Willis, 2002; Gilding, 2001; Goldscheider, Bernhardt, & Lappegård, 2015). The change from a nuclear family to various forms of family interdependence did not degrade people's commitment to each other. There are

many kinds of relationships and engagements - the relationship between parents and children who no longer live with their parents, the relationship between the young and the older siblings, grandparenthood, partnership, or even long-standing friendship can be perceived as a family relationship (Williams, 2004; Smart, 2005; Widmer, Castren, Jallinoja & Ketoviki, 2008). People become family through shared intimacy with same-sex partners or friends, post-divorce recomposition, adoption or technology of reproduction, but in some cases through commitment and care without blood ties or legal partnership. However, the family concept remains problematic when trying to define it. Family sociology should therefore focus not on institutionalized relationships and parenthood, but also on relationships that, under different conditions, have a family meaning (Bahr & Bahr, 1996; Widmer et al, 2008).

According to Smart (2004) one of the most important changes in family life in Great Britain, with the emergence of a post-war welfare state, was an increase in divorce and separation. Popular discourse and populist moralists tend to see divorce as a symbol of worse change on all issues related to family and social stability (Dennis and Erdos, 1993; Morgan, 1995; Etzioni, 1993). This attention meant that the political debate polarized the issues of whether the divorce is damaging to the children, or whether the families of the single mothers produce the criminal sons and so on. She suggests that divorce not only obliges people to change their care, financial exchange, communication practices, but also forces people to negotiate new moral territories for which they need to make decisions on how to deal with their children, how to balance their needs with the needs of others, and ultimately how to rebuild family life. The perceived normality of the nuclear family of the 1950s meant that the family relationship was easy to take for granted. However, after divorce, the extended family needs to work with their relationships. According to Bourdieu (1996) the dominant, legitimate definition of a normal family is based on the word constellation - a house, a home, a household, which, although it seems to describe social reality, actually creates it. By this definition, a family is a collection of related individuals that are interconnected by marriage, or less common, by accepting legal relationships and living under the same roof (cohabitation). He pointed out that, with regard to the 'real world', many groups that today are called 'families' are completely inconsistent with this dominant definition, and that in most modern societies, the nuclear family is a minority experience compared to unmarried couples living together, single-parent families, married couples living apart and so on.

Giddens and Beck account women as 'agents of change' (cited in Smart, 1997). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2018) also argues that changes have been greatly influenced by changes in the position of women in the education system, in the labor market and in gaining more civil rights

in general. As stated by Gilding (2001) the role of women has changed over the last hundred years. Today, people choose whether they will get married, what sexual relations and lifestyle they will have, whether they will have children or not, whether they will stay married or they will divorce. Agreeing with this statement, Goldscheider et al. (2015) adds that these family changes were accompanied by an increase in female labour force participation, as they called it gender revolution. They argue that the increase in female labour force participation should only be seen as the first half of the gender revolution. Giving women access to the workforce could indeed put stress on family relationships, but since the second half of the gender revolution is slowly manifesting - men join women in a private family space - they say that the revolution really strengthens families. However, at the same time, they are two sides of the modern gender revolution, a revolution that not only strengthens the economies of the countries, as women connect their skills and energy to men's in the marketplace, but also strengthen families as men increasingly play important roles at home, primarily as active fathers, and finally as full participants. Another important aspect, as emphasized by Bengston (2001), is the increasing importance of multigenerational bonds. As the reasons for it highlighted the demographic changes of population aging and longer years of 'shared lives' between generations, the increasing importance of grandparents and other kin in fulfilling family functions, the strength and resilience of intergenerational solidarity over time. He also adds that family multigenerational relations are increasingly diverse because of changes in family structure, which involves increased divorce rates, more frequent step family formation and increased longevity of kin. Grandparents can be a source of money, care, and support. Nuclear family is depicted as a norm in many, especially Western societies, however in reality a different case can be argued. Gilding (2001) argues that no one is absolutely sure what is happening and what would happen to the family. But one thing is clear - the family can no longer be taken for granted.

3.3.3.1. Whole family approach

Despite all the family theories that have been developed, family prospects and experiences are still extremely poorly known (Clarke & Hughes, 2010) Murray and Barnes (2010), state that reflections about families' everyday practices, thus broadening a concept of the family is a challenge to normative assumptions, also to the theories which justifies family relations based on kin ties. A broad family definition that embraces the daily family life involves recognition of people who are important for the social functioning of social units, which is not limited to relatives. It recognizes the role of children, youth and the elderly, not only as care receivers but

also as wider mutual relationships of care. Such relationships are not necessarily related to children, therefore the family includes those who do not have the role of child-caring. It also recognizes that the family is fluid and it is constantly changing in the social space. Families are becoming more ‘transnational’ (p. 535). Family members who are constantly interested or responsible for other family members, such as older parents who do not live together, are considered ‘detached carers’ (p. 535). Socially constructed space, which is not necessary in contiguity, is an important and neglected aspect in understanding family (Murray & Barnes, 2010).

The term ‘whole family’ offers an integrated approach that covers different relationships. In fact, it is being promoted as a comprehensive and multi-level approach in addressing the problems faced by socially excluded families. The whole family approach emphasizes the intergenerational relationships as well as the importance of various structures that affect the families. According to Cabinet Office’s Families at Risk Review (SETF, 2007, p. 29):

A ‘whole family’ approach should not be confined to a rigorous family concept. This may include a reorganization of responsibility for a wider community. It can also include friends, kinship carers, support networks and the wider community as sources of social capital that help family members to cope (Murray & Barnes, 2010).

According to Morris (2012), the key issue in developing and applying appropriate services is in fact lack of knowledge. There is no published research focusing specifically on effective services for ‘resistant’ families where children are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm. Rather, studies have tended to examine case records or practitioners’ and parents’ perceptions of the effectiveness of different aspects of services [...] It is not possible, however, to determine whether these families were actively resisting services or were not receiving the services and support that they needed. (Thoburn, 2009 cited in Morris, 2012, p. 3). Morris (2012) states that her research data revealed evident gaps in existing practice and challenges social workers to ‘think family’ in new ways.

According to Clarke & Hughes (2010), there is an assumption to the approach which focuses on ‘whole family’ may not respond equally or are not always useful to identify individual support needs. Therefore, whole family support needs to be understood as an additional identification of personal roles and relationships (e.g. parent or the child), and the goal should be to seek to provide a ‘coherent’ response to the difficulties faced by the private context of family life.

3.3.4. Family practices

Terms such as ‘family practices’ and ‘doing family’ are used quite widely now within the context of family sociology, most with reference to Morgan’s (1996) elaborations. Those terms present differences between theoretical frameworks of a family concept. ‘Family’ is a facet of social life, not a social institution, it ‘represents a quality rather than a thing’ (Morgan, 1996, p. 186). Morgan’s (1996) discussions on family practices that has had a significant impact on the perception that the family is a set of activities for which the family attaches particular importance and meaning. Family is not a social institution and not just a structure in which individuals in some sense belongs. Therefore, in order to become a ‘family practice’, these actions must be clearly understood by others who share the meaning in relation to the ‘family’. Finch (2007), stated that families must be defined by ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’ a family, also argued that families must be ‘displayed’ as much as ‘done’. She introduced the concept of ‘display’. The display is a process in which individuals and groups of individuals communicate and express to each other, and to the relevant audience that certain actions are ‘doing family things’, and thus confirm that these relationships are ‘family’ relationships.

According to Morgan (2011) these brief discussions about the ‘family practice’ method can be expressed in a wider context. First, this approach is understood as action, as doing or as a social action. It does not matter whether we are talking about the daily meeting of specialists and clients, or the daily experiences of marriage and paternity, it is important in terms of everyday practice, and those practices should not be limited by official instructions or descriptions. Bourdieu (1996) stated that family members are united by intense emotional bonds, and all practical and symbolic work, that transforms the obligation to love into a loving disposition and tend to give each family member a sense of ‘family feeling’, which must be taken into account. The ‘feeling of family’ causes devotion, generosity and solidarity.

Morgan (2011), distinguishes differences between social practices in general and family practices. An important feature is that family practice is focused on another family member. More than this, when implementing this practice, the other is defined as a family member. To illustrate this statement, Morgan uses an example given by Cheal (2002). He points out that as a practice, every family has their own talks. Participating in this type of conversation, members reiterate that there is a certain type of relationship between them, family relationships. ‘Family talks’ may include jokes or certain words that can have a meaning that only family members understand.

Morgan's own concept of family practices includes some of the key concepts used by other scholars to analyze contemporary families - fluidity, diversity, and multi-facetedness. It does consolidate our understanding of the 'family' in the daily and routine situation where individuals make certain actions and activities as 'family'. It is believed that the consequences of changing social context for the argument about 'displaying families' are divided into three main categories: the family is not the same as a household; the fluidity of families over time; and the relationship between a person and a family identity. The example for the first category is given in situations following divorce. In such situations, co-parenting greatly disrupts the expectation that families can be easily defined by the limits and boundaries, of course, not within the nuclear family, since the divorced parents are in a 'chain of relationships' with different individuals and between different households (Smart & Neale 1999, p. 72 cited in Finch, 1997, p. 68) . For many people, their close relationships with friends or relatives can extend to different households, because of past or present marriages/cohabitations, broader kin relations, etc. Geographically speaking, the connections of individuals across households can spread across countries and continents through migration patterns (Williams, 2004 cited in Finch, 2007).

The second category, that Morgan (2011) distinguished, defines families fluidity over time. This means that family relationships can change over time, because by moving through the life course, individuals change and adapt to diverse ways of living. Family relationships and practices also gets redefined and re-established, because of formations of new sexual partnerships, marriages, cohabitations or divorces. Some children leave their parents' home at different stages and in different ways, some remain with their parents, even form their new families within the same household. Emphasizing the importance of family as 'practices, identities and relationships' means that the fluidity of family life is not defined by the transfer of membership as often as the constant nature of the changing relationship - how people interact with one another, and the assumptions underlying their relationship. Finch (2007) stated, that this does not mean that family relationships are unstable. Depending on their living conditions and their personal circumstances, people 'work hard to tailor' their needs and the needs of others, and maintain a link and commitment to the people they choose (Williams, 2004 cited in Finch, 2007).

Lastly, the third category defines the relationship between a person and a family identity. By this, Finch wanted to highlight the connection between relations and social processes and interpersonal intimacy and identity. It can be concluded that intimate relationships can change, because the individual identities they support (or do not support) are also changing. It complements fluidity of contemporary family relationships and increases the need to show those relationships that are significant at any given moment.

Ursin et al. (2016) studied how family is conceptualized and negotiated in a Mexican and a Chilean child protection institution - perspectives of marginalized families for whom perceptions of 'family life' may differ from normative ideas. Daly (2003), also argued that there is a significant difference between the way families live their lives and how we are theorizing about families.

However, it can be argued that referring to family practices as such is not only limiting analysis, but also reproduces heteronormative models of human relationships, without taking into account all different ways of how individuals live their lives (Roseneil, 2005 cited in Morgan, 2011). Morgan points out that 'family practices' can also be criticized by having an assumption that something similar might also be said about other relationships, such as friendship.

3.3.5. Concept of vulnerability and vulnerable families

As claimed by Birkmann (2006), more than 25 definitions of vulnerability can be found in the scientific literature, as well as abundant manuals and guidelines that not only refer to methods for measuring and reducing vulnerability, but also provide more definitions of this term. Birkmann argues that it can be assumed that trying to measure what is not clearly defined can be considered a paradox. However, although there is no general agreement on this term, different disciplines present their definitions for this concept. In English Oxford dictionary, this term is described as "a position of relative disadvantage, which requires a person to trust and depend upon others" (Soanes & Stevenson, 2005)

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies defines vulnerability as the "diminished capacity of an individual or group to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard". According to Red Cross, the term vulnerability is most often associated with poverty, but it can also include people facing risk to be harmed in any way, marginal or isolated groups of society, people who are in shock or stress. Physical, economic, social and political factors are crucial for identifying people's vulnerability and their ability to resist, cope with and recover from threats.

The term vulnerability has complex dimensions and lack of consensus when defining it. Some scholars use this term when describing risk to illness (Schwarzer, 1994), people's inability or powerlessness in protecting their rights and meeting personal needs (Vonthron Good & Rodrigues Fisher, 1993). Concept of vulnerability appears at individual, group or family level. According to Thywissen (2006), vulnerability can often be perceived as an intrinsic part of broader structure or as its element (cited in Birkmann, 2007, p. 21). In general, the concept of vulnerability is constantly expanding in order to achieve a comprehensive approach to sensitivity, impact, capacity-building and adaptation, as well as to various thematic areas such as physical, social, economic, environmental and institutional vulnerability (Birkmann, 2006, cited in Birkmann, 2007, p. 21).

The term 'vulnerability' can be applied to various stages in various situations and fundamentally, affect people's ability to cope with those unpredictable events. Ability to cope can depend on various social and structural factors and take a toll on their eventual outcome. 'Vulnerability' can be seen as a prologue to an unpredictable event whereas the term 'risk' is what would be seen as an epilogue of that event, an outcome and a means of preventing another unpredictable event. Based on this statement, vulnerability can be understood as a response to the risk (Birkmann, 2007).

According to Boyden and Mann (2009) there are factors that determine whether and how a person experiences disasters at different levels. Practical experience has shown that there are significant differences between groups of people, taking into account their risk and survival, overcoming and prosperity, and that such differences usually have structural reasons related to the differences in social power. Often, these structural threats at a macro level are transmitted several times to the population, community or family, and rarely fall under the control of a person. The structural disadvantages also applies at the micro level. Social characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or religion, and personal attributes such as temperament, physique, or cognitive abilities, are valued very differently in families and communities.

On the basis of the statements made, it can be assumed that due to the uncertainty of the concept, the vulnerability attributed to families can be treated in a completely different way in other countries, cultures, or depending on the people who measure this vulnerability. Likewise, differences in how family situations are perceived by its members and social workers can be highlighted. So, what seems to be one of the most vulnerable or 'risky' living conditions for one person, the same may seem like a natural or manageable situation to another person, depending on a life experiences that person holds.

3.3.5.1. Stigma

Vulnerability may be closely connected to what Goffman (1997) called stigma, as it can be assumed that vulnerable families can be ‘at risk’ of experiencing it. The public determines the ways and characteristics of categorizing individuals that are believed to be normal and natural for each of these categories. Social settings determine the categories of people who may be confronted. When a stranger arrives in our presence, the first appearances will allow us to predict the hxs category and attributes, its ‘social identity’. We rely on expectations, which are transformed into normative expectations, to the right requirements. Goffman (1997) claims that the requirements that a group of people attribute to an individual to assess whether he/she ‘fits’ can be called demands *in effect*, so this introduction presents a potential retrospective and the result of such representation is a virtual social identity, but only categories and attributes that an individual can prove can be called his actual social identity. So, in our minds, it is reduced from the whole and from the common person to discounted one. When a stranger is in front of us, in our minds there may be evidence that his qualities have an attribute that makes him different from other people - the extreme, a person who is dangerous or weak. Such an attribute is stigma, especially when the effect of its discrediting is very wide, sometimes also called shortage or obstacle. This is a special mismatch between virtual and actual social identity. The term stigma and its synonyms presents dual perspective. The first is whether a person understands his ‘differences’ and that this is visible to others, and second is whether a person does not assume it about himself/herself, nor noticeable by others (Goffman, 1997). Goffman (1997) argues that there are certain norms in society that distinguish people and their actions as normal and compliant. An individual or a group that does not meet these categorizations may find themselves stigmatized. Families who do not meet these ‘established’ requirements can have major consequences (such as being socially excluded) for the whole family, as well as for individual family member and especially for the children of these families.

3.4. Normative discourses on ‘Good’ or ‘Bad’ families

More than 25 years ago, Bumpass (1990) argued that the family should not be considered as a fixed form, which we can judge for its behavior. He suggested that family should rather be understood as collective representation of our changing realities and how family experiences interact with its diverse environments. Normative expectations play an important role in structuring family patterns, but they are also generally lagging behind the social and cultural changes. It can be assumed that this statement already supported the idea that the family is a social construct, which unfortunately had difficulties dealing with the discourses that have

emerged in the different societies. Bumpass (1990), argued that the answer to the question of what is a 'good' or 'bad' family cannot be found, because we all have a distinct set of values that are incompatible.

As stated by Gubrium and Holstein (1990), one can look at the family definition in two ways - conservative and liberal. Conservatives claim that the relationship between reality and representation is not arbitrary, but should be oriented to the 'reality of family life'. What this reality is depends on specific feelings, experiences and events. For some, this means a nuclear family consisting of mother, father and children. For others, this includes intergenerational relationships, beyond parent-child relations. However, conservative 'reality' usually does not include the growing variety of modern family forms. As stated by Giele (1996), the conservative idea developers claim that the ever-decreasing number of marital families, especially the absence of a father because of family divorce, poses a higher risk for children to experience school difficulties or to immerse themselves in deviant behavior. Based on conservative reasoning, it is important to strengthen religious values and family responsibilities, thus preserving, in their opinion, the 'best' family type - nuclear family. A liberal approach also focuses on the reality of the family, but differs from a conservative approach as it includes various family forms constituting a 'proper' family. Thus, family life and family values are expressed in the one-headed families, common law marriages, convenience agreements, gay marriages, and so on. The idea is that family feelings, their related rights and responsibilities define the family more than specific legal or biological relationships (Holstein and Gubrium, 1999). However, Morgan (2011) claims that there is no such thing as 'The Family', given the attempts to define the family based on any normative ideas.

Morgan (2011) states that there is an opposition between family theory and practices, and between practices and discourses. Theory and discourses can describe ideological definitions or understandings which are taken for granted, while practices are ordinary activities and actions which are 'done' on everyday basis. Morgan illustrates these oppositions by using metaphor from Bourdieu (whose ideas I will present shortly) - "Thus, there is the familiar distinction between the rules of a card game and the actual play, depending upon the cards dealt and the skills of the players" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 58). It can be assumed that family practices may differ depending on variety of families and its contexts, so theoretical and discursive ideas cannot be applied to universal/general use. However, regardless of the different personal life in practice nowadays, the idea of a family had such a significant cultural impact in post-

industrial societies that family hegemony discourses continue to affect the way people organize their own families (Smart, 2007, p. 52 cited in James & Curtis, 2010, p. 1164).

According to Smart (1997), in contemporary discourses, the family is the only institution that 'should not change', ignoring the fact that everything around us is rapidly changing. If we adopt a sociological statement that changes in family life cannot be separated from other social changes and that they are also related to the struggle for intimacy, then perhaps we should be concerned when family policy seems to ignore such changes in order to establish a new direction for intimate relationships. From a political point of view, divorce has been redefined as a social problem, even though, for most it is the only solution to the problematic marriage. In turn, 'problematic' marriages need to be understood in the wider context of social processes, such as changing employment patterns, changes in social welfare, changes in expectations, and so on. According to Dench (1996) thus, marriage and divorce are forms of social action, and not simply 'unlimited individual choices' (cited in Smart, 1997).

The power of official discourse can create the phenomenon that Bourdieu called *doxa*. This is a situation in which arbitrary things are considered as natural and important aspects are left unspoken as they are considered as self-evident (Bourdieu, 1996). Even though, according to Clarke (1996), normative constructions of the 'good' nuclear family are increasingly not related to family practice (cited in Murray & Barnes, 2010). Bourdieu (1996) emphasizes that official categorization and politics, discursively and symbolically equate certain types of family as more natural and acceptable than others. Bourdieu maintains that a heteronormative family is considered as ideal, natural and self-evident. This type of family also receives incentives from the state to exist and persist. He proposes that in the field of symbolic production, the state's grip is most powerful. State bureaucracy and their representatives are major producers of their own 'social problems' through the official discourses (Bourdieu, Wacquant, Farage, 1994). The concept of 'troubled families' gives us such an official social problem that the state is preparing and reorganizing. For example, in UK, through 'troubled families programme' (Crossley, 2016).

However, Bourdieu did not look at the state as the only organization and wrote about a 'bureaucratic field', which highlighted the struggle between different statesmen (Bourdieu et al., 1994). One of the main powers of the state is to produce and impose, especially through the school system, the categories of thoughts that we spontaneously apply to all things in the social

world, including the state itself. He argues that the state is “the culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital” (ibid, p. 4). Those species of capital are capital of physical force (military, police); economic capital (fiscal system, institution of the tax); informational capital (cultural capital, statistics, national accounting, all forms of communication, classification systems, educational structures, social rituals); and symbolic capital (any form of capital whether physical, economic, cultural or social, which are perceived by social agents provided with categories of perception which cause them to recognize it and to give it value). Juridical capital (legal systems) is tend to be an objectified and codified form of symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu, these different dimensions of capital are interdependent and the construction of the state also constructs a field of power. If the state can create symbolic violence, it is because it simultaneously incarnates objectively in the form of specific organizational structures and mechanisms, and embodies subjectivity in the form of mental structures and categories of perception and thought. By assimilating itself in social structures and in the mental structures adapted to them, the instituted institutions makes us forget that it issues long series of institutional acts which in result appears to us as natural (Bourdieu et al., 1994). Under the influence of all these categories, social workers rely on the norms defined by these forces to provide assistance to families, and families must also meet the criteria of these influences that appear to be ‘natural’ in society.

3.5. Previous research

In Lithuania, vulnerable families are studied by many scholars within different academic disciplines – social work, sociology, psychology, economics, etc. Studies mostly emphasize problems faced by families, their causes, family living conditions, social inclusion/exclusion, the attitude of employees and clients towards the services provided/received and their quality; social work with vulnerable families, also the emotional and physical outcomes of being considered ‘at risk’. The family concept has been studied broadly enough, but without distinguishing vulnerable families and their perspectives. However, none of these Lithuanian studies are conducted within the childhood studies approach.

The works of sociologists in Lithuania broadly analyzes the aspects of ‘families at risk’, which are reflected in the works of Grigas (1998, 2003); Zaleckiene (1998); Poviliunas (2001, 2003); Rimkute (2003); Vosyliute (2002); Taljunaite (2004); Mikulioniene (2005) and others.

In Lithuania, the term of a ‘Marginal class’ can be detected in the works of Grigas (1996, 2002, 2003, 2013). Grigas (2013), based on the definition of ‘crisis personality’ formulated by V. Kavolis, developed it and described the marginal personality type - “it is particularly difficult

for the personality of the crisis to stabilize themselves for longer, to perform public duties, to work collectively” (cited in Grigas, 2013, p. 1000). In addition to the marginal personality type, Grigas (2013) also described what can be considered a normative personality in the Lithuanian context. He states that normative is a person who, after evaluating the contextual aspects that affect him/her, is looking for consensus with other members of society and then realizes his/her actions.

Zaleckiene (1998) examined social exclusion in a civic perspective and discussed the possibilities for inclusion of segregated people in the community through activities. She also noted that social exclusion is linked to specific living standards (low income, poverty); education, employment; place of residence (social exclusion of rural population is more highlighted); age (includes children) and gender (cited in Kondrotaite, 2006, p. 56).

Stankuniene and colleagues (2003), based on the data of gender and generation studies and contextual information, presented a monograph analysing the changes in the family of Lithuania. Their findings revealed that economic and social changes in Lithuania have had a major impact on the family institution. In times of economic instability, crises, unemployment, declining living standards, the number of marriages are decreasing or postponed, by choosing cohabitation as an alternative. Families response to economic instability and deterioration of living standards occurs in demographic changes, such as decreasing fertility and increasing migration (Stankūnienė et al. 2003).

Moteciene and Naujaniene (2011), disclose experiences and reflections of social workers and clients. Also social worker’s perceived experience in social work with ‘risk’ families. Their findings revealed that the functions performed by social workers are related to both the form of dominance and the desire to empower the family. Reasoned analysis of experience helps clients to think critically and look at their situation as one that determines a different future perspective. When evaluating family situation, it is recommended not to personalize the problems experienced by the families, but to analyse and evaluate them based on the ideas of a critical social work perspective, when the social problem is examined in social, political, economic and cultural circumstances.

Ivanauskiene (2012), explored a process of becoming a social risk family by presenting the women’s perspectives and experiences. Her research revealed most participants grew up in non-social risk families , but unsuccessful socialization in childhood and adolescence (violence,

underdeveloped sense of security, survival loss, lack of emotional relationships) led to the formation of these female personalities and future family life patterns. The lack of attention and love of the closest family members, the feeling of uncertainty and tension, the lack of the necessary support in the toughest cases of life, has had a negative impact on the lives of women and their families. Her data also revealed that research participants denied the need for help and believed that their families have to overcome existing problems themselves, usually without changing anything. Ivanauskiene stated that unsupported and with lack of help from the environment, the family isolates even more, not wanting to get involved in community life. It can be assumed that in her study, she relied on developmental psychology and the theory of socialization.

According to Kondrotaite (2006), families often fall into crisis situations or face social disadvantages, which were found to be the risk factors that violate the balance of family relationships disrupting a successful functioning of the family. A family that has overcome the crisis, begin a new stage and quality of functioning. However, a family that is unable to cope with the problems that it encounters, become vulnerable, does not perform its functions and is more likely to be affected by social risk factors.

Cesnūtytė (2013) studied subjective understanding of family among population of Lithuania. Family concept was analysed according to what the participants of the study listed as family and non-family members. The results of the survey showed that the majority of Lithuanian residents consider their family members as members of the nuclear family, but about one third of the participants, first associates family with the extended family, and one tenth- with a friend / cohabitant, former spouse, former friend / cohabitant. These results confirm the hypothesis of the study and allow to assume the results of the study show that the subjective concept of the Lithuanian family has features that are recognized by the world's sociologists as characteristic of a postmodern family. Lithuanian residents are not completely and absolutely oriented towards the nuclear family. As members of their families, they named both extended family members and people outside the nuclear and extended family. One-tenth of participants, as members of their family, first identified other persons outside the nuclear and extended family. These are people they are not living with in marriage or those with whom they previously lived in a couple (marriage or non-marriage). These facts testify to the orientation of part of the population to non-traditional family patterns. Among other features, the fact that the mother's family is dominated by the concept of the family is also worth mentioning. This partly reflects

the distribution of roles between men and women in a family that is characteristic of a postmodern family. The specified family members are not confined to one generation, but include at least two generations, and in individual cases four generations.

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

As this specific study seeks to gain deeper understanding and knowledge about different experiences and perceptions on family as expressed by social workers and socially vulnerable families, qualitative methods were chosen as most appropriate in order to answer the research question. This study employed qualitative methods such as participant observations and semi-structured interviews. This chapter intends to give a description of my research methodology in the following order: access and sampling of participants; methods chosen for data collection; transcription and analysis of the data, challenges, ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

4.2. Qualitative methodology

Due to the purpose of the study, a qualitative research method was chosen. Tidikis (2003) states that the data obtained in a qualitative study provides a much more detailed, broader and deeper information on the phenomenon studied. Qualitative research is an unstructured study of a case, an individual, a group, a situation or an event in a natural environment, in order to understand the investigated phenomenon and to provide an interpretive and holistic approach (Kardelis, 2002). Taylor et al. (2015) also state that “The phrase qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data. It is a way of approaching empirical world” (p. 7)

4.2.1. Ethnography

An ethnographic approach was chosen for this research as suitable in order to reveal various family experiences and the means of a family definition. This approach gives an opportunity to collect and interpret data that most closely approximates daily life by observing and interviewing participants in natural setting, like in this case participants’ home or working place (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012).

According to Blomberg, Burrell & Guest (2009), ethnography has its underlying assumption that to understand people's cultures, habits, mutual differences and the everyday lives we know little about, we must experience life at first hand. Ethnographic studies tend to include gathering information in natural settings and activities as they occur. An ethnographic approach is also holistic, related to the view that activities which occur in natural setting must be understood within the larger context. Geertz (1976, p. 9-10) suggests, that ethnographers "try to analyse or make sense of the 'structures of signification' which inform people's action. Author states that data collected in research can be understood as our own construction of other people's construction of phenomenon we seek to study" (cited in James, 2001, p. 3). Various qualitative research methods such as interviews, observations or casual conversations can be used in ethnography in order to help researcher in gaining deeper knowledge in study of interest.

4.3. Access and sampling of participant, and methods used for collecting data

Different methods, namely participant observations and in-depth semi-structured interviews were used in this study. Information was gathered from various sources, such as documents, laws and statistics in addition to research participants' stories. That was chosen in order to get a broader understanding of the subject.

As it was mentioned earlier, I chose the ethnographic approach in which the concept of 'field' differs from those researches where data is collected by making a formal appointments often in the researcher's preferred location. I entered into participants' home or work environment and conducted interviews and observed events as they transpire in a real time, as suggested in ethnography (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012).

4.3.1. Access and sampling of research participants.

Before starting this research project, I contacted leading social worker in a governmental institution providing various social services. I chose this organization because I had previous research experience in this particular institution which made my access easier. The choice to conduct research in Lithuania was also made because I intended to apply my local cultural knowledge.

In order to obtain permission to collect data in this institution, I provided the letter of confirmation from the university, information letter about myself and this project for the head of the institution, information letter and informed consent forms for the research participants were provided. Fieldwork took place 03.08.18 – 20.09.18 in a city of Lithuania and its districts. In total, 26 families and eight social workers participated in this study. It is worth noting that

participants were mainly females. Reasons for this are due to the fact that men were less willing to participate in this project. They were normally not present during home visits because of employment reasons, and in the fact, in Lithuania there are significantly more women than men working as social workers. So, unfortunately, almost in all cases, families are represented by only one member, mainly by mothers.

Research participants were families who are under supervision of social workers and social workers themselves. Families which are defined as vulnerable or ‘being in risk’ are only included in supervisions of social workers and child protection services if they are currently having children under the age of 18. However, it was decided to additionally interview families whose children are currently older. In doing so, I was also able to include the retrospective perspective of participants.

Research participants were sampled using snowball technique – selecting people for research by starting with one participant and asking for suggestions about, and introductions to other people who might be interested in taking part in the research (Ennew et al., 2009, p. 10.20). The social worker I had contacted initially, selected one participant to start with. That participant was a social worker who also recommended the families she is working with, along with another social worker I can try to contact. This way of recruiting participants was used throughout the process. I had a chance to recruit participants in both rural and urban areas.

4.3.2. Study participant’s characteristics.

Table 1. Families.

Participant	Age	Marital status	Education	Brief Description
Family 1	In 30s	Partnership	Secondary	Woman lives in a rural area with her boyfriend, son and boyfriend’s daughters. All children are underage. The woman is currently unemployed. Her boyfriend is the bread-winner. Family is under social worker’s supervision for a year. The woman admits that she used to have an alcohol addiction before.
Family 2	In 50s	Divorced, now in partnership	Secondary	Couple lives in a rural area, both unemployed. Have 3 adult children. One son is still living with them. Family were under social worker’s supervision for around 18 years.
Family 3	In 40s	Widow	Secondary	Family lives in an a rural area. Woman has 4 children, two still live with her, but only one is under age. The woman has health problems so she is unable to work. Family lives from social benefits. They are supervised by a social worker for around 3 years.
Family 4	In 20s	Married	Secondary	Family lives with husband’s father in a rural area, they have 2 children. Husband is a bread-winner, family has been under social worker supervision for 2 years now.
Family 5	In 40s	Partnership	Secondary	Family lives in a rural area, couple has 7 children, one of them lives separately. The rest are under age and live with them. Husband is the bread-winner, he does small jobs for farmers. Rural area cannot offer that many jobs. Family is under social worker’s supervision for 12 years now, but after being rehabilitated for several years, social workers are looking to take them off their ‘family at risk’ list.

Family 6	In 30s	Married	Secondary	Family lives in a rural area, have two children. Husband works odd-jobs, family also receives child support benefits from government, but that money is under social worker's 'control'. Family is supervised around 13 years.
Family 7	In 30s	Partnership	Secondary	Family lives in an urban area. They have a daughter. The woman also has 3 children with her ex-boyfriend. Oldest daughter is married. The mother lost her maternity rights for 2 other children and now they live in a foster care home. Family is supervised for more than 10 years.
Family 8	In 30s	Married	Secondary	Family lives in an urban area with husband's parents. They have 2 children. Both are employed. The woman contacted social workers herself, seeking for help to solve some problems her son had at school. After that, the family became supervised by social workers, this continues for 2 years now.
Family 9	In 20s	Divorced	Secondary	Woman lives with her two children. Now she is waiting for her third child to be born. She is employed. Got supervised by social workers after an argument with her husband. After that she got divorced. Social workers are visiting the for about family a year now.
Family 10	In 40s	Married	Secondary	Couple lives in an urban area with their 6 children. One is an adult, 4 still live with the mother and one child lives in foster care. Husband is employed, also family gets child support money. They are under social worker's supervision for around 10 years now. Money that family receives as benefits is 'under control' of social worker.
Family 11	In 50s	Married	Secondary	Couple lives in an urban area with their 5 children and their families. One daughter lived separate, but after her husband committed suicide, she (and her child) came back to live with the parents. Family has been supervised for around 10 years. Money that family receive as a governmental support is 'under control' of social worker.
Family 12	In 40s	Married	Secondary	Couple has 4 children, 2 of them still live with parents. The woman is employed, her husband is temporarily unemployed. Family is supervised for 12 years now but after being rehabilitated for 4 years, social workers are looking to take them of their 'family at risk' list.
Family 13	In 30s	Partnership	Secondary	Family has 2 children. They live in a rural area. Her boyfriend is employed. Family receives governmental support, but that money is 'under control' of social worker. Family has been supervised around 4 years
Family 14	In 50s	Divorced	Secondary	Man lives alone now, temporarily in shelter. He has one son, who is an adult and lives abroad. He states that he still has contact with his family. Man is supervised by social workers for around 7 years now. He receives governmental support, money is 'under control' of social worker.
Family 15	In 50s	Divorced, now in partnership	Secondary	Man lives with his girlfriend and describes her as the only family he has now. He has two children from previous marriage, but according to him, children refuse to have any contact with him. Couple temporarily live in a shelter. They are supervised by social workers for around 4 years. Money they receive as benefits is 'under control' of social worker.
Family 16	In 40s	Divorced	Secondary	Woman lives with her daughter in the urban area. She struggles with mental illness, so she gets a lot of support from her sister. The sister is responsible for woman's finances and all other decisions are discussed with participant's sister and the social worker. Family is supervised for around 10 years now.
Family 17	In 30s	Divorced, in partnership now	Secondary	Woman lives with her boyfriend and their daughter. She has two sons from her previous marriage, that are currently living with her ex-husband. Benefits that the family gets are under social worker's 'control'. Family is supervised for more than 10 years in total. The woman has been receiving social worker's services since she lived with her first husband. Supervision remains to this day.
Family 18	In 50s	Divorced	Secondary	Woman has 4 children, two of them still live with her. Family is supervised by social worker, because her teenage daughter has been struggling at school, along with her health problems. Family has been supervised around 3 years now.
Family 19	In 40s	Married	Secondary	Family lives in a rural area, woman is unemployed, because she suffers from health issues. They have 2 children. Husband is employed, but not permanently. He is also responsible for all family decisions, finances, everyday activities, such as grocery shopping etc., due to his wife's health condition. All family benefits are under 'control' of social worker, they have been supervised for around 8 years.
Family 20	In 30s	Partnership	Secondary	Family has 4 children, both parents unemployed, family lives in urban area. Child's benefits are under social worker's 'control'. Family has been supervised for around 6 years now.
Family 21	In 20s	Married	Primary	Woman lives in urban area with children and husband, but he is temporarily working abroad. Family has been supervised for 2 years now.

Family 22	In 70s	Married	Higher	Woman lives with her husband, son, daughter and a grandchild. Her daughter (mother of her grandchild) passed away, so she takes care of him. The woman's son, grandchild's father, also lives with them, but he is permanently unemployed. Another woman's daughter is an adult, but she has a disability, so woman takes care of her too.
Family 23	In 30s	Single	Secondary	Woman and her daughter live in an apartment with her sister's family. The woman is employed. Her family is under supervision for around 7 years.
Family 24	In 30s	Partnership	Primary	Woman lives in an urban area with her boyfriend and children. Her boyfriend is a father of the youngest child. Couple have lived together for a year. She is unemployed. Their family is supervised around 10 years now. Child benefits are under 'control' of social worker
Family 25	In 20s	Single	Secondary	Woman lives in apartment together with her child and her ex-boyfriend, child's father. Couple broke up a while ago, but the woman is unemployed and doesn't have another place to live. Family have been supervised for around 4 years. All her money she gets as social benefits is under social worker's 'control'.
Family 26	In 40s	Partnership	Secondary	Family lives with their son, both parents are unemployed. Family has been supervised for around 6 years.

Table 2. Social workers.

Participant	Age	Marital status	Education	Working experience (years)	Brief Description
Social worker 1	In 40s	Married	Higher	4	Woman lives with her husband, couple has one child, he is an adult.
Social worker 2	In 30s	Divorced	Higher	8	Woman lives with her daughter. Daughter meets her father twice a week.
Social worker 3	In 30s	Partnership	Higher	2	Woman lives with her boyfriend. They have a child.
Social worker 4	In 60s	Widow	Higher	20	Woman lives alone with one of her son. All of her children are adults now. Her husband passed away a long time ago, so she was a single mother. She works as a social worker, but she has a medical degree.
Social worker 5	In 60s	Widow	Higher	10	Woman lives alone now, but her adult son and his family visits her very often. She used to work as a social worker, but now she is retired.
Social worker 6	In 30s	Single	Higher	5	Man lives with his parents in a rural area.
Social worker 7	In 30s	Married	Higher	9	Woman lives with her husband child.
Social worker 8	In 40s	Divorced	Higher	17	Woman lives with her teenage son. They do not have any contact with his father.

4.3.3. Participant observation

With reference to Spradley (2016), participant observation method means to observe different social situations, people activities and characteristics, also it gives an understanding how it feels like to be part of the scene. Participant observation was used throughout all process of my fieldwork. It was mainly unstructured, excluded those times I asked prepared questions during informal conversations with social workers. Participant observation method was used as a supporting tool. It was valuable in terms of contextualizing, helping me to understand family practices and living arrangements in natural settings – their homes, whilst grocery shopping, while collecting governmental support i.e. allowance, food, and clothes. The information

collected during the observation was described in the field notes after each day spent in the field. According to Schensul and LeCompte (2012), field notes are a detailed representation of activities and experiences of researcher, which in turn are a reflection of time spent in the field. My field notes consisted of observed descriptions of events, records of informal or more formalized conversations, behaviors, reflections and my feelings about each day of the study. I chose to write the notes in a paper notebook because it was convenient to have with me, but I did not write the notes in front of research participants. I wrote my observations when I was alone or back at home to avoid any inconvenience or discomfort for the participants.

Observations with social workers gave a deeper understanding on their perceptions of the families they are working with. Before going to each home visit, during informal conversations, social workers gave short descriptions about families we were to visit. They presented ‘problems’ that the families are dealing with, family members characteristics, living arrangements and their own working experiences with each family. Listening such descriptions helped to reveal family situations from social worker’s perspective. Participant observation method was also a good way to cross-check the data gathered using other tools – to see whether the information corresponds and if there is anything that can be added (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012).

4.3.4. Semi-structured interview

According to Brinkmann & Kvale (2009, p. 6), a semi-structured interview “is defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of described phenomena”. Authors state that the qualitative research interview seeks to explore the world from participant’s point of view. Considering the research problem based on individual stories/conversations and examples is important, as in the Lithuanian society a stereotypical attitude towards vulnerable families prevails (Ivanauskiene, 2012). Many tend to believe that they chose this way of life and they do not want to change due to the lack of motivation. Semi-structured interview was chosen as a suitable data collection tool, during personal conversations participants would have a chance to express their own perspectives about their family situation, practices and share their individual life experiences. Interviews with families were mostly conducted during home visits, some of them took place in the social welfare centre where they came for meetings with social workers or activities such as ‘positive parenting training’. Two of the interviews were conducted outside of the post office building as it was most suitable for the participants. Interviews with social workers were mainly conducted after home visits, in the places that they were most comfortable with – an office

room, a car and etc. Whilst conducting interviews, I used prepared questions and topics I wanted to touch upon during conversations. In doing so, I tried to ensure that I would keep my focus on topics that would help me in answering research questions. Doing so, I was flexible to adjust questions differently for each participant depending on their vocabulary and various experiences. Interviews varied from participant to participant. Some of them were more talkative than others, interview lengths varied from 4 to 30 minutes. The length of the interviews varied due to the challenges faced on the research field that I will discuss shortly. Some of the participants were uncertain if they can answer questions after presenting my project, but almost all of them felt relieved when we started. Five interviewees thanked me for our conversation and shared that they felt better after having an opportunity to be listened to and were able to talk about subjects they do not usually talk about. Being provided such feedback was a very positive experience for me as a researcher.

Interviews were recorded with participants' consent. In total I carried out 30 interviews with families and 8 individual interviews with social workers. All interviews with the staff were recorded and 28 out of 30 were recorded while interviewing families. Two families did not give a consent to be recorded. Their decision was respected.

4.3.5. Secondary data

Secondary data, according to Ennew et al. (2009), is such data that already exists and has been collected for relevant or other studies and purposes, including statistics, books, laws, records and etc. In this thesis I used national reports, laws, statistics, previous research and documents social workers use in their work. All these were used for background information, but documents and laws also had an impact while collecting primary data for this research.

4.4. Data transcription and analysis

The analysis of the data was done by using Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). According to Anderson (2007, p.1), "TCA portrays the thematic content of interview transcripts (or other texts) by identifying common themes in the texts provided for analysis". Anderson explains that in TCA, researcher groups similar themes from the text and in doing so gives expression communality of voices across participants. He also suggest, that even though, naming and sorting of the themes requires some level of interpretation, researcher should keep it as minimum as possible. The weakness of the thematic content analysis can be an assumption that the text is always manifold and the results presented always contain a certain part of the subjective interpretation of the investigator (Bitinas, Rupsiene & Zydziunaite, 2008). Data

analysis was performed using the following steps: Data were transcribed, while transcribing data, information such names, places and other details which may identify research participants were anonymized. Interview records were deleted immediately after transcription. Transcribed text was read many times until the meaning from the content was divided into sub-themes. Sub-themes were compared to each other and divided into large themes – *what is a family, what constitutes a 'normal' family, and family practices*. Then the content was reviewed again in order to see if it reflects the titles of the themes it is assigned to, and if data were assigned to the correct topics. Finally, the data were interpreted.

4.5. Ethical considerations and dilemmas

While planning and conducting this research, ethical considerations were taken into account. During all processes, it was important to ensure that ethical principles such as respect, non-discrimination, confidentiality, privacy, voluntary participation and rights of participants were not to be violated (Ennew et. al, 2009).

4.5.1. Informed consent

Before starting fieldwork, it was made sure that participants understand the aim and process of this project, how data is going to be used, but also, that participating is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time. I introduced myself and information about this project to each participant individually, mentioning that data is going to be anonymized and used only for a scientific purpose. Then informed consent (see appendix B and C) was given to sign. It was made sure that the participants had enough time to read it carefully and decide whether they wanted to take part. After signing informed consent, I asked again if they had any questions and repeated one more time that the interviews were going to be recorded, explaining that recordings helps to capture information without affecting what was originally intended to be spoken. All of the intended participants agreed to take part in the project. However, two of them did not agree to be recorded and several of participants chose not to talk about topics they found sensitive, as for example, their childhood. All decisions were respected and treated in respectful manner.

4.5.2. Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, the names of the research participants' were not collected during interviews or informal conversations. None of the participants were asked to sign by name under informed consent. However, some of the participants' names were mentioned by social workers or participants introduced themselves and family members using their names and

surnames. All information such as names, surnames, name of the community, cities or areas were changed and anonymized in order to hide the identity of participants. Instead, the participants were given code names (pseudonyms), but not names to avoid any associations. The characteristics of the participants were presented in the Table 1 and Table 2.

4.5.3. Ethical dilemmas that encountered during preparation of the study

When planning this project, I intended to study family conceptions and family life experiences expressed by all possible family members. However, it was decided that children are not going to be included in this research. Such decision was made partly because this research could harm them psychologically (Ennew et. al, 2009). In this case, some children may experience different forms of violence or stress at home. According to social workers, who work with the children in this particular institution, every talk or activity with the new person can cause them stress. They may be afraid to say “too much”, which could lead to consequences at home. Even though I would manage to get parental consent that would let to include children in this project, it could lead to other ethical dilemmas. Some children may be unwilling to participate themselves, but would feel pressure to do so, because parents had signed consent forms or vice versa, project could leave some children excluded. For instance, those who want to participate, but did not get parental consent, since it was planned to conduct research in the day care center with all the group. Conducting research with children in their houses would lead to same dilemmas that they would feel stressed to say something inappropriate while their parents are present or would feel pressure to participate since parents could ask them to do so.

4.6. Research field challenges

4.6.1. Researcher’s role

It’s worth noting that I found it quite challenging to define and present myself as a researcher during the fieldwork. First of all, participants (both families and staff) were not familiar with the term *researcher*. Social workers called me a student and they liked to call my fieldwork ‘practice’, so I was defined as a student on her practice for her studies. On the first day of my fieldwork, I heard that the social worker introducing me as a student to a family we visited. In that context it meant that I am a social work student, since I arrived with the social worker. It made it harder for me to explain that I am not one of the staff. Being seen as part of the staff could have an impact while collecting data due to their interaction and conversations held with certain prejudice (Ennew et al., 2009). The fact that I visited the families with the supervision

of social workers may have given participants an impression of me leaning towards ‘sides’ of the social workers, who are often perceived as an authority by the families. According to Christensen (2004), the researcher must take steps to reduce the power imbalances that have arisen between the researcher and the participant and reflect the possible consequences of this on the research results. After that I asked social workers to be given an opportunity to introduce myself. However, possible impact on data depending on my researcher role was reflected and seen as a limitation. This situation must also be taken into account in terms of social workers. First, they heard about my research from a leading social worker I contacted. She told them about me, mentioned that I had already completed my bachelor's practice in social work and research project in this institution. This could have sounded as a recommendation that I should be trusted, including misunderstanding that I am one of the social workers, since I have this degree. Secondly, I also got some contacts from this employee, so I had to mention this when I contacted the research participants. These aspects could have influenced the attitude of social workers towards me. Although I tried to make it clear as possible that I was not going to take any sides and my research project is conducted within different academic framework, it was not hard to feel that social workers treated me as one of the staff. They used phrases like ‘you know this situation’, ‘you have probably seen this before’, and ‘this is a typical *risk* situation’. They provided a lot of detailed information about families that might not have been revealed to me if they thought I was an *outsider*. The *insider/outsider* difference reveals differences in power and experiential differences between the investigator and the subject (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012). In addition, the bipolar placement of the *insider/outsider* side also creates a false separation that does not take into account the interactive processes that create ‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’. ‘Insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’ are not fixed or static positions, they are constantly changing and permeable social areas that community members experience and express differently (Naples, 1996). Scientists are never entirely inside or outside the community. Our relationship with the community is never expressed in general terms, but is constantly negotiated and renegotiated, in particular, through everyday interactions and these interactions are themselves located in shifting relationships among community residents (Naples, 1996; Schensul & LeCompte, 2012).

I sampled researched participants using the snowball technique, also got access to families through the social workers. It means that choices who to include were not random or only my own choice. I visited families which social workers recommended and in their opinion would be most representative. Their choices may had had an influence which had indirect effects on my research.

I visited each family with the lead of social worker, who knows family and have their own 'style' of interacting. Another important observation is that the nature and location of the meeting can only be described as common to families and treated as a casual meeting with a social worker, which may have influenced predestined and practiced results. According to James (2001), the research setting organized in such way might shape and style the its process. As it was mentioned earlier I faced some challenges to introduce myself as researcher, not as another social worker. I also found it quite different having conversation with families while a social worker was present. Those who had conversation while a social worker was around expressed less critical stands about institutions, their work, services which families receives, and the fact that they are being considered as family 'at risk'. However, not all social workers were positive about me having private conversations with participants. That might be because of various reasons. Practitioners could have saved their time, since they agreed to bring me together during their working hours, some of them may thought I am not confident/qualified enough by mentioning that sometimes it can be unsafe or 'complicated' to make a contact or simply for the reason that they want to keep their 'authority' in front of the families. Anyway, visiting families not individually, but with one of the staff they already knew, influenced participants way of interacting, even though I tried to introduce myself as clear as possible.

4.6.2. Practical challenges encountered in the field

Originally it was planned to include more research methods, for instance, a focus group discussion with staff or diaries and drawings. Social workers did not attend group discussions due to lack of time. Diaries and drawings turned out to be inappropriate methods for this research because of multiple reasons. First of all, because of limited time families agreed to spend with me. Many of them said that they did not want to answer too many questions or spend too much time as home visits usually takes (15-30 minutes). Drawing and diary methods can be time consuming. Their choice was understood and respected. Some of the families were visited only once, so collecting diaries would be impossible. Drawings were seen as a 'game they do not want to play'. Almost all participants mentioned that being considered as "a social risk family" stigmatizes them. Because of ethical considerations, the drawing method was not used, as it could make them feel inferior. Even though methods such as group discussions, diaries or drawings could help collecting rich data and answer this research question, it is the researcher's responsibility to protect the participants' dignity and ensure that participants are not going to be harmed emotionally or physically during the research process (Ennew et al.,

2009). Choices such as activities they want to participate in and how much time can be spent, must be respected.

Some of the interviews were very short, taking only 4 to 5 minutes, before conducting the interview the participants agreed that they wanted to take part in this research and to answer questions openly and in full. Unfortunately when the questions were asked, those answers were one worded, by which I understood that they did not want to delve deeper into the conversation. This may be due to lack of practical skills as a researcher. Having said that, I cannot say that the reasoning behind their willingness to participate may have been influenced by the social workers that were present during that time, nor can I dismiss the notion that they felt that participation was compulsory. Prior to conducting the research, as a researcher, I did my utmost in explaining to them that this research was in fact voluntary and not compulsory. During the interviews, I gave them time to ease into the conversation and although this method was almost successful, their one worded answers suggested to me that they were beginning to feel uncomfortable and only participating to please the social workers, by which point, I decided to conclude the interview. Upon one particular interview, the interviewee was getting ready to enter a rehabilitation centre, which gave me a limited amount of questions to ask her, in order not to upset the interviewee emotionally, or not to evoke painful memories. Instead, I decided to break down the single interview into two parts.

4.7. Limitations of the study

Children are not included in this research project, that can be seen as limitation while studying family concept and experiences of 'doing family'. Since children are not included in this research, their opinions and views will not be presented. Ideas and experiences about family are thus expressed only by adult point of view. However, Alanen (2009) argues that there has been significant shift in research field of childhood studies – from focus on adults mediating children's worlds to children's perspectives being central to the research field. Mannion (2007) states that "the search for more authentic forms of children's participation has led to adults being pushed into the background, occupying more marginal positions and standpoints" (cited in Wyness, 2013, p. 429). Wyness (2013) suggests that it is crucial to bring adults back into the analysis as partners and collaborators within a framework of intergenerational dialogue between children adults.

Adding to this it is worth mentioning that vulnerable families and staff members (and their families) are represented mainly by females. Only one male social worker and 3 male family

members to be exact. That makes data lacking of male perspective about family concept and practices. Another limitation of research is that the number of participants would represent just individual situations, but not the population.

Part II.
Empirical investigations

Introduction

With this part I present the findings of this study, based on the data gathered from research participants. First chapter of the analysis (Chapter 5) presents the research data revealing current family composition and prevailing family type of participants. Thereafter, next chapter (Chapter 6) presents the findings of the study revealing the attitudes of the research participants to what family would meet the society's expectations and could be publicly defined as 'normal' or vice versa, which aspects might prevent the family from meeting the societal requirements. The main purpose of this chapter is to reveal whether the real situation of the families differs from the discursive approach to family. Through this, an attempt to broaden the family concept and its understanding will be made. The purpose of the last analysis chapter (Chapter 7) is to reveal the practices of the families of the participants in the study, including intergenerational family relationships, the distribution of domestic work, the attitudes towards the changing family in terms of child-rearing, society's expectations for families, and ultimately the stigma revealed.

5. What is a family? *“If there is no communication, bond or empathy for each other, then there is no such thing as family”* (Family 3)

Families can be expected to have some similarities. Nonetheless, families are also different in many ways – in who are included as family members, emotional environment, living conditions, ideologies, social and affinity networks, economic and other functions (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2011). The purpose of this part of the analysis is to reveal what the participants are referring to by identifying their family members and what criteria are used to define 'my' family. The aim is to broaden the concept of 'family'.

5.1. Family composition

All study participants were asked to define who they consider to be their family. The main purpose of this question was to reveal whether the family structure defined by the research participants is characterized by a variety of family types. The purpose was also to compare whether the structure and type of social workers' families differ from socially vulnerable families.

The study data showed that 13 families and two social workers defined their family based only on the nuclear family composition. However, such a way of defining family was not based on

conventional idea of who must consist one's family, but the solution was most influenced by the strength of the relationship with particular family members: *My Family members are me, my husband and children* (Family 3). This research participant grew up in a foster home (institution). She does not know any of her relatives. Having reached the age of maturity, she left the institution, married and has two children, what she defined as her current family. The woman's husband has relatives, his sister's family also participated in the study. However, the woman did not name them as family members, claiming that she does not have a close relationship with them.

Similar situation as shared by Family 3 was revealed by the woman from Family 20: *My family is my husband, our two kids and that's it. I don't have parents or any relatives, they left me when I was born. I grew up as I called it 'in the country'* (Family 20). The woman grew up in an institution, and explains that when she was a child, there was no one she could call a family. She does not think that the children she lived with in the foster home can be defined as family, nor the staff who worked there. However, the woman recognizes that she had close friends, but according to her, the children in the institution have an opinion about what a family is, namely exactly what they do not have - parents. It can be assumed that, because of this belief, other forms of family are simply not included in contemplation. Close relationships with other children or educators are simply attributed to friendship or similar relationships. The woman from Family 20 grew up in an institution, but she is not an orphan, she has parents. Though, she has never been in contact with them. As a result, she has not classified them as her family members who can be called mother and father, because their practices as 'mothering' and 'fathering' were lacking. As Morgan (2011) claims, looking at the family from the 'doing' family perspective, one can take a broader look at how people decide who make up a family. Family members are not simply defined as those who are mother, father, sister, brother, grandfather, etc., but rather 'doing' mothering, fathering, and so on. Thus if mentioned research participants did not identify such practices performed by individuals around them, this determined that these people were simply not identified as members of their family.

Another research participant from the Family 5 said that they used to have close ties with her sister and her family, but after having a conflict, their relationship was no longer so close. She defined only her husband and children as her current family. In this case, affected by the conflict, practices such as 'doing sistering' was determined to be not good enough to further define each other as a family member. Finch and Mason (2000) stated that kinship should not be seen as a structure or system, but as created in the practice of relationships. "Kinship is very much about doing, reasoning and working it out in your own relationships" (2000, p. 164-5).

A slightly different situation was found in Family 19. The woman's parents and husband passed away, so her family's circle is narrower. She says there are only sisters in law left from her relatives, but they do not support close ties: *My two sons and my daughter is my family* (Family 19). As it is stated by Finch (2007), it is not just a matter of determining who belongs and who does not. The main focus of families, consisting of 'practice, identity, and relationships', means that family fluency is not defined by changing membership, but how the relationship is constantly changing - how individuals speak to each other, interact with one another, and the relationships between them and the assumptions that they relate to. So the question 'What is my family?' is really a question of relationships - 'Which of my relationships has the nature of family relationships?' (Finch, 2007, p. 69). Social worker 3 shared a similar position as the families mentioned by stating: *My family is my husband and my daughter*. The woman also shared the experience that she has a brother but she could no longer define him as a family member, because, according to her, he chose an unacceptable lifestyle and is currently homeless. For this reason, the woman claims, they do not communicate any longer. Burgess (1926) also suggested that "the unity of interacting personalities" was the most appropriate way to conceptualize and explore the family (Burgess, 1926 cited in Bengston, 2001, p. 3). In this respect, it meant three things. First, the 'family' is essentially a process of interaction between each member. It is not just a structure or a household. Secondly, the behavior of one family member cannot be understood, except in terms of the relationship with other family members, their constant patterns of interaction, and the personalities developing and changing through such interactions. Third, the main functions of families have changed from being essentially structural units of social organization, to relationships that support the needs of individuals.

The participants explained that their family can be defined only including members of the nuclear family for two reasons. One of them is that the participants have grown up in foster care homes/orphanages and have no relatives, and the second reason is the strained or lack of relationship with the members of the biological or extended family. It can be assumed, therefore, that the strength of their relationships and family practices between family members are an important criterion in defining family members. Morgan (2011) suggested that if we define family members in terms of a member of some designated collectivity, that won't broaden our understanding. However, if we define family members in terms of everyday practices, including not merely what is done, but how it is done, that can define who is counted as family members, at least as long as these practices are being followed.

However, as it was revealed, most of the participants while naming their family members gave the priority to their nuclear family, while also mentioned members from their biological (relatives/kin) family – 11 out of the 26 families taking part in this research mentioned their biological family members as their current family. The data revealed that kinship is not the main criterion for defining a family: *Well, it's a sister, a sister's husband, their children, Me and my daughter* (Family 18). Family 18 shares housing with the woman's sister and her family. Domestic work and other family affairs are handled individually by these two families, but they are closely linked, they spend their free time together, and share their daily experiences. The woman from Family 13 defined family members are the people she respects most: *I'll start from who I respect the most, my mom, dad, kids, sister, brothers, but on my part, I'm not talking about a cohabitant's here. Well, kids, mom, dad, cohabitant*. The participant first identifies her parents and children as her closest family, then includes her cohabitant. The woman currently lives with her cohabitant and children. The participant from Family 21 once again illustrated that family relationships can determine the composition of family members. The woman tells that she has two brothers, one of them she defines as a member of her family, because they often meet, celebrate family holidays or other occasions together, and communicate by phone. However, she does not define her other brother as a current family member. According to her, their communication is interrupted: *There's a friend (partner) now and there are six kids in my family. I have my brothers, one visits us often, with other brother I simply can't find communication* (Family 21). The stories of these families also illustrate that identifying their family members is not based on a pre-emptive model of what 'should be' labeled as a family, but the relationship between family members and their communication becomes an important aspect. Bengston (2001) argued that a few decades ago, Burgess (1926) was right by claiming that 'the family' is in transition. However 'the family' is not just moving from 'institution to companionship', as he said. Family structure and functions have changed a lot. The greatest of these was the expansion of family relationships, love and faith, help and support for several generations, whether it be biological relationships or the creation of similar relationships.

It was noted that six out of the eight social workers included their relatives when naming their family members, but the priority was given to their nuclear family, however, even the nuclear family term here appeared somewhat different than the normative one:

We are two, Me and my son. It is our nuclear family. And then there is the extended one I think, then there are my parents, my sister's family, my aunt, my cousin's family, that is the circle which is behind me (Social worker 8).

This social worker is a single mother, but she defines herself and her son as a nuclear family based on the fact that her son is the closest person to her. She argues that they provide an emotional support for each other, they make decisions together, and they also share domestic work. The social worker also names relatives as her family members, she involves a rather wide circle of people, but defines it as a 'circle of people behind her and her son'. She has in mind that with these family members they have their own family practice, they usually communicate over the phone and get together through family celebrations. Unfortunately, they are not able to see each other more often because of the great distance between them and the lack of time. Therefore, as Finch (1997) suggests, it may be more useful to define specific types of family for which the display is adapted (and, on the other hand, to others not covered by it), to think about the degree of 'intensity' to be displayed in the circumstances. This means that there are certain circumstances in which the need for display becomes at least more intense. This may be because new people enter the picture and new relationships emerge. However, it may also be due to changing circumstances; an adult child lives in another part of the country, a woman who has previously focused on childcare, works full-time. In these examples, 'membership' does not change, but individual identities change and need to redefine, revise, and actively show the family's attributes of relationships. As Social worker 8 revealed in her story, her family members have changed little over the years, but the intensity of these relationships has changed as they live in another city. A similar position was expressed by another social worker: *Me and my daughter. The closest family, then, it is a sister with her son and my dad* (Social worker 5).

Two of the participants have defined their family as the closest people they currently live with. Those relationships are not based on kin ties neither by marriage or cohabitation and in this way they stand out from other families involved in the study. In particular, Weeks et al. (2001) documented the emergence of 'families by choice' sets of relationships that identify individuals in the commitment and support network. Some relationships may be blood-based, but most will not. Basically, they are seen as related networks of relationships based on friendship and strong commitment. The essential feature of these 'chosen' families is that they are actively developed as a positive step to support their identity and provide a new way of 'belonging' to the social world (Weeks et al., 2001 cited in Finch, 2007, p. 70). However, the man from Family 15 tells

that he would have defined his family differently many years ago. He was married and has children, but after the divorce their ties began to weaken until they finally broke:

I had a family, in another city. I have two children. We had divorced a long time ago. We are not communicating simply. One was ten years old, the other - seven. We talked in the beginning on the phone, and then everything stopped.

Now, he lives in a shelter with his friend: *Now my family is just Olga. My friend. She is the closest.* They are considered as a couple since they live in one room, but according to the participant, their relationship is based more on mutual support, both financially and emotionally, than a romantic relationship. This example illustrates the socially defined family type. He appreciates the fact that she cares about him and he tries to care for her. The man says that their relationship is based on the fact that they both find themselves in a similar situation in their lives. Losing their former families and homes, and having little contact with others. This life situation brought them closer together. Various processes and events reflect the definition of the family, i.e. an “intimate group that creates a sense of home and group identity and experiences a common history and common future” (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 71). The man from Family 14 shares almost a similar situation. He lives in a shelter. He has some contact with his former (biological) family, but their relationship is not very close:

I was married, I have a son, but my son is abroad. We communicate when he returns, we meet then. Also I talk with my ex-wife, sometimes she comes here to visit me. I also have sisters and a brother. We are six children in the family. With one sister we are twins, but she has passed away.

The man tells that because of many unfortunes in his life he found himself in the shelter. According to him, due to the changed life situation, the people he could call a family also changed: *Now my family is here, where I live, I don't have such a family like before* (Family 14). The participant believes that the people who he lives with can become his family, similar life situation can bring people together and form organic bonds similar to a family situation. In their study about orphan children due to HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ethiopia, Abebe and Aasen (2007) distinguished ‘fictive kinship’ - people who have no relationship with each other, but have deliberately created social relationships that would allow them to cooperate with each other at normal times and during periods of stress. Similar aspects of ‘fictive kinship’ were

reflected in the stories of Family 13 and Family 14. The situation of these two families also illustrate the family fluidity over time as suggested by Finch (2007).

Social worker 6 also expands the understanding of the family concept by including two very close friends in her definition of family members:

My family is my son, his wife and my grandson. I live alone now. But I'm still very grateful that I have two friends, my son's age, they are social workers. Some people sometimes think they are my daughters because we communicate very closely.

As Morgan (2011) suggest, it is more important to look at how people are 'doing' family, rather than to perceive individuals as 'being' one. Thus, the family can be defined by its interrelationships, conversations and similar practices, just as Social worker 6 has revealed that, if necessary, she could always contact those two close friends for help. The research participant defines these relationships similar to family relationships. Jamieson et al. (2006) stated that from the point of view of the language used, family relationships have been expanded when individuals and practices are described 'like a family', obviously this statement is used to describe positive relationships that can complement or even fill a lacking family relationship void. A broader family concept involving people with whom she is not related by kin ties, but shares close relationship with, was emphasized by another social worker:

I am not close enough to my relatives, but I still have one woman, my mother's age. I can always contact her for help, we are very close, but when I thought about my family I didn't think about her immediately. I think this shows the attitude that we think about family only based on the blood ties or kinship and often forget those who are close and could be equated with family members or even replace them (Social worker 3).

Social worker 3 defines relationship between her and this very close women, as a source of support. Galvin (2006) uses the term *intentional* families - apart from biological and legal families, they remain self-defined. These 'fictive' or self-assigned relatives become family by choice and perform family functions. Adjacent neighbors who serve as extended family members, the best friend who is considered a sister, other immigrants from the same homeland, or sometimes a 'city tribe' or a complex community of young people living and working in various combinations (Watters, 2003 cited in Galvin, 2006, p. 6) function as a family. Above

given examples also support Murray and Barnes' (2010) statement that the family definition should be viewed much more broadly and should not be limited to relatives and kin ties.

5.1.1. Household

There is no consensus on the conceptual separation of families from households. There are two main reasons why families and households can make up an analytical difference (Bender, 1967). As for the first point, if the family concept is based on kinship, and the household is based on close relationship or residence. If families were always to make up households, and if households were always composed of families, such a conceptual difference would be justified. Indeed, there are many societies where families do not usually form households, and even more cases where households do not always form families. It is worth noting that the vast majority of the study participants who mentioned biological family members in defining their family do not live with those members at the moment. At the same time, most families living with the extended family did not name these people as family members. Difficult material situation is the most important factor for families to share housing with an extended family, but they expressed that they would prefer to live alone if possible: *Now we are temporarily living in my cohabitant's sister's house, but we are planning to move out when we save some money* (Family 20). Abebe (2007), claims that due to unfavourable circumstances such as the loss of parents, and the consequent material and other difficulties, children in Ethiopia join the other households as a survival strategy and an improvement in the material situation.

One of the participants lives with her husband and their children at her parents-in-law's house. When asked to define who is her family she did not mention her father and mother in-law as family members: *Me, husband, children, although my parents do not live together, but I also consider them a family. Now we live with my husband's parents in their house* (Family 7). The description of the family composition agrees with Bourdieu's (1996) statement that even though the dominant, legitimate definition of a family is based on house, home, household, and people living under the same roof, this definition often does not correspond to the 'reality' in which people live. Because of various reasons family members have to live separate and sometimes, as in this case, their place of residence does not affect the definition of their family members. According to Bender (1967), people living together do not necessarily form families. Families (as a specific kind of family structure), co-living and internal functions are three different social phenomena. The common place of residence and internal functions were mistakenly attributed to the characteristics of families. The first major analytical breakthrough was when families were separated from households, first as reference to their relatives, and the latter is believed to

be an advantage or location. Even after more than twenty-five years, Kertzer (1991) takes a similar position, claiming that a household and a family are not synonymous, and when both are intertwined, there may be an analytical and theoretical confusion. Household refers to a group of people who live under one roof and who share common consumption. Family is a much more ambiguous concept, and is related to loved ones, but the exact reference to the term usually varies. Very different kinship systems can have homogeneous local groups or households, and similarly, the same kinship systems can cause a variety of households (Kertzer, 1991). A similar position can be noticed in another participant's family definition, as she lives with her husband and children in her husband's grandfather's house: *My Family members are me, my husband and children* (Family 3). She did not mention him while talking about her family and also said that she had no relatives, because she grew up in a foster home. During the home visit I noticed that there was a man watching television in this house. As the woman mentioned there were only children at home and her husband had left for work. After a meeting, the social worker explained that the man I saw was her father-in-law and that the family live in his house. As it was mentioned in the first part of this chapter, woman's from Family 3 sister in-law also participated in the study, and named the woman as a family member during the interview (while Family 3 did not include her husband's relatives into the definition of her family). This reveals how notions of the family are highly individual. Family 3's experience also illustrates that even people sharing kin relationships can have a different position while defining their family, relatives and etc. The definition of the family is based more on the strength of the relationship and communication.

Another research participant, Family 17, highlighted the importance that she does not live with her children, so their relationship became strained. She has lost custody of her children. According to her, the fact that she do not share everyday interactions with her children has a significant impact on their relationship: *Well my family is my man and daughter. I have two more sons, but they live separately with my first husband. I live here with my daughter and cohabitant.* Nevertheless, the study data also revealed a slightly different position: *My family is my mother, dad, daughters, husband, sister, brothers. I live with my daughters and husband, but now he is abroad* (Family 23). The woman is currently living with her children because the husband has gone to work abroad and spends some time there. This example illustrates that families do not always manage to live in the same accommodation all the time. One or more family members in terms of family welfare have to travel to live elsewhere, where job opportunities are better. The common place of residence is not the important criterion for

defining the members of her family. Nowadays, with a high level of international and local migration, many families are living in separate households due to material wealth and career opportunities. Members of transnational families support a family feeling, because they continue to feel a sense of belonging to the family, even when they cannot see each other or physically interact for an extended period of time (Baldassar & Merla, 2013). All these changes caused a much greater variety of family and domestic order than existed throughout almost all of the 20th century (Allan et al., 2001).

The situation in Social worker's 2 story was somewhat different from other social workers participating. He is single and lives with his parents. He defines family as a household, but also has a conventional idea of what should a family for an adult contain (spouse and children): *I am alone, I do not have a wife or children, but at the moment my family is my parents because we live together.* He attaches great importance to the fact that his family is his parents because he is still living with them at the moment. However, the situation is different from the research participants already discussed, as many of them have defined their parents as part of the family independently whether they are still living together. The man expresses his position that he should live separately from his parents when he is an adult. In this case, the definition of a man is more related to the expectations of the society as to what the family of this social worker 'should be', than to the importance of a common dwelling in defining his family. According to Smart (2007), despite the different practices of personal life, the hegemonic family idea had such a great cultural impact in post-industrial societies that discourse on family hegemony continues to influence people to organize their families following that 'normative' family model. Bourdieu (1996) claims that the heteronormative family is considered ideal, natural and obvious. This type of family also receives state incentives to exist and survive, what is reflected in some of the family laws in Lithuania (see Chapter 2). The perception of above mentioned Social worker 2 introduces another very important aspect. The next chapter will discuss the differences between the families of the research participants and what is expected from families in society so that they are defined as 'normal'. However, before moving on to the next chapter, I would like to summarize the findings of the one presented above. Based on the data it can be assumed that the participants have different perceptions of what their families are. Some define their family based on blood ties and marriage/cohabitation, others include relatives, while others perceive that the family is with whom they have an emotional connection. The main findings are that the vast majority of the study participants, in defining their family, relied on and prioritized the strength of family relationships and the nature of family practices. Based on the data, it can be assumed that being affiliated by kin ties is not a sufficient criterion for

identifying a person as a family member. Also empirical data revealed that the family is not static, but dynamic⁴ - who is currently one's family and its members, after a while, affected by various life events, may change slightly or significantly by supplementing or reducing the circle of the family, including adjustments of households. According to Skolnick and Skolnick (2011), one of the myths about the family is that it was a constant, unchanging form until the nuclear family began to crumble. In fact, families have always been changing. When the world is changing around, families have to react. In periods of profound transformation in society as a whole, family change can be particularly rapid and crowding out. Indeed, family trajectories have become increasingly complex over time (Martinson & Wu, 1992 cited in Wu & Thomson, 2001, p. 685) The results of their research show that the changes taking place in the family, in their words 'family turbulence', indicate various changes in the family over time, including changes in family structure due to divorce. Because of various events, family interpersonal relationships can change, the number of family members may increase or decrease, and household structure may also not remain unchanged (Wu & Thomson, 2001).

6. What constitutes a 'normal' family? *"So I guess the expectations to the family in general are – married couple, both are working, children are well educated and family aren't facing any problems, however I think everybody does have some problems"* (Social worker 3)

Families participating in the research are defined as socially vulnerable or otherwise known as 'social risk families' in Lithuania. In this way, they are defined by the institutions because, according to them, these families do not meet the requirements of the society and do not 'properly' perform the established family functions. However, as stated by Holstein and Gubrium (1999), there are no dysfunctional families in analytical terms, only those families that have reached this status because the interested party, agency or family members categorize the family as inappropriate. There are also no functional families analytically. There are only those families who have been granted social status or this status is perceived as self-evident. Only developed analytical neutrality can reveal local sources of meaning and social order (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999). *Good family is married couple, both employed, children are well*

⁴ "character of 'my family' is further reinforced by the obvious point that families are subject to change over time, as individuals move through the life course and change their mode of living" (Finch, 2007, p. 69)

educated (Social worker 2). These requirements are closely related to what is perceived as a 'normal' family in society. As already mentioned, the definition of 'normal' family is emphasized in functionalism (Parsons, 1971), as well as in church teaching, where the family is emphasized as 'natural' (Buss, 2003). Those 'normal', 'natural' families are usually associated with the nuclear family composition, and are also based on middle-class family standards (Bourdieu et al., 1994). This definition of a normal family has become the mainstream perception of what the family 'should be', especially in Western societies. However, it is important to find out how the perspective of a 'normal' family is in contemporary Lithuanian society.

This chapter reveals the attitude of the research participants to what family is socially acceptable in Lithuanian society, so called 'normal'. In this section, there was a slightly different approach than the one presented above when the participants of the study described their own family composition. The data supports the statement made by Ursin et al. (2016) that participants' perceptions of 'family life' may differ from normative ideas. The statement by Gubrium and Holstein (1990), that nowadays, descriptions of traditional living arrangements and social relations do not seem to apply, also corresponds with the empirical data of this study. The main purpose of this chapter is to reveal how the attitudes of the research participants differ when describing the reality of their family and how is the attitude expressed about what family should be in order to meet the demands of society. The participants, both families and social workers, shared their views on marriage, sexual orientation in the family, the relationship between age and maturity, social status in society, the importance of education, and the 'appropriate' way of applying these practices, as well as distinguishing addictions and domestic violence as totally unacceptable family behavior.

6.1. Marriage

The stories of study participants shows that the traditional family model can no longer be defined as dominant as most of the participants live in cohabitation. Other types of families, such as single parents, divorced or widowed, also emerged. Such diversity was prevalent in both groups. However, even though the majority of the participants agreed that fewer and fewer people nowadays choose to live in a marriage and that marriage is no longer a necessity, there were few (two social workers and one family) who shared slightly different opinions.

The story of Social worker 2 reveals two rather different attitudes towards marriage. The first question was whether marriage is necessary for couple living in a family. Having formulated

the question in this way, he replied that he considers marriage to be important but not compulsory:

Marriage? Well, I think it's like facilitating the relationship between the two people because there's no question there, but basically if people get along together it wouldn't be necessary.

Yet, when asked what is a 'normal' Lithuanian family, he replied: '*Normal*' family I would say - the parents are married, have no serious problems. Social worker 3 maintains the same 'dual' position and states:

Traditional Lithuanian family I think are people who are married first of all, because from my practice I know people suffer a lot about being not married. So first of all, a married couple.

The important criterion in determining what is expected from a 'normal' family, however, remains marital status. I would like to emphasize that Social worker 2 works in the same office as Social worker 1. The opinion about the importance of marriage of these two employees, as well as one of Social worker 1 supervised family, was more heightened. The research conducted by Robila and Krishnakumar (2003) revealed that the people of Eastern Europe have a traditional approach to the family and highlights the importance of marriage, which organizes their decision to have children. As gender roles and marriage prospects become more egalitarian and less traditional, it is important to promote the central role of children. Social policy must recognize egalitarian tendencies and encourage and support people with children, regardless of their traditional or contemporary attitudes to marriage and gender roles.

However, in this study, empirical data revealed that the participants highlight the features of the traditional family in a more discursive way, in order to emphasize the common ideologies that the state expects from them, but not to describe the family reality. The empirical material illustrate that although almost all of the participants express the view that in reality fewer families live in marriage, but in defining what they think would describe a socially acceptable and 'normal' family in Lithuanian society, they name marriage and the type of nuclear family as a factor. This definition was more popular among social workers, stating the nuclear family as the criterion for identifying the public's expectations. It can be assumed that the expectations of the society do not correspond to family reality and are still based on hegemonic discourse which presents a 'normal' and 'natural' family made up of a nuclear family (Bourdieu et al., 1994).

Social worker 5 expressed the same attitude that even though nowadays the cohabitation is chosen by many couples, discursively, marriage remains a family 'norm' in the society. This research participant also mentioned that when discursively marriage is considered a 'norm', then divorce still remains a 'non-normative' event, constituting a 'failure' in the family. She is divorced and lives with her 10-year old daughter. According to her personal experience of being divorced she tells:

I think in a small town like this the attitude and perception towards family is like in the old days I guess – it is better to be married rather than living as a cohabitee. It looks somehow not right, not good. Maybe the perception about divorced people is slowly changing, but I think it mainly remained as it was before.

Her statement that she thought the approach to divorce remained as it used to be before could be compared to Giddens's (2009) example of a divorce in the 1950s. He claimed that to leave the marriage without stigma was almost impossible, especially to women. Even so a Social worker 1 argues that the importance of marriage today is undervalued. She is a widow who has raised five children alone. Her husband passed away 27 years ago:

Well, maybe I will be old-fashioned, but marriage is necessary I think, I believe it strengthens the relationship, develops a sense of responsibility, it just feels 'stronger'. Well, now it is different, most of them live in a cohabitation, but it is not a fixed connection. For me it is not a strong family, in my opinion. I do not condemn them, let them live, but when I visit families I speak and motivate them to get married, because it is the consolidation of your wishes (Social worker 1).

This social worker is the oldest of all the employees involved in the study. She expresses the strongest opinion on the importance of marriage. This could be explained by the fact that for her generation in Lithuania, marriage is a very important criterion in defining a family. With reference to Mayall (2002), one of the ways to adapt the intergenerational approach in childhood studies is to study the individual relationship between people born in different historical periods, but of course not limited to that. As it is stated by Olk (2009), there is a need for a relative understanding of the generations and the relationship between the generations and the evolution of these relationships over time. According to Bengtson (1970, p. 16) the differences between youth and adults “regarding value system, orientations towards social

institutions, interpersonal relations and communication, and locus of control and authority” can be perceived as a *generational gap*. Bengston points out that while younger generations are changing their behavioral expression, they remain linked to their parents by many basic values. This position recognizes multiple differences between generations and allows to hypothesize generational similarities in some areas, and differences in others (Wingrove & Slevin, 1982, p. 290). Bengston (1971) presented the data from a study of generation differences. The results of this data shows important conclusions. The age of the perceptive makes a big difference between the perception of the *generation gap* - the youngest age group, sees a greater gap than the middle and oldest groups, especially within context of the family. This supports the idea that it is in the interest of young people to emphasize the differences between generations, and their parents have more focus in reducing the differences. It can be assumed that by encouraging families, with whom Social worker 1 works, to evaluate the importance of marriage, she tries to reduce the differences between the generations. While Social worker 3 notices the differences between the generations regarding the importance of marriage, she reflects these differences, but chooses to live in cohabitation, what in her generation looks like a perfectly acceptable family type: *Everything is good for us, but I know that mother would disagree with this, because those people still have these stereotypes in their minds*. Social worker 3 says that the most important thing in a family is to feel happy and marriage is not necessary if people do not feel the need for it. However, she does not deny that there is still a stereotypical view of families living in cohabitation in Lithuanian society:

We are not married, but I say that he is my husband, my man, because we live together, but we are not married and 'I don't lose a sleep at night' because of it since I live with the person I love. I don't feel bad about it, I'm fine because I'm happy the way we live, because we're letting ourselves to choose to live like that, we don't care what others would say, others may talk, but you live your life and they live theirs. Because those elders, they still live with such old stereotypes and, as I said, I hope that now Lithuanian family became a bit looser, a little more democratic, more self-reliant, maybe more European (Social worker 3).

Research data revealed that the importance of marriage among socially vulnerable families is not so emphasized as compared to social workers. As it was mentioned earlier, only one of the families, particularly the family which receive supervision from Social worker 1, expressed that marriage would strengthen their family and encouraged by their social workers they are already planning their wedding. Family 5 claimed: *Now after fifteen years of living together,*

encouraged by a social worker we think it is important to get married. That relationship seems to become stronger, perhaps more secure, safer. She emphasizes that marriage means security. It can be interpreted in two ways. The first approach defines the legal security of a couple in marriage, because marriage is protected by law, unlike a partnership that is not legally defined in Lithuanian legal system. The second approach can be understood in terms of societal attitudes towards the couple if they will get married. Security can then be perceived as a defence against a negative attitude. Though it is important to come back to the aspect that a Family 5 has decided to get married only after this idea has been suggested by a Social worker 1. Referring Qvortrup (2009), people react to different parameters of change and create new interrelationships at various levels. In this case the social worker presents a new social parameter by presenting her own perceptions on importance of marriage thus partially modifying the Family 5 view of their current family situation. The influence of a social worker on their attitudes can be described as a structural effect, and the family's decision to marry as their agency in occurred situation. However, there is another very important factor that cannot be ignored – the power imbalance. Social control is related to agency-based practices, settings, and requirements for employees to serve as buffers between a client, agency, and state. It was suggested that social workers do not like to admit that they have authority and power over their customers and therefore do not see that what they think is in the customer's interest is actually their expression of power (Cohen, 1998)

As Valentine (2011) claimed when presenting the *social model of agency* - based on this concept 'free choice' or 'autonomous activity' becomes problematic, because many activities that people perform based on their agency are not politically empty or neutral. Family 5 is considered as vulnerable by the institutions, at the same time as not meeting some of societal requirements. The social worker visits the home of the study participants and provides assistance to ensure the well-being of the children, as Family 5 is perceived not 'competent' enough to do it individually. Those are the reasons why they receive the help from a social worker. Child protection interventions can lead to greater actual and/or perceived power imbalances between the client and the employee compared to other social work interventions (Maiter, Palmer & Manji, 2006).

The Social worker 1 claims that marriage is crucial for her client's family, thus presenting an approach that getting married could help to fulfil the demands. A social worker represents a state institution designated to assess family welfare. This family has expressed the view that they respect the social worker assigned to them, her opinion is important to them. As stated by Maiter et al. (2006) research over the years has shown that the qualities of the staff, i.e. their

personality and character are important to the satisfaction of their clients, and are often more emphasised than the functions of those agencies social workers represent (Sainsbury, 1975). The question is whether the family's decision to marry is not affected by the desire to please the social worker and, at the same time, the state she represents. Perhaps the most important issue in this situation should be whether the nature of the social worker's help will improve or serve, and to what extent, the Family's 5 children's well-being and interest.

On the contrary, another participant stated that, in her opinion, people today have a freer attitude towards what the family is and are less conservative about the choice of marriage, divorce, and decision whether they want to have children, when to have them, and under what circumstances:

Now no one judges whether you have children or whether you are married or unmarried. Before you want it or not you had to live in marriage, it was a shame to divorce. If you do so it was a harm for the reputation, hard to find a job even. Now it's easier, less people care (Family 7).

Giddens (2009) claimed that the decision to have a child is very different from previous generations. In the traditional family, children were an economic benefit. In Western countries today, a child is a major financial burden for parents. Having a child is a more distinct and specific decision than before, and is a solution based on psychological and emotional needs. However, as stated by Robila and Krishnakumar (2003), people with more traditional approaches to gender roles and the importance of marriage believe that having children is a key part of their lives. They also express the view that children are a necessity for a 'fully valued' family. Such a position underestimates the families that choose not to have children or cannot have them for various reasons. Having said that, Robila and Krishnakumar (2003) based on their findings stated that even though in Eastern Europe the number of couples raising their children out of wedlock has increased, from a societal point of view, the traditional family is still appreciated. This can lead to stigmatization of being not married or not having children. As mentioned before, the laws of the Republic of Lithuania defines the nuclear family as a value, and the ecclesiastical marriage is emphasized as an important aspect of family stability, the transfer of values, etc. The research participant argues that she is not married to her husband because their marriage is registered only in the registry department: *We are not married, just in registry department (Family 6)*. In such way she emphasizes the prevailing importance and value of ecclesial marriage. Jancaityte (2011) drew attention to the overriding role of the Church in shaping family policy in Lithuania. The findings of her research have shown that policy

experts are opposed to the active interference of the Church in the shaping of family policy, since the approach is associated with conservative attitudes to marriage, abortion, fertility and the like.

6.2. Sexuality

Although Giddens (2009) stated that marriage is no longer an economic institution, but as a ritual commitment it can help stabilize otherwise fragile relationships of the couple. Giddens (2009, p. 30) argues that “If this applies to heterosexual relationships, I don't see why it should not apply to homosexuals”. However, the research data revealed very different position. Social worker 4 agrees that marriage is not a necessity any longer, but has expressed a fairly strict opinion about what she perceives as unacceptable family type to be.

I don't think it is important if people are married or not and if single mothers are doing fine so it's no problem also. I do not accept the same sex families. No, no I am completely against it. It must be nuclear for sure, like how does the child would know what to tell to the teacher if asked who will come to the parents' school meeting? How a child will tell my dad will come if his/her parents are two woman? No, maybe we are old-fashioned, but it is totally unacceptable to me.

One can only wonder why a woman expresses a negative attitude towards same-sex marriages, as it can be due to various factors, such as structural, social, cultural, religious, and etc. Though, it is worth noting that when she presented her personal opinion, she named the Lithuanians as old-fashioned. It can be assumed that she thinks that such perception is shared in Lithuanian society as a ‘norm’. In Lithuania, the topic of discrimination in the public space emerged only after the restoration of independence. Until 1991, discrimination issues were not publicly analyzed, discrimination was not recorded by appropriate statistical indicators (Okuneviciute - Neverauskiene, 2011). Until 2006, in Lithuania, issues related to homosexual persons were not fully investigated. According to the results of the survey by Zdanevicius et al. (2007), 51% of respondents think that homosexuals should not be allowed to work in the police, 58% of respondents would be afraid if their child teacher was a homosexual person, and almost 70% would prefer homosexuals to be out of school. Also 37% of homosexuals teachers reported to have suffered harassment from pupils and students, and 34% reported having experienced discrimination in general in the educational institutions (cited in Okuneviciute - Neverauskiene, 2011, p. 122).

Although the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and other legal acts comply with the provisions of the EU legislation on non-discrimination, national family law emphasizes the superiority of families of different sexes and some parts of the law, as already mentioned, may be considered discriminatory against same-sex families.

Apparently, in defense of the traditional nuclear family, many people claim that children need both mother and father. This position suggests that childbirth and parenting are related to gender and mutually incompatible capabilities. Although research data is poor, it is often thought that mothers and fathers are naturally provided with different complementary ways to respond to children's development needs. Furthermore, most people at least quietly believe that the healthiest families have two parents of the opposite sex (Pacilli et al., 2011). Giddens (2005) agrees that with the exception of certain judicial or elite groups, sexuality has always been dominated by reproduction in the traditional family. It was a question of traditional and natural issues, and the homosexuality in many societies was perceived as specifically unnatural. As far as parents of non-traditional sexual orientation are concerned, discrimination against homosexual couples in relation to the family in Lithuania is evident - there is no possibility of partnership, marriage and adoption of children, so they remain invisible when planning a family (Radziuniene, 2012)

Nevertheless, many individuals, especially those who are political or religious conservatives, continue to be concerned about the health and safety of children raised by gay and lesbian parents and defend a traditional family based on 'natural' rights. The widespread devaluation of gays and lesbians, as well as the assumption that heterosexual orientation is 'natural', the biological inscription on the body, can actually affect how people look and perceive their bodies. Western society continues to assume a gender hierarchy that clearly defines parenting roles and subordinate (heterosexual) men to (heterosexual) women when it comes to parenting skills. Thus, far from being recognized as a multiple and dynamic process, it is assumed that parental functions derive from pre-established status management, which depends on the physical nature of men and women. For this reason, (heterosexual) women are often considered 'naturally programmed' for reproduction and motherhood. (Pacilli et al., 2011)

6.3. Age and maturity

A somewhat different family situation was revealed in Family 22 story. The woman is married and has two children but she is still defined as a minor by social workers - her age and definition as a minor was given to me firstly when social worker described the client's situation. When asked what her family is, she said she probably was too young to understand:

I don't know what is a family, it seems to me that I am still too young to understand these things. What I know, I think that a family is a man, children, people who love each other, who support, love and understand each other. The most important thing is to trust one another, to find a consensus, to find the one who really suits you and not to live with someone who is just like a cat with a dog (Family 22).

She stated that such a public attitude towards young mothers makes her lack confidence. This aspect can make us wonder whether the age is always a sign of human maturity, or different experiences and contexts, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, etc., are the essential factors? As it was mentioned by Boyden and Mann (2009), risk measurement, risk itself, and ability to cope have structural reasons related to differences in social power. Aspects like ethnicity, age, gender or social class also play a very important role depending on how these aspects are evaluated in different countries and cultures. They claim that the influence of these aspects on one's life is rarely controlled by that person. The participant's age was not identified as the main reason why the woman's family was included in the list of 'risk families', but according to social workers this aspect is important because she was perceived as lacking maturity and experience, and in need of help in making important decisions. The definition of social workers gives reason to believe that her social class, however, plays an important role, as not all young mothers are defined as vulnerable. The woman is not alone, she has a husband and has a close relationship with her parents and other relatives. However, the social workers say that the woman may need help in decision-making or similar situations, but they think it should be provided by social workers or institutions, not her family. In this way, social workers reveal that her family, in their opinion, is not capable of helping, perhaps facing poverty problems or other difficulties where social workers 'identify risks'. The situation reflected in the research data can be also based on the *generational order* provided by Alanen (2009). Keeping in mind that in modern societies there is a system of social ordering. Affected by various social processes some people are constructed as 'children' while others as 'adults'. In this case, according to the laws prevailing in the Lithuanian society, a minor is a person who is not yet eighteen, and is being constructed as a 'child'. Social workers and the wider society do not take into account other contextual aspects that could describe the maturity of the participant in this study.

6.4. Employment

One of the participants said that her family, although defined as 'risk', can be regarded as perfectly 'normal'. One of the reason for this, she has mentioned that in her family both she and her husband are employed: *We are a good family, we are working people* (Family 8). Occupation is emphasized when describing what the participant from Family 8 thinks is a 'good' family. This can be related to the discourse prevailing in society, which describes what a 'good' citizen is. A good citizen of a state is one that contributes to the welfare of the state itself, in this case paying taxes and etc. Workplaces, positions and reputations are the common values and optimum behaviors that are communicated by more abstract categories of identity - 'rich', 'smart', or 'successful' (Jenkins, 2014). This view is partly supported by the Family 23. The participant is not distinguishing her family as 'good' or 'bad', but she highlighted the employment being crucial factor in order to fulfill societal expectations: *Normal family needs to live a normal life and that's it. To do nothing wrong, to have a job and live without any scandals.* Braziene (2004) stated that participation in the labor market is one of the key characteristics of the individual's position in society. She claims that socially vulnerable groups, people with low education or qualifications are more likely to become socially excluded, meaning that they have less opportunities in the labor market. According to Valor (2005 p. 197), "any powerful organization needs effective countervailing power to keep them performing effectively for their own benefit as well as that of wider society". Employment, in this sense, can be perceived as a necessity in contributing to the welfare of the state, and unemployment as an inconsistency with state-imposed norms, possibly leaving unemployed person in social exclusion.

The rhetoric of Lithuanian social policy has highlighted the tendency of categorization, when the terms 'socially disadvantaged', 'social risk families' or 'long-term unemployed' are used to negatively name persons. The terms we choose for people who receive social support reflect the nature of our relationship with them. There is a pronounced negative stereotypical attitude towards people who receive social assistance, benefits and social housing in Lithuanian society (Zalimiene, 2011).

As the importance of employment is highlighted in society as a crucial aspect in describing the 'normality' of the family, the research participant from Family 17 emphasizes that in such a case her family cannot be defined as non-compliant because she and her cohabitant had jobs:

That's why I don't even know why am I involved in that risk, I've been involved here since ancient times when my son was a minor, so it remained that way. They could delete us from that risk

list. I worked for example and he was working, we were working, and we were really unnecessary for social workers. And so I don't even know what we're here for, no benefits, nothing we get.

In her opinion, when you are defined as a vulnerable family, the state must provide assistance, such as allowance or social housing, and Family 17 does not receive such assistance. According to scholars (Haitsma, 1989; Jenks, 1990; Gans, 1996; Lawler, 2005), poverty and deviant activity are often attributed to vulnerable families by defining them as 'underclass'. As Skeggs (2004) points out, such images have nothing to do with the working-class people themselves, but those images can tell us something about how working class people are 'othered', they are described as 'problematic' and are attributed by middle-class people. Middle-class, in such terms, is considered normative and normalized (cited in Lawler, 2005). Similar relationship between 'inappropriate' behaviour and families is expressed by Bourdieu et al. (1994). As they expressed the assumption that through the official discourses state bureaucracy and their representatives are the main creators of 'social problems'.

6.5. Material resources/housing

Positively evaluated family display, according to Heaphy (2011) has been associated with moral and economic justice since the 19th century through associations with bourgeois norms and values typical of middle class family structures. The modern family, based on experts, policy and political discourse, relied on this model and was dependent on how family relations will be governed. Heaphy (2011) stated that it is worth asking whether state agencies are still likely to follow families' living conditions in the lower part of the class hierarchy. If so, they will be monitored more intensively than middle-class families and will be assessed for their compliance with social requirements. Considering that 'good', 'proper' or 'successful' is still measured by the standards and practices of well-resourced middle-class families, middle-class displays tend to be 'successful' when working-class families are seen as 'failing': *a rich person will never understand the poor, and I am, for example, I am not rich, I am rich only with children, this is my joy* (Family 5)

House and home are closely related to each other, although the term home does not necessarily mean just an accommodation as a material unit - a house (see also Allan & Crow, 1989; Ursin, 2011). Ursin (2011) claims that while many people live in quite different types of homes, the prevailing idea of 'home' usually corresponds to the dominant middle class home. Ensuring

privacy for family relationships is a key function of a home because normal family life is built around a nuclear family living independently in its own detached house (Allan & Crow, 1989). It is the 'homely homes' of modern society; dominant version referring house as home - dependence and intimacy of members of the nuclear family living in a particular dwelling (Ursin, 2011).

Family 8 shared that her family is expected to have their own accommodation so that their living conditions would be considered as appropriate by the institutions:

Like until that level, they say you must take a bank loan and buy a house. Live a lifetime in debt. They even found us a house and told us to buy it. They don't care that maybe we want to buy an apartment, maybe we would save some money and do it later. We don't want to buy a house. They think it is not enough space for us, but I think it is enough. Can you imagine? That's up to that level.

However, according to her this requirement is not acceptable to them. First of all, because their family has enough space living with the father and mother-in-law, the second is because the family does not want to buy a house but is considering an apartment. The woman's statement is consistent with the findings of Ursin et al. (2016). They studied how 'family' is conceptualized and negotiated in a Mexican and a Chilean child protection institution. Their research data revealed that the 'big' things are more recognized by the staff whilst the 'small' things are essential for the families. 'Small things' turned out to be emotional family well-being, family photos, food, gifts and family time together, while 'big things' are considered to be housing, employment, nuclear family structure, therapy and parental school attendance. Latter ones are given more importance and attention by the institutions. They are also considered as the main criteria for families seeking to regain their child's custody. Ursin et al. (2016) stated that 'big things' often take a lot of time and are costly. Given the economic situation of most families, their ability to meet these requirements is minimal. This view is also shared by the Family 18:

For example, others who are wealthy, have money, they have respect and everyone are imagining that 'here is a family'. Indeed, as far as I notice, those who have more money, there is no harmony in the family at all. First of all, it's important to have a relationship at home, with kids with the environment, and then all the other things (Family 18).

This example illustrates what Bourdieu (1996) called ‘doxa’, when certain types of families are perceived as more natural and normal and those assumptions are taken for granted as self-evident. Family 18 believes that high economic status often defines families as ‘naturally better’ than those who live poorer. Families with high material resources are being defined as ‘good’ by default. In Family’s 18 opinion, this perception is too exaggerated, because it is forgotten that emotional and relational aspects are more important than the spatial, material and financial. According to Social worker 2, families may face various difficulties, but in a rural area where he works most frequently he defines low income as an important aspect: *There are quite a few of these problems, but the main thing I think is the low income, order in the house and in raising children.* The employee emphasizes that low income, in his opinion, necessarily means disorderly homes and bad living conditions for children.

Holstein and Gubrium (1999) suggest that official organizations are a virtual characteristic of modern Western society. Our daily lives are increasingly lived with bureaucratic, professional and disciplinary practices. When it comes to family affairs, organizations are increasingly formulating and evaluating most aspects of domestic experience, so their business is to interpret the lives of members and clients. Some consider the situation as an insult to personal privacy. Similarities can also be found in the definition of ‘bureaucratic field’ proposed by Bourdieu et al. (1994). Nevertheless, Holstein and Gubrium tend to be less critical in claiming that institutions have become the prevailing sources of domestic meaning. Yet, Fossum and Mason (1989) stated that the result of it is that many people try to live up to an impossible image - what others are offering or redirecting them to be.

Three of the social workers who participated in the study express a similar view that the importance of the material situation overshadows other very important aspects of the family, such as the mutual emotional relationship. Social worker 3 emphasizes that little attention is paid to how Ursin et al. (2016) defines ‘small things’ when assessing family welfare. She tells that children in poor families can feel happy and loved.

I think that everyone somehow hopes that things like housing and work would be sorted out, and what is going on inside the family, like emotionally, there is less attention paid. There are five children in one of the families I work with, they live in a one-room apartment and everyone is there, but the mom and dad really can give a maximum for a family even in a one-room apartment, but they really live well, they're happy, they have little space, but they all get the

attention, go to the garden together, fish together, wear each other's clothes, because all of them are boys, but they are happy that they have each other (Social worker 3).

She stresses that the material situation of the family is of high importance in Lithuanian society. According to this social worker, this is an integral criterion in society for assessing family welfare and its 'normality'. In this way, families in poorer living conditions are being underestimated and discriminated. She argues that even in poorer living conditions, it does not mean that the family cannot provide the necessary emotional and physical care for one another. However, a difficult material situation often becomes one of the criteria for defining families as 'being at risk'. The misconception that poorer families are experiencing difficulties in the family just because of the lack of material resources is expressed by another social worker. Social worker 8 wants to emphasize that it is not possible to assume that only financially-struggling families face problems that can lead to 'risk'. According to her, such a stereotypical approach prevails in Lithuanian society, but she argues that this attitude must change.

Later it turns out why the child has problems because sometimes the trouble is very well masked and sometimes the outside is quite different from the inside. There have been cases when externally looks like wow, maybe it should even be envied here. Externally looks like everything is in order, has it what it takes, it looks as needed, presents itself as needed, and then you see that it's far away from that. It's so bad that it's probably even worse than the average family at risk (Social worker 8).

In her work, she finds that families that are wealthier, with no material lacks, still face the same problems that the underprivileged families do. Whether it be addiction or domestic abuse, these problems are disguised and hidden under their high social status. Hence, wealthier families should not be seen as 'naturally' better only because of this criterion.

Even so, while social workers admit that a difficult economic situation cannot be the main reason for defining a family as a risk, their stories reveal the position that poverty can, yet, be seen as an important aspect which contributes in the creation of other difficulties. Data revealed that social workers perceive that low income are interconnected with the aspects such as housing problems, low education, lack of hygiene and cleanliness at home, or even cause conflicts between family members which can lead to violence or divorce. The family becomes vulnerable when these problems are intertwined:

Poverty is not a reason to involve families in risk, because it is possible to live, maybe eat more economic food. Luxury does not guarantee human quality, but again it is related. Because when you think of a hundred and twenty-two euro allowance now, can you live in dignity, and feel good for a long time? You get it once a month and this situation lasts a year or more. I think it also affects the emotional state. You can't name poverty as the main reason, but its effect is very huge, because that poverty is following a lot of different nuances [...] Knowing if there is a lack of resources, tension increases, then that tension can turn into violence of some kind and some kind of conflict, tense interrelationships that continue to lead to divorce, all kinds of childhood behaviours and then the avalanche. One pebble who should be completely innocent and insignificant, but it does harm over time (Social worker 8).

Poverty and economic hardship is strongly highlighted while defining vulnerable families. However, Social worker's 8 opinion partly shows that poverty per se is not seen as problematic, neither the 'nature' of poor people, but rather what the consequences of poverty can do. She creates a connection between poverty, emotional tensions and interrelation conflicts. Morris (2012) stated that in her study, poverty was a stark reality of family life – but was rarely, if ever, given by families or professionals as the primary reason for service intervention.

6.6. Education

Research participants mentioned that education is an important criterion defining 'normality' of the family. Importance of children education was highlighted both by the families and employees, yet social workers also added parents' education as crucial. It is important to emphasize that education as such concerns two different forms in this study (Ursin, 2012). First, it was perceived as formal education. Secondly, education was defined as being civilized, and having proper set of values: *Children have to attend school and be polite, respectful to others, but it is important what parents are able to teach them* (Social worker 6). With reference to Boyden (1990) and James et al. (1998), Ansell (2010) states that fear of 'inadequate' parents has 'polluting' effect on children's innocence, along with concerns about producing able adults that contribute to the industrial economy, informed the English social policy three decades ago, and even today the problem persists. Economic development has led to a higher demand for 'human capital'. Compulsory schooling has also acted as a state tool for socializing children without family socialization. In the twentieth century, attempts to implement new political values in the population, whether totalitarian or democratic, were used as a state effort to shape and control school education in order to convey relevant politically accentuated values (Zeicher,

2009). Global discourse on children's rights and the importance of education, seen as formal education in an institutional context, have a major impact on the daily lives of children worldwide. The institutions in the Global North are more school-oriented, constructing children as future citizens and workers in the first place (Kjørholt, 2013).

Social worker 2 emphasised that if the family wants to be deemed as 'good', their children education is highly important: *The family has no financial problems and the children are studying somewhere*. In Lithuania, the law stipulates that children under the age of sixteen must attend school, so secondary education is compulsory, available to all children and it is free of charge. Education is closely related to the opportunities in the labor market, and as mentioned employment is an important criterion to meet the public expectations. A person who has graduated is expected and hoped to 'become someone', expressing higher social status and material conditions. According to Jenks (1990), the low education is one of the aspects which is attributed to the concept of 'underclass' and is perceived as part of 'social ills'. As parental education is a key component of social and economic status, it can be expected that this variable will be negatively associated with deviant behaviour. Nevertheless, studies carried out over the years shows that the links between social class and deviance are weak (Osgood et al., 1996). Social worker 5 perceived that lack of education is of great importance for the limited awareness of families regarding their situation and the seriousness of their problems and the possible ways of solving them: *others are also affected by the fact that they are either completely uneducated or the education is very low and their perception is different*.

Social worker 1 argues that the problems that have arisen are not solved in time not due to lack of motivation but due to lack of internal and external resources. According to the employee, this may be due to low level of education, lack of knowledge about where to seek help, and a limited circle of people to ask for advice or guidance: *Well, families have a lot of different problems. There is no such family without it. Some of them have bigger, some smaller problems, but the main thing is the way how families manage to solve it, deal with it*. Both Social worker 5 and Social worker 1 takes the view that low education prevents families from identifying their difficulties and finding appropriate solutions. Likewise, in their opinion, for parents with lower education is more difficult to care for their children because, as workers say, they lack daily and communicative skills, their perceptions are 'different'. The question that arises here is 'different' but by whose standards.

Social workers add that due to lack of education, such parents can offer little to their children, little to teach, and 'inappropriate attitudes and values' taken over from their parents can have a

major impact on the future of these children. Research participants say that the experiences and knowledge acquired during childhood have a great effect on the person's life. According to them, values and knowledge that we get from our family or close people during childhood are of great importance: *It helps people make decisions, develop a certain attitude and create their own family model (Social worker 3).*

Social worker 4 says that in vulnerable families, the relationship between parents and children and the transfer of 'inappropriate' features and lifestyle is based on determinism, claiming: *Like they have seen this type of behaviour during their childhood and their genes are weaker.* The woman's opinion not only reveals determinism of learned behaviour, but also biological determinism. In her opinion, parents' behaviour is passed on genetically to children. Skolnick and Skolnick (2011) argue that the family in which the child grows leaves a deep, lifelong impact. Though, more and more research has shown that early family experience is not a comprehensive, irreversible influence that is sometimes thought of. Unfortunate childhood does not condemn a person to an unhappy adulthood. In addition, happy childhood does not guarantee a similar blessed future (Emde and Harmon, 1984; Rubin, 1996 cited in Skolnick & Skolnick, 2011, p. 5). Skolnick and Skolnick claim that parental determinism can be perceived as one of the myths about the family. According to Gordon (2011) 'any policy based on the idea that there are a group of 'problematic families' who 'transmit their poverty/deprivation' to their children will inevitably fail, as this idea is a prejudice, unsupported by scientific evidence' (Gordon, 2011, p. 3 cited in Crossley, 2016, p. 6)

Giddens (1984), in presenting the theory of structuration, has stated that structural factors and human agency are mutually related and dependent on each other. Alanen (2009) takes a similar position by saying that both children and adults develop and improve their generational identities through daily interactions with each other. Those interactions create interdependency, which links generations together (Bumpass, 1990). Similarly, Qvortrup (1985, 1987) takes the position that childhood and adulthood are structurally related to each other. The above mentioned scholars disagree with the view that children are passive and completely dependent on parents and what parents will teach them, so they can 'become' educated as 'good' citizens. Children are active participants in the society and while being exposed to various contextual and structural factors, children at the same time contribute to the creation and recreation of those factors (Christensen & James, 2008).

Raising a child is not like writing on an empty slate. Rather, it is a two-way process in which both parents and children interact. Children come to this world with their temperament and other qualities. In addition, children from a very early age are active participants and thinkers

(Punch, 2005). Finally, parents and children do not live in a social vacuum; children are also affected by the world around them and the people in it - relatives, family friends, their neighbourhoods, other children, their schools and the media (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2011).

As already mentioned, this study revealed that vulnerable families are being categorized by society. It tends to include a causal-consequential or intertwined relationship between aspects such as poverty, unemployment, and deviant behavior. Thus, in society, there are prejudice of 'families at risk' which can be found. They are to be categorized as living in 'inadequate' conditions, such as poor hygiene. According to social workers, their perceptions are limited, and too low of an education 'hinders' their understanding of how to live a 'normal' family life. Ursin's (2012) study in Brazil suggests that perceived 'underclass' is not only associated with the identified 'impurity', but also with low education. The results of her research have shown that lower social class representatives are often presented as uneducated and therefore dirty and polluting the environment.

Social worker 7 takes a slightly different position and thinks that education as such does not guarantee good family relations or the transfer of values, and also agrees that determinism cannot be relied upon to explain the intergenerational relationship: *Long time ago, people didn't have much education, but they were able to communicate, lived together long and happily because there was no anger, there was consensus, it gives a lot.* In her view, education is currently oriented and based on clearly defined state requirements. She says that children nowadays spend most of their time in institutions that have a lot to do with the way a child is educated, what child is taught, and even have an impact on children's personalities. According to her, her generation's children spent more time with their family members, the family had more influence on the child's education, set of values, perceptions and personality. The research participant's position is linked to *the institutionalization* approach. It points out that children live their lives within organised institutional settings, such as educational institutions, day care centres, etc. Children are assigned the status of children, according to which children's clothing, television programs, even food or activities are adapted to them. An institutionalization approach seems to, at some extent, separate and protect children from the world of adults. A similar concept in family studies is the concept of professionalisation of paternity and family life (Brannen & O'Brien, 1994 cited in Järventie & Lähde, 2008).

In addition, I would like to note that social workers with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in social work or relevant, had a more tolerant attitude towards socially vulnerable families in a variety of respects than those with other education or qualifications.

6.7. Addictions and domestic violence

It was noticed that in defining a 'normal' family, the participants of the study identified the continuing importance of marriage in society (mainly by social workers), the material situation of the family, as well as the repeated statement that a 'normal' family is such a family where is no alcohol consumption. Dependence on alcohol was identified as an inappropriate factor for the family by all of the participants in the study. However, domestic violence was mentioned mainly by the social workers. According to them, alcohol consumption has serious consequences for the family and one of them is violence.

Social worker 5 and Social worker 6, claim that addictions are intertwined with other problems. They say that parents often do not recognize or simply do not realize that there are problems in their family:

Some are dependent on having addictions and, like alcohol, and they are losing hope to have something better in life or solving problem. At least in our area it is alcohol dependence, which is the most common cause. In this sense, some sort of problem solving, addiction and everything else contributes to the problem. And then that so called 'risk' appears (Social worker 6).

Employees claim that addiction either causes more problems or the various difficulties encountered causes addiction. During the time in the field it was observed that addictions and the ways of solving it were highly emphasized by social workers. Although the workers say that the difficulties of families are not caused by one factor, such as alcohol dependence in this case, it was often presented to families as their only problem. Talking about their addiction, its treatment and possible family improvements if addiction is cured took most of some supervision's time. So, by focusing on this aspect alone, other important things are forgotten, such as child welfare, their attitude to the situation or solutions. According to social workers, addiction is perceived as a child's neglect:

The main reason for what is now being named is child care. Violence, but it is still can be perceived as a child's neglect. And those options of neglect are alcoholism, addiction, violence, everything that is related to inadequate childcare (Social worker 8).

However, the topic of possible consequences for children was not included in the presentation of the family situation, and the children themselves did not participate in the discussion of family troubles. It was noticed that children were even involved in lying to social workers: *Sometimes, even before the children are asked, they already say that my parents are not drinking* (Social worker 8). It can be assumed that this is because families are perceiving alcohol as their only problem (as its highlighted by social workers), so they are trying to hide it by involving all the family members in such strategy. This misrepresentation of the situation and inappropriate ways of solving it can lead to children not only being not heard, but also causing them stressful experiences.

Families themselves say that alcohol dependence is a very important aspect of interfering with family life. Family 7 is also telling that alcohol causes problems in the family. The woman claims to have been dependent on it for many years and has lost her custody right for her daughter. Her daughter is now an adult and she is trying to reconnect with her. The woman is no longer drinking alcohol, so the adult daughter's attitude towards her mother is gradually improving. Research participant is currently preparing for rehabilitation and attending AA meetings. She says she is doing it for herself and her one year old daughter. However, she emphasizes that the current cohabitant and father of the daughter often drinks, which hinders the maintenance of the desired family relationship.

I think 'good' family is when both parents are sober, children feels better like that. Because if one comes back drunk, like I can imagine now when I stopped drinking, when Marius comes back home drunk and 'cause a scene', we are all affected (Family 7).

The view that alcohol is not compatible with the image of a 'normal' family was also shared by Family 5. He believes that it was his alcohol dependence that collapsed his family, which is why he found himself in the shelter: *A normal family is when no one is drinking. Smoking is possible, smoking is another thing. But this (alcohol) is all that destroys families.* Family 8 applied to social workers for help, because their son got in trouble at school. That's why, in the opinion of the research participant, their family could not be classified as the same 'risk' group. According to Family 8, such a group can include people who are anti-social and hence

dependent on alcohol: *We are not as anti-social, we are not drinking.* ‘Anti-social’ people, as expressed by research participant, are often referred to as lazy people who tend to consume alcohol and are lacking motivation to become employed. Likewise legal definition of a ‘risk family’ in Lithuania pronounce that in order to become such family one of the criteria is that at least one of the family members has an addiction. Often these characteristics are attributed to vulnerable, ‘risk’ families (Zalimiene, 2011). Family 8 feels undeservedly defined as a family of risk, because they think these families are those with addictions. Saying this, the woman highlights that her child attends school with children whose families are drinking alcohol. The woman also assigns labels to children whose families are defined as being ‘at risk’. The affixing of such labels is based on the fact that their parents are defined as ‘non-compliant’, their behaviour is considered negative, without even knowing the exact family situation. Children from such families are affixed with negative descriptions, and perceived as a bad influence to their peers, only because their parents are critically evaluated:

He got into an associative class - half of the parents are alcoholics. It's scary there, and my child was always annoyed, tense, and I noticed that those kids started to have a bad influence on my son (Family 8).

When talking about addiction, Family 5 includes the possible consequences of their behavior on children. There were seven such families in the study. However, the woman presents her own approach how the family problems may influence her children, but did not mention listening to the children about their actual experiences, concerning family situation.

We have this social service about 12 years. I'll tell you openly, I will not give a lie, I was a 'lover' to drink, but I did not drink so often until my man went abroad, then it's started, but thanks to a social worker, I stood on my feet. I got a treatment and I started to think about my children. What would happen when they grow up, they see me being drunk, it must be a horrible feeling for them when they come back from school and mom is sleeping drunk, house is not clean, there is nothing to eat (Family 5).

In conclusion to this chapter, it was noticed that the families, when talking about what the society expects from a ‘good’ family, expressed uncertainty. More than half of the families participating in the study said that the ‘ideal’ or ‘good’ family does not exist, and that it is difficult to understand what is needed that their families would be accepted as ‘meeting the requirements’. No matter how much effort they have spent over the years, social staff and

institutions says that ‘something’ is lacking. Most of the families participating in the study emphasized the importance of family relationships rather than the material aspects, as well less as social workers, they highlighted the importance of marriage. The majority of families also said their family probably did not match the image of a ‘good’ family because of the aspects which are perceived as ‘inappropriate’ by the institutions. Because of the ‘risk’ label affixed to vulnerable families in Lithuanian society it can be assumed, that talking about what ‘normal’ family should be, became more related with the request to define what the public thinks ‘does not match’ in their families. Ursin et al. (2016) claims that although social workers are responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reporting family practices, they are part of a larger system. At the structural level, politics, policies, legal systems and institutions define which family practices and displays are appropriate, following hegemonic ideas about ‘appropriate’ family activities which are socially created, politically defined, and institutionalized.

7. Family practices *“To tell you the truth, if I had the chance to do it over again, I don’t think I would change a thing when it comes to my family”* (Family 23)

This chapter presents the interrelation of the families of the research participants, their family values, importance of intergenerational relations within the family, their daily practices and the division of the housework, along with the attitude towards the changing family and the role of the children in it. It will also describe the attitudes of social workers and families towards what family practices are expected in society. Finally, this chapter will be completed by discussing the possible stigma experienced by families.

7.1. Interpersonal and intergenerational relationships within the family

7.1.1. Family values

Social workers expressed the view that the experiences and knowledge acquired during childhood have a great effect on the person’s life: *Family is the foundation of everything, family values must be passed down from generation to generation* (Social worker 1). According to them, values that we get from our family or close people during childhood are of great importance. It helps people make decisions, develop a certain attitude and create their own family model. Difficult childhood experiences and learned behaviours, according to social workers, can lead to inappropriate decision-making or even the formation of addictions. However, it should be emphasized that none of the families involved in the study neither shared

or mentioned the view expressed by the social workers above. The families in the study said that family values should be passed down from generation to generation. They have expressed that respect for parents is a positive family value, and have also said that children should learn to take responsibility and, for example, earn pocket-money:

When you must think who they are going to become when they grow up, because when they are small it is hard to tell. What they need to do so that they would actually earn money, that they need to help the family. Not like if they said I want a euro, you give them a euro. I think they need to deserve that euro, and that's how I try to teach them. I yell sometimes, things happen, but I want them to do great at school, that they would study further or get a job, get 'back on their feet' (Family 4).

Woman from Family 6 believes that if children learn responsibility it will be easier to achieve their goals and find a job. The woman does not hide the fact that her children are educated quite strictly, as she has learned from her parents, and such an upbringing seems acceptable to her:

Our mother was very strict and used to control our dad, but she was not bad. Only once I had to 'stand in the corner', but I understood why, it was my own fault. Actually, I am very happy that I had such a family.

According to Punch (2005), children's expectations that parents will establish their authority and impose punishment can provide a motive for certain forms of behavior. The woman in Family 6 recalls her own childhood experience, through which she considers to have developed positive qualities due to the upbringing methods of her parents, which she now adapts to educate her children. However, one must keep in mind that every child has different perceptions and interpretations of his/her childhood (Mayall, 2009), and this method will not necessarily be effective or give the expected results in the woman's family.

Family 9 highlights the importance of mutual respect in the family by stating: *Responsibility, to have responsibility, respect for family, respect for parents. Not like "F..." and "SH.."*⁵*attitude*. The woman adds that in her opinion, a very important family value she cherishes and expects from her own children is to care for each other. Bearing in mind that children would care for their parents when they get older, or in case of illness or misfortune. According to Kemp (2007), intergenerational relationships and their nature depends on many aspects of the

⁵ Swearing

family, such as religion, culture, and the structure of society. In Lithuania, a cultural norm is to take care of the elderly parents or grandparents which is also considered as one of the core family values. Through this, the intergenerational relationships are more likely to be positive and one of bonding experience. Having said that, in Lithuania, when a family is not in a position to raise a child, it is legal to first consider the grandparents of the child to raise them. Through this, a positive attitude towards intergenerational may be achieved and passed on to later generations. Families with a history of close relationships are characterized by collectivistic family systems (Pyke & Bengtson, 1996). Thus, the individualistic and collectivistic family qualities revealed in the research data will be further analysed in the next section.

As it was mentioned, in terms of family values, social workers have highlighted not the values that are cherished in their families, but revealed their views on the importance of the ways in which values and lifestyles are conveyed in their clients' families. Social worker 1 stresses that it is important to look for internal resources to solve the problems that arise in the family. She also emphasizes that family values must be passed down from one generation to another:

Family is family members first, because I don't think that family problems should 'go outside to the public'. Unless you feel that you cannot manage to solve it yourself, within the family. If that happens you can search for help outside the 'family circle'. From generation to generation, all traditions will be passed on, skills will continue to pass on to their children.

She expresses the importance of the transfer of values from generation to generation, however she also emphasizes that it is crucial to keep emerging problems within the family. Such thinking can be assimilated to the prevailing norms of the former Soviet Union, when the existence of social or other personal problems was concealed. To recognize that a person is facing problems and seeking help was shameful. This provision is still felt in Lithuanian society, because the support of social workers, psychologists, and non-governmental organizations in the country has been available for only twenty-five years (Putinaite, 2007). This makes an idea of receiving help relatively new to the older generation. Such an outlook is shared by the employee and her clients, which can complicate the situation for families looking for solutions to difficulties, due to a lack of external resources. Just as the employee's view that family problems can be 'unacceptable' for society can make families feel 'different' and encourage isolation, leading families to stay in marginal position. As Murray and Barnes (2010) suggest, the 'whole' family approach includes supports networks and wider community as a

source of a social capital that can improve problem solving solutions. That would help families to cope with the difficulties which have arisen.

The research data also revealed that social workers claim that childhood in foster care and orphanages may have many negative consequences. According to social workers, people who grew up in such circumstances did not acquire the necessary family example and necessary life skills:

There they live in an institution that will never show a real family example, there is no father or mother from whom they can learn something, they do not see everyday family routines, communication. Some of them have not even seen their parents or relatives. As a result, they go out into the world without being prepared. They have some kind of lessons like cooking, but that's not enough. As an example, they do not know that sugar should be put in the tea, as they get instantly sweetened tea in the canteen in the foster home (Social worker 1).

Nevertheless, the participant goes on saying: *I grew up in foster care home. But my childhood was good. We spent our summer vacations at grandmother's. After that I got married.* Thus she highlights those positive memories from her childhood, but she did not want to talk much about her biological parents. The woman's parents got divorce when she was a child. It was too difficult for her mother to raise her children alone, so they were placed in the institution, and never returned to their mother. According to her, her grandmother was the one to whom she could come and seek help when she was struggling. She has many beautiful memories about summer spent with her grandmother, she learned her life lessons from her, and took over her values. "Without doubt, grandparents can be among the 'most stable figures' during marital changes in the middle generation" (Johnson, 1988 cited in Kemp, 2007, p. 876).

Social workers say that not only positive values are passed down from generation to generation, but also are the inappropriate lifestyles. According to them, a 'bad' example in the family can lead to the grown-up children using this model in their families:

Although there are those who have been from generation to generation, but because the mother was without any social skills, now her daughter and her children are the same (Social worker 6).

Social worker 6 argues that even when talking about the three generations, this family has kept the exact same attitude to family practice. According to Mannheim (1970), although the members of one generation are undoubtedly linked in certain ways, the relationships between them does not result a specific group. According to him, even people within one generation may have different attitudes depending on their personal experiences. Therefore, when analysing the similarities and differences between the three generations, one should not neglect the assumption that people, although related to each other by family relationships, are affected by other structural changes, other people, communities, etc. They also 'filter' all these changes through their perception prism. While the patterns of family life changes, the practices applied in the family also inseparably shifts. Hill and Foote (1970) claimed that when analysing family relations between three generations, one may bear in my mind that as the age composition of the family changes so does the expectations associated with changes in family members, as well as the quality of family interaction. However, Social worker 6 believes that changes in her client's family are unlikely:

There you can do whatever you want, and the 'brake' for the woman is her mother. Because if she was left alone to live, it would be better. However, all her achievements are hampered by her previous life. It was from the family that she brought such a bad experience. I would also say there are many influences depending on the family one came from.

This social worker argues that the main cause of all women's troubles (mainly referring to the woman's current family and relationships) is childhood experiences and present relationship with her mother. The findings of the study by Lawson and Brossart (2001) showed that little support was given for the hypothesis that current relationships with parents predict current relationships with spouses and children. This goes against the social worker's view that the current relationship with the parents is the main reason and model for building relationships with her client's husband and children. Mannheim (1970) presented the phenomenon of 'the fresh contact', claiming the importance of it in many social circumstances. 'Fresh contacts' play an important role in the life of an individual, when events trigger their own social group and introduce a new one - for example, this employee's client has created a new family and left her parents' home. In this way, there is room for change in the woman's life.

Social worker 4, is in agreement to the approach that one's future life depends only on parent's transferred qualities and lifestyles, and claims:

But everything depends on parenting I believe. There are many good children, but it depends from what kind of family they came. I am still pretty sure those things came from the childhood.

Returning to the aforementioned statements, children are not completely dependent on their parents and are active participants in creating their own perceptions of life (e.g. James & Prout, 1990). Similarly, children and parents are bound by intergenerational interdependencies, so the relationship between parents and children is based on their mutual creation and influence on the creation of these relationships (e.g. Mayall, 2009). From this point of view, one can assume that the attitude expressed by the employee is based on the view that a person is passive in his/her life and blindly uses the family model learned in childhood without adding his/her agency.

7.1.2. Individualistic and collectivistic families

The participants' stories revealed the view that intergenerational communication and assistance to each other is considered an important value in Lithuanian society. The majority followed a positive attitude towards the collectivist family and emphasized that the growing popularity of the individualistic family approach, and individualism itself, breaks family relationships. Social worker 3 says that both children and adults are not paying enough attention to each other today. In her opinion, the growing popularity of individualistic family type and the processes of globalization can play a role in changing family values:

Parents and children probably had more time before, now the parents and children do their own thing separately. They meet in the evening only at the table if they succeed and go to bed after dinner. In the morning, everyone goes back to their business again, and there is a presence of such families - one 'on the phone', the other 'on the computer', the dad 'at the TV', the mom is 'on the pots', and somehow the evening ends, and earlier it was somehow different. Maybe now children are allowed to do more things, to choose more, there is more freedom for them in general.

According to Jensen (2009), since 1960, politicians have tried to increase the institutional education of all children from an early age. In this process, they were well aware that today's knowledge and service economy requires better qualifications for all children, and that equal opportunities can be strengthened through institutionalization, thus combining economic and

democratic goals. In such way children spend less time at home with their families. When at home, they have to do homework which reduces the time spent with the family. This was also the opinion of another social worker. In her opinion, the relationship between parents and children nowadays is more distant because everyone is busy with their own affairs:

Although I say from my experience that parents worked very much, but we always found the time to stay together on weekends, we really traveled, my mother and my dad tried to pull up and we really took part in all kinds of sports competitions. Dad cared about the nature, and now people are lazy to go to the events, those families I work with they choose to sit on the couch in the evening instead of going somewhere together. It is better to lie on the couch, it is important not to disturb each other, and be silent. Earlier this was not the case, before Mom knew who the child was friends with, the children knew what the parents were doing, now it seems that everyone lives their own separate lives under one roof (Social worker 6).

The above mentioned social workers expressed that all family members both children and adults are too individualistic and busy with their own affairs, however social worker 4 stresses that the growing individuality of children is a threat to family values and traditions: *There are no such values now I might say, computers, everything, children are very brutal because of those games, like they believe they have nine lives in games, so they believe they do have those in real life.* The woman supposes that nowadays children no longer have respect for their parents, do not feel obliged to help or listen to them. She claims that these changes are caused by technological innovations and the content of information that is accessible to children through these technologies. One can assume that the woman supports a conservative Christian position that protects a 'natural family'. In this sense, globalization processes are perceived as causing chaos and the threat to the 'natural' family values (Buss, 2003). Saying that children do not respect or listen to their parents, she added that the growing importance of the rights of the child, and the changing laws protecting the rights of the child in Lithuania made it harder for parents to raise children according to the prevailing values and norms. In her opinion, with the help of technology, children not only became more aggressive, but it added to them possibility to access the information about their rights. According to the social worker, modern children manipulate their rights to frighten their parents to get what they want or to avoid discipline. From her point of view, children must be completely dependent on their parents, blindly listen to their instructions, and keep on track with their discipline.

The social worker presents children from adult-centric point of view, where children are being defined negatively on adult premises (Nilsen, 2003). She equates the individuality of children with ‘protest’ against their parents. According to Montgomery (2003) children, as potentially evil or wicked (The Puritan discourse), were widespread in European Christian cultures that prevailed in the 17th century. The newborn was particularly vulnerable to the devil, so constant observation should have been applied to the child so that the devil’s signs would disappear. But the Puritans also believed that the child could be ‘cleansed of innate sin’ through adult discipline and education. Cotton Mather (1663–1728) believed “in total paternal control over his children, mirroring God’s authority in Heaven with a father’s on earth” (cited in Montgomery, 2003, p. 62). Beck (2012) claims that there is an individualistic understanding of individualization based on the assumption that a person seeking only personal gain is also the author of this developing process. This interpretation does not acknowledge that the utopia of his/her life is deeply rooted in the institutional structure of the Western world. In short: individualization must be clearly separated from egoism (or individualization, emancipation, atomization, etc.). Although egoism is usually understood as a personal attitude or preference, individualization means a macro-historical, macro-sociological phenomenon. According to Pyke and Bengston (1996), the individualistic families encourage self-reliance, self-confidence, independence, self-expression, personal achievement, free communication and friendship. Family relationships are more voluntary and egalitarian. Although, less attention is paid to the responsibilities of family members and greater attention to independence (Stacey, 1991; Pyke & Bengston, 1996). It needs to be emphasized that the individualistic approach, as Brannen and Nilsen argue (2002), is essential because it presents children as social actors who can participate in actions and decisions related to their well-being as well as shape their identity.

On the contrary to the social worker’s view, the research participant in Family 21, claims that her children respect her and that she always receives help from them. The woman taught her children to feel a duty to help the parents, because she grew up in a family where parents needed help from their children. Mutual help can be seen as a family value that is being passed on from generation to generation in the woman’s family. Her family lives in a rural area. As stated by Abebe (2007; 2013) for some poorer families all family member’s contribution to family welfare can be an important survival strategies, especially in rural areas. Child support for housework is highly appreciated, and parents believe that the child’s social responsibility is to contribute to the welfare of his/her family.

I think being a 'good' family means having an agreement, consensus within the family. I grew up with four brothers in a single mother family. We helped a lot, with everything, like taking care of siblings, helping mother on the farm, I did those domestic jobs since I was six years old, like taking care of the animals and so on. Now it is easier with all of those amenities, and I don't know about the other families, but my children help me with everything (Family 21).

The values cherished by her family are similar to collectivistic families where all the members contribute to the well-being of the family. As scholars have described, collectivist families are more likely to feel that their families are satisfied with their emotional needs, which gives them a sense of continuity, belonging and identity (Segura & Pierce, 1993). These families emphasize family-kin relationships and family obligations, which are more important than other roles and responsibilities. However, collectivism is often associated with working class and ethnic families, while individualism leans towards white middle class (Pyke & Bengston, 1996). The division of domestic work, as stated by Mayall (2002) can also be related to intergenerational interdependencies. She claimed that intergenerational relations and its nature can often be associated with the family values and traditions. What kind of interconnection between the family members strongly depends on how children themselves construct and perceive their childhood. Whether they would see contribution to family welfare as value, obligation or self-evident activity also depends on different contextual, cultural, economic and other conditions. Twenty-one of the study participants (both social workers and families) indicated that they shared household work, including help from children. However, more than half of these participants distribute tasks based on gender.

7.2. 'Manly' and 'womanly' tasks

According to West and Zimmerman (1987) gender and sex are two different concepts, as the latter is what is ascribed to us biologically. Gender is a constructed status created by psychological, cultural and social means. With this approach they created the term *doing gender*. Deutsch (2007) stated that people behave deliberately so that they will be judged on what is considered to be a feminine or masculine behaviour. These normative concepts of men and women differ in time, ethnic group and social situation, but the ability to act as manly male or womanly female is everywhere. Thus, gender is a constant aspect of social interaction.

Research data shows that domestic work and their division is based on perception of what 'should be done' by a woman and what 'should be acceptable' for a man. 'Womanly' tasks

were food preparation and cleaning. Women also said they take more responsibility for educating children and their emotional well-being, while the 'manly' tasks were usually those requiring greater physical power, including tasks such as repairing broken or damaged items, or chop and bring firewood: *at home I do feminine work, and he does the masculine, it is a fact* (Family 7). The words 'womanly' and 'manly' were used by the research participants themselves while talking about domestic work and its division. The stories of the families participating in the study did not reflect the dramatic gender role changes compared to their parent generation (in terms of household tasks). As it is revealed by the data of this research, gender roles considering household tasks seemed to be similar to couples with a traditional division of housework. These findings coincide with the data of the Cinikiene's (2011) study in Lithuania. She studied women's decisive power in family activities. Her data showed that in the families of women interviewed, as well as in the families of their parents, traditional gender roles distribution prevailed. Traditional 'womanly' housework – cooking, laundry, cleaning, and traditional 'manly' housework - repair, maintenance of household appliances. However, as stated by Deutsch (2007) instead of behaviour and practices or identities rewarded and modelled by parents, teachers and other authorities, men and women create gender in their social lives throughout their lives. This formulation assumes that gender is dynamic and that 'proper' gender behaviour can change over time (Thorne 2002 cited in Deutsch, 2007, p. 107). As socialization theories assume that individuals internalize gender equality norms that were important during their childhoods, the gender equality model assumes that people are responding to changing modern norms. Changing gender does not mean waiting for the next generation to be socialized differently. Today, women who grew up in the 1950s can live radically differently than their mothers. Gender equality refers to the possibility of revolutionary changes over a shorter period than the methods of socialization (Deutsch, 2007, p. 107). Evertsson and Neramo (2007) revealed that in Swedish families where both partners have lower education, the woman's share of the housework is greatest. The data from this study coincides with those presented in the Swedish context. Also, the research data revealed the importance of the family type in the distribution of family housework. In single-parent households, housework was mostly done by one adult person, in this case mothers, because there was no single-father households among the study participants: *I do everything myself, and I am responsible for my house work and for everything else* (Family 8). It was also noted that children were more involved in household work in one-parent's family: *I do housework, but children always help when needed, because I don't have time to do it just alone* (Family 16).

Social workers do not make the clear distinction between ‘womanly’ and ‘manly’ domestic tasks, as they claimed to be sharing tasks as cooking, cleaning and etc. However, three social workers named the man as the main financial pillar of the family and four claimed to be more responsible for the upbringing of children.

7.2.1. Decision-making

When making important decisions, the families claimed that they were discussing together, but women took the final decisions: *I am responsible for the finances, we discuss the decisions together, but I always make the final one* (Family 1). This approach was expressed by almost all participants (except those who live alone, there were two). One social worker said that a woman’s opinion should dominate in decision-making: *We are discussing, but having a feminine logic, you decide more* (Social worker 4). This research participant said that although she was employed, her husband contributed financially more to the well-being of the family, but in this case, the higher economic status of the man does not add more housework to the woman. She said the couple shared everything in half and that she was even more dominating in the decision-making or budget allocation. Women’s share in housework is also decreasing if their relative social status increases (Evertsson & Neramo, 2007). However, in this case the woman argues that even though her husband’s social status is higher they divide household chores according to who has more time. Based on this data, it can be assumed that if both spouses are employed, that one of the partners earns more, does not make a dramatic change in the distribution of housework because the breakdown is based on a time criterion, but not on earnings. The more hours a person spends at work, the more he/she should experience interference from work to home (Duxbury, Higgins & Lee, 1994). Hence, one of the family members might be unemployed or work fewer hours of a paid job in order to make a stricter change based on economic status. Then he/she would possibly be defined as having more time for housework.

The woman from Family 1 claims she is responsible for the distribution of finances, although the income of her and her husband is equal, but she carries out more housework, and takes more responsibility for the children. In this way, she has more ‘power’ to decide how and where family money will be spent. A structural approach can explain the disproportionate share of household chores as a function of men’s income, as men do less homework because their higher income entitles them to refuse. However, studies based on the principle of gender equality show that inequalities in the distribution of work among households persist even when women contribute to half the household income (Berk, 1985 cited in Deutsch, 2007, p. 108). This is

also evident in the data from this study. The man as the bread-winner was not dominant in family stories because more than half of the families said the family was financially retaining by both. However, three families in the study say that it is the man's duty to provide for the family financially. One participant expressed the view that it was more acceptable for a woman to be a housewife and to do unpaid housework than it would be for her husband. Four families mentioned that decisions about family life were also discussed with children, but their decision was not decisive. Six families said that they always consult the social worker when dealing with family matters. Two of them said that the opinion of a social worker is sometimes decisive in solving the problems that have arisen:

All together with the social worker, me and my husband, my sister helps with her husband and children, but they have their own family. Now everything is managed by the social worker, she buys what it is needed, everything is provided by her (Family 6).

Slightly different situation was revealed in the stories of social workers, as they all said (except for one who has no children) that they always talk to the children when making their decisions, but again it turned out that children's opinions are not always taken into account when making the final decision:

As if there was anything to be negotiated, for example, we made a home repair, we talked to the daughter which wall will demolish, which we leave or the color we choose. This is where we can negotiate, I don't always blindly do the way she decides, but we're talking and discussing (Social worker 5).

Almost all of the social workers who participated in the study said that children who are 'not too young', who are capable of understanding the situation, or when family matters are not about the personal relationship of their parents, should be included in family matters and their solutions. Article 12 of the UNCRC indicates that one must take into account the child's age and maturity in terms of participation. Freeman (2009) argues that the UNCRC does not specify how to evaluate maturity or what the term means. However, it is clear that this is decided by adults, not by the child itself. He raises an important discussion: what if the child's opinion contradicts what the adults think is his or her best interests? What is the purpose of giving the child the opportunity to be heard if we do not listen to or disregard his views at the end of the day to support what we think is his/her best interests?

7.3. Child-rearing in terms of the changing family

7.3.1. Changing requirements and parental authority

The majority of the participants in the study identified the changing attitude to the relationship between children and parents as the greatest change in family life, and mentioned that the perception of the child itself changed significantly. Research data shows that it is difficult for parents to comprehend the changes in childcare requirements. Furthermore, the role of the child as an active participant and rightsholder seems to them new and unfamiliar. According to Jamieson and Toynbee (1990), it is believed that the parents of modern Western industrial societies are less willing to control their children's behavior than previous generations. Some believe that the parental authority has collapsed. They argue about this approach when discussing the changing economic, social and political circumstances of parenthood (see also Ambert, 1994). It should be noted that scholars have been conducting these discussions three decades ago, while this research data has revealed that debates on the status of parents and children in Lithuania is still considered 'new'. As Jamieson and Toynbee (1990) said, paternity and its models are affected by various structural changes, such as the political system in the country. As in many Western societies democratic governance has led to a more favorable attitude towards the child, through the creation and adaptation of laws that are more favorable to children, as well as a lot of work on strengthening and enforcing children's rights, while in Lithuania just 28 years ago, communism prevailed. As stated by Putinaite (2007) there had been little talk about human rights in general and children and women in particular. There was no direct link between the individual's attitude or the dynamics of the change of life and social order. Individuals' individuality and distinctness were intolerable and 'illegal' in terms of officially established procedures and lifestyles. The very existence of an autonomous personality was an illegal act against the regime. Social worker 3 says that changes in how to communicate with and educate a child have occurred quickly enough, according to her, over the past ten or fifteen years, when Lithuania joined the European Union. The state of Lithuania has not only reached the wave of changed requirements, but also has a huge influx of information:

The opportunities for children has changed first of all, and perhaps, the fact that it is difficult to 'control' them now. The same upbringing of children has changed, because now there is a lot of training and lectures and advertisements and books and all sorts of information related to the upbringing of children, and there is a lot of talk about it. Previously, I don't think it was the same (Social worker 3).

According to the employee, it is difficult for many people, especially the older generation, to process this information and to choose the right ways and attitudes for a child's upbringing. The information that is currently emphasized is what should not be done, but just the same, it lacks alternative suggestions on how outdated ways of child upbringing can be replaced:

So everything is allowed just because of lack of knowledge and alternatives in children upbringing. Seems like a mess, everyone knows what not to do, but no one knows what can be done. Like I saw in the pizzeria several times, a child was screaming and the mother tried to say nicely that it is not good to behave like this, however child did not listen and started to shout even louder, so at the end, mother let that child to climb on the table. I don't know about that...
(Social worker 3).

The woman says that in Lithuania, a rigorous way of child-rearing has been common since the old times. Many parents interpret the freer approach to the child as a protest by children and claim that the growing rights of the children will lead to chaos when parents are no longer able to 'control' the situation and their children. In social relationships, the power is usually structured in such a way that one or more people take instructions from other people (Albrow, 1990 cited in Punch, 2005, p. 4). Punch (2005) study data revealed that in a child-parent relationship parents tend to exercise power over children. This view was expressed by the majority of the research participants: *The child has to know his duties, and if parents do not tell the child his rules and duties, if there is no structure at home - the child does what he wants* (Social worker 5). Participants emphasize that children must perform their duties and follow the instructions set by their parents. Children duties and responsibilities also reflected in the Lithuanian Laws, discussed in the second chapter.

According to Mayall (2009), changes in the perception of one social group may occur, and changes in one social group will eventually lead to changes in another. So, if children are increasingly perceived as competent, knowledgeable and morally trustworthy, their parents will be less needed and will see fewer reasons to control their children. However, the study findings revealed that children are depicted by their parents rather as passive 'human becomings' (James & Prout, 1990), who are in need of adult guidance and supervision. Family 6 also expresses the view that the greatest change in family life can be the changed requirements for raising children. In her opinion, twenty years ago, families were confronted with the same problems as alcoholism, domestic violence, and so on, but institutions were less involved in family life and

such a rigorous parenting and parental domination was the norm. In her opinion, it is much more difficult for families now, because things that were previously looked upon in a lenient way can now have consequences such as the loss of the right to child custody:

Everything is strengthened, the rights of the child, there are those supervisions, those visits, I think maybe now are more of those requirements from 'the drinking' parents, let's say. All of us drink, on weekends, earlier it was normal, now such people are considered as alcoholics, unable to bring up their children (Family 6).

Hockey and James (2003) claimed that the family is a social institution that is formed by structural relationships between generations, based on both childhood and adult social and cultural constructions. Changes in childhood studies have cast doubt on traditional models of socialization, where adults are considered to have authority over the children. Valentine (1999) argued that children are actively challenging parental authority and that families now are choosing negotiation more often than controlling and regulating relationships with their children (cited in Punch, p. 4). However, as stated above, the data of this study revealed somewhat different findings, which overlap more with the findings of Bidjari and Zahmatkesh's (2011) research on paternity patterns and family values passed from generation to generation in Iran. Their study revealed that the dominant educational style in the mentioned society is authoritative and few percent of people have an oppressive style of education. This may be the result of the influence of religious thoughts in Iran. Their findings coincide with the results of this study, as authoritarian paternity model can be influenced by both prevailing conservative and religion-based Lithuanian family laws and long-term Soviet occupation.

7.3.2. Disciplinary practices and punishments

The participants of the study emphasized that the attitude towards children and their upbringing has changed over the last twenty years. Attitude and thinking that children are active participants in society, that their opinion on family affairs is important and valuable and that the laws protecting children's rights seemed 'new' to them. Families expressed their view that parents know what is best for their children, and the social workers have said that if families are unable to provide the right conditions for the child's growth and life, then institutions must intervene. Unfortunately, both groups of participants in the study did not mention that children may decide and express what they think would be the best for them in terms of discipline. Families stressed that the most difficult thing for them to understand is the discipline they

should apply and if physical punishment is impossible. Attitude towards punishments was most prevalent in family stories, but social workers said that, in their opinion, rules and discipline, though non-violent, are necessary for educating children:

Well they hear that 'I can't yell, I can't beat, I can't do anything', but they have to create rules for children. Well I don't know about this. I understand that physical punishment is not acceptable, such as kneeling and 'standing in the corner' also is not really appropriate, but some sort of rules and requirements must still exist (Social worker 3).

The same opinion is shared by another social worker. In her opinion, the families know that physical punishment cannot be applied, but they do not know what penalties are acceptable, so instead of looking for alternatives, they simply do not educate their own children, letting them do whatever they want. In the opinion of a social worker, such a 'failure' to set limits and rules in the family leads children to no longer have respect for their parents, as they no longer see parents as authorities and no longer know how to behave, because parents do not teach them:

Because parents hear that no abuse can be used, no voice can be raised, there can be no stronger word for the child, but what they do not hear is that there must be very specific rules at home (Social worker 4).

Family 6 says that nowadays, the cases of parental violence are more publicized, but the woman thinks that a few years ago such brutal cases of violence leading to the death of a child were extremely rare. In the opinion of the woman, because of a number of extremely cruel incidents she saw on the news⁶, the authorities greatly strengthened the rules on violent punishment in order to prevent the recurrence of cases of parental violence leading to the death of a child: *I think families have changed a lot now, because of all those child abuses and children being taken away from their families so often (Family 6).* The woman says she understands that parental violence is unacceptable when you seriously hurt your child and harm his or her health. However, in her view, the institutions impose too stringent requirements to prevent violence, which makes it difficult for children to be disciplined and she fears that children will be taken away from the family by the institutions due to the 'slightest spanking'. A similar position is

⁶ In 2017, six people 0-17 years old were killed by parents or adoptive parents (Lithuanian Department of Statistics, 2019)

expressed by Family 9, the woman says that only by stricter upbringing it can be possible to introduce the desired values and rules for the child:

Families have changed very much in terms of raising and disciplining a child. It may seem old-fashioned in terms of disciplining, but I think physical punishment is needed. I don't know, I am raising a sixteen-year old, and with him there is no single way of disciplining him. It gets in one ear and comes out the other. But back in the Russian/Communist days, you could easily raise your hand to a child in the name of discipline. That's me, I am like that, of strict upbringing. Sometimes I have to resort to more corporal punishment such as kneeling, or ban them from watching Television, amongst other things. I am strict, but my way of raising them is with 'one hand punishes, whilst the other comforts'. So back in the days it was easier, now what...you can discipline just with words. You know, those words doesn't help every child. One gets it to his/her mind, while others – not really.

She says that when Lithuania belonged to the Soviet Union, the attitude towards the child was different - physical punishment was considered a norm, parents, teachers and government were the main authority for the child whose instructions they had to follow. The woman supports this approach and such way of upbringing as the most effective. Punch (2005) suggested that parents can support their disciplinary power for a number of reasons, including training and communication with children, promoting cooperation and order, and trust at home. The participants expressed their opinion on physical punishment that violence should have certain limits and not cause serious injury to the child. Such punishments must be applied to make the child 'a good person'. At this point one could ask if it is possible to find and measure the limit for violence, what emotional and physical harm such an upbringing can have for the further life of the child, and whether, in this way, parents will achieve what they think is 'best' for their children. UNCRC's Article 18 indicates that parents have primary responsibility for child's upbringing and development, though their main concern must be the best interest of the child. Article 19 indicates that the child must be protected from all possible forms of violence. Article 3 is emphasizing that all actions concerning children undertaken by any public or private social welfare institutions, etc., the best interests of the child shall be a their primary consideration, and lastly Article 12 points out that the child has a right to express his/her views on any matters affecting them. Based on these articles and the data from research one can ask who should decide what is best for the child. Data revealed that parents choose their way of upbringing believing that this is for the 'best'. The data also showed that neither parents nor social workers

ask children what they think about parenting and punishment. Who is then responsible for ensuring the best interest of the child and who should measure it?

7.4. Family display, daily routines and established criteria

The research data shows that families have precise requirements set by institutions for how they should handle domestic situations and how to communicate with each other. According to social workers, these requirements are not high, they are called 'common sense'. Families say that these requirements do not always coincide with their point of view, bearing in mind how these requirements must be met. Although, everyday family practices such as (cooking, supplying family members with essential items, payment of household charges, cleanliness, etc.) have been named very similarly by families and social workers. The following requirements set by social workers have emerged: order and cleanliness at home, 'decent housing', cooking, paying for household services, lack of debt, no alcohol consumption, and 'proper' child care, including regular medical treatment, needed school tools are provided. By saying 'proper' child care, basic needs like food and clothing were more emphasized than emotional needs.

After the hard experiences that she had suffered, woman from Family 5 said that the greatest value of her family is children. The woman tells that when she used to drink alcohol her priorities were different. Now living a sober life she says she is trying to redeem those things she did not give the family during all those previous years - attention to children, delicious food, a sense of trust, support, bond and communication are of highest priority: *It's hard to say...perhaps to love your children, I don't know. For me my children are in the first place* (Family 5). The woman not only highlights that despite material aspects, family should share time together, comfort each other and be the safe place of support, but also illustrate Finch's (2007) suggestion that families are subject to change over time. That Family's 5 fluidity is reflected when woman shared that their priorities changed together with the alcohol absence.

The participant from Family 9 says that they have been receiving social services for many years, have met all the requirements, but social workers say they still lack life and social skills (these skills mainly define the woman's ability to cook and maintain order at home). She does not agree with that and says that within the 10 years of being supervised, the necessary skills have been learned.

They say I don't have those, how to say, social skills? When we lived in a countryside nobody cared, but when we moved here they started to looking. Its seems to me that it is not necessary

to get services, because I manage everything myself. Children have grown up already, it seems to me, I don't know. I don't have any problems with a children's rights services, but social worker comes to visit sometime (Family 9).

In her opinion, when the family moved to a big city where the demands for the family were greater, then their family attracted the attention of the institutions. The participant did not mention the event after which her family started to receive social workers' services. According to the woman, the institutions measure everything by looking at their prism, much depends on the personality of the social worker, whether the family practice will be acceptable to them. She expressed that the way her family is 'doing' it, are accepted by its members and satisfies their needs. Finch (2007) suggests that family display is a complex matter with many opportunities for confusion and misunderstanding, both within the family and from the perspectives of institutions. However, every family has the right to say and decide that "this is my family and it works" (Finch, 2007, p. 78).

Family 6 believe that the support provided by social workers is too controlling. She says it is too difficult for her to plan what products she will buy for the family, because the employees are responsible for the family benefits they receive, and what the family buys. In this way, they do not learn to plan a family life independently. The woman agrees that she might need some help, but in a way the help is provided now, she does not feel empowered, but disapproved:

Now everything is managed by the social worker, she buys what we need, she provides everything. I'd handle myself, I'd pay my bills. Well, we get it, but how to say it, if money would be in our hands maybe it would be better, because there is no difference if I do shopping or buy things. I would somehow regulate my money, control it, just like she can look at what I buy, give advice, but I would like to keep my money in my wallet. What I will do next or will I buy or will I save, it's supposed to be my decision, I guess I'll let her supervise me, but I lost hope that I would ever get this back (Family 6).

As it is suggested by Finch (2007), for any actions or activities to become 'effective' as family practices, these actions must be understood and accepted by other related members, as tailored to their particular family. Therefore, this shopping practice does not seem to describe the activities defined by the family itself, in particular because it does not involve all family members, but usually only one, which in some cases might be acceptable to the family as a mother's or other family member's task. On the other hand, this activity is more of a reflection

of shopping practices perceived by the social worker, than the mother who represents the family. In addition, at one of the shopping sessions, the woman from Family 6 burst into tears, she said she was uncomfortable that the people around her saw she was shopping with a social worker. According to her, people in a small town see her family needing help, which leads to a sense of hopelessness and ‘otherness’. It was also noticed that the shopkeeper behaved in a rude manner with the woman, urging her to load things on the counter faster, because other people are waiting in the queue. According to Goffman (1997), when a stranger is in front of us, in our minds there may be evidence that his qualities have an attribute that makes him different from other people. This situation illustrates that when shopping with a social workers’ supervision, the woman stands out from other buyers and is stigmatized by the surrounding people due to perceived ‘inability’ to individually deal with the daily tasks.

Social workers have taken a similar view that ‘money control’, particularly long-lasting, does not bring many benefits. In their opinion, families should learn to plan their own money, decide which products to buy and what to eat, but with the rules that shopping is done with the help of social workers leads families to just ask employees what to buy because they are afraid they will decide ‘wrong’:

Some need my intervention so they can live and they can raise children. In some cases, I am there in the morning and I am there at night and everywhere they go, they ask me to be with them – hospital, grocery shopping, etc. (Social worker 7).

In the opinion of the employees, the families themselves have to lead their own family practices, because in such way it is now, it seems that employees are deciding what particular family is going to eat. However, such an opinion is somehow denied when social workers say that families do not even cope with simple daily tasks: *They don’t understand how to handle things, how to clean the house for example, so this is a lack of social skills, even though they don’t drink at all* (Social worker 4). When asked what are the requirements for the family and whether it is difficult to meet them, the staff said:

These tasks being asked of them are not impossible tasks. They are not being asked to rebuild a house or reconstruct their children’s moral compass. These are daily and mundane tasks that most of the society adhere to. Let’s say getting a job, paying taxes, bringing children to school/kindergarten, that they have school tools there, that they are in regular medical

treatment, in that sense it is very common and natural what we all do every day. Sometimes it is even strange why they have a problem here (Social worker 7).

The woman claims that it is very easy to fulfill such requirements and she thinks families do not fulfill them *due to lack of motivation* (Social worker 7). However, one can argue whether those 'self-evident' requirements are perceived equally to everyone. In this case, the motivation here will not be the root cause. This can be illustrated on the basis of the views expressed by the research participants. Social worker 4 says that the Family 9 does not meet many of the institutional requirements, because she believes that the family accommodation is not suitable for raising children: *The current living conditions are inappropriate, there are no amenities, and the family has to go to the centre of social services for showers, etc.* (Social worker 4). Social worker said that the house was without foundation, so the floor was soaked by the rain. In her opinion, if she had to live in such a house and in such circumstances it would be a tragedy/punishment. In this situation, the 'doxa' defined by Bourdieu (1996) also emerges. The official discourse is defining standards for family life that are norms, but it does not draw attention to the fact that the needs of each family and the perception of these things, as the quality of the dwelling, may differ substantially.

Participant from Family 9 defined the situation in a slightly different way. According to her, family living conditions meet the needs of their family, no discomfort is experienced by her, her husband or children. Here one can think that a social worker, when assessing family living conditions and their daily routines, relies on her individual approach to personal needs. However, every person and family has their own needs that do not necessarily coincide with the rest of the society, but the fact that one person feels that one's living conditions are inappropriate does not actually make those conditions unacceptable. As suggested by Heaphy (2011), family displays are connected power, because it means that family claims are more or less recognizable and validated by their correspondence with 'appropriate', 'good' and 'normal' cultural ideals of families. It may also seem that the criteria that families have to meet in their daily lives are based on the definition of the middle social class family (as it was analysed in the previous chapter), but it seems that too little attention is paid to the individual needs of the particular family, which can vary greatly. This is reflected in the attitudes of social workers in assessing the living conditions of families, and it seems that they are returning to poverty, which is naturally associated with poor living conditions, dirt, and so on. It occurs in both in a matter of describing 'good/bad' family discourses or telling about the probable family practices: *very*

limited maternal resources to take care of children, dirt, mess and most of the time it is related to poverty. Then it can be defined as living conditions (Social worker 2).

It is evident in this study that family practices, that is both their communication and their daily routines, seem to be a personal matter for every family, which should not be seen as universal. However, in the narratives of the research participants, especially in the definition of social workers, what requirements should be met, it seems as if they go back to normative criteria - what is 'self-evident' and 'must' be done by each family. These criteria can also be linked to the requirements of a good citizen already mentioned, which would benefit society and the extent to which it would meet the needs of the family itself is unclear. Enforcement of laws and public norms at both personal and family level, tax payment, and so on, has emerged in the stories of the study participants. According to Milne (2005), the fulfillment of these requirements defines a 'good citizen' rather than a family. Heaphy (2011) also claims that family displays are political because they relate to inclusion and exclusion from citizenship.

7.5. Stigma

As already mentioned, the study data revealed that, because of being identified as 'family at risk' and receiving intervention, families find themselves excluded and stigmatized. It has been revealed that being perceived as a vulnerable family affects not only adult family members, but children from these families that are being labelled. In the spoken Lithuanian this would be a humiliating description – 'rizikiniai'⁷. This division in society, by defining the family as 'different', can lead them to closure, separation and alienation from the public, in order to avoid unpleasant glances or comments. Social workers state:

Well, 60 percent yes, they are experience stigmatization. There are families that are completely distancing themselves, thinking that help is pointless. Some of the families don't want to participate in the public events, because they think that other people know them and that other kids are laughing that their children are 'the risk children'. But I try to motivate them to go and I say they shouldn't be afraid. Being isolated does not give much for children either (Social worker 3).

⁷ 'risky'. This term was used by the research participants.

Social worker 3 emphasizes that families feel the rejection of society and frequent stereotypical attitudes towards them. As a result, families avoid community meetings or public city events because the adversity they experience is painful. Family leisure spending is often seen as a positive family practice. This is also stated by the social workers who participated in the study. Families stressed that they would like to take part in city events, but they ‘choose’ not to do it because of the feeling of rejection already mentioned. It is very likely that such contacts, between ‘normal’ and ‘stigmatized’, can lead to the latter action to avoid such contacts (Goffman, 1997). However, vulnerable families are often criticized for their lack of motivation both to solve problems and to participate in community life, to actively spend leisure time and to communicate with others. Families are sometimes accused of not wanting to change anything, and that they are guilty of their own situation, but it seems that people who think so are not fully immersed in what the family is experiencing and that isolation can be as a strategy to avoid uncomfortable experiences, which has nothing to do with ‘the lack of motivation’. Bryne (2005) suggested that what happens to these families can be called ‘exclusion’, because ‘exclusion’ is something that is done by some people to others. These families also experience social exclusion, which the author believes may be the consequence of changes in the wider society, as economy fluctuates – “it is the fault of society as whole” (Bryne, 2005, p. 2). Yet, one principle of mainstream versions of the ‘underclass’ arguments is that the miserable conditions are self-encouragement - the poor do it to themselves. Social worker 3 also said that children whose families are defined as vulnerable are segregated as 'others'. They are labelled with etiquettes regardless of their personal actions or their personal features. Just because their families are defined as ‘risk’, it seems that these children are pre-assigned the characteristics of problematic children:

Families say that they can feel that judgment from society, they mentioned that even at school some teachers highlight that their family is a ‘risk’ family and their children are problematic. They feel that attitude from other parents too (Social worker 3).

The most harmful consequence of stigma is that stigmatized people can begin to see themselves and their lives through stigma, as it is observed, stigmatized individuals sometimes blame their difficulties for a stigmatized trait rather than facing their own personal difficulties. Thus, the usual problems facing life are often an obstacle to the growth of stigmatized people due to the associated assignment process (Coleman, 1986).

Employees point out that the name ‘family at social risk’, which has been used in legal system for about 20 years, has a very negative effect. If a family is defined as ‘at risk’, the public looks at them as a group, with the same problems. Being defined as such in society means family ‘failure’. On the other hand, stigma is a statement of personal and social responsibility. People irrationally feel that by separating themselves from stigmatized individuals, they can reduce their risk of getting stigmatized. By isolating and defining individuals, people feel they can also isolate the problem. If stigma is ignored, responsibility for its existence and survival can be transferred elsewhere. Making stigmatized people feel responsible for their stigma allows non-stigmatized individuals refuse to create or maintain the environment that conducive to non-stigmatization (Coleman, 1986). Based on this statement, it can be assumed that the inappropriate, defamatory definition of families (social risk families) has not been discussed for many years, as it was simply easier to assume that these families carry the name and characteristics themselves, so that the term would not fundamentally change their situation.

But I think this word ‘risk’ is really discriminating, it makes people feel very bad. Now it was changes about the usage of this word, but I guess it will take a lot of time for everyone to get used to it. I don’t even know how exactly those families are called after these changes. It was a big mistake to name families as ‘risk’ in the first place (Social worker 4).

Social workers say that it has now been decided to change this name, but they do not know exactly how, the new definition is not yet fully in force. They think that, even if it is changed, the family ‘at risk’ is such an old term that it will take many years to get used to the new one. Families agree that being defined as a ‘risk family’ leads to negative public attitudes: *That ‘being at risk’ I don’t like it, people look differently at me (Family 24)*. Family 9 claims that even close friends have doubts about what is happening in the family, even though the family has been in contact with these friends for many years. According to the woman, such a definition complicates the approach to their family. They feel they’re being depicted as unreliable.

I don’t like to be in this ‘risk’ thing. My old friends comes to visit and they can’t understand what is going on, because I have raised so many children, so that being ‘in risk’ gives a doubt about me to others, even though I think I am doing fine (Family 9).

According to the Family 4, a negative attitude towards their family is also felt when visiting an institution that has assigned this 'name' to families:

Such communication simply labelling people and when you go to children' rights to talk, you can feel that you have been 'labelled'. It's not hard to feel that they are communicating differently, it's a lack of respect or trust in you.

To sum up, families participating in the study say that this definition (risk family) is a stereotypical attitude of society. No matter how much effort the families put in trying to deny the characteristics assigned to them, families say that both the surrounding people and the institutions are confronted with distrust. All the families participating in the study claim that there are no perfect families and they believe their families are no worse than others. However, as social workers argue, the long-lasting feeling of rejection brings many families to reconciliation with the situation and the label. They are trying to separate themselves from those who are hurting them, thus destigmatizing becomes even more complicated. The stories of the participants reflected the view that children are dependent on their parents in terms that they are seen to attribute the characteristics of their parents' behavior. Children are not seen as active members in the society, who can construct their behavior and perception based on their own point of view.

Part III. Conclusion

8. Conclusion

8.1. Concluding reflections

In this Master thesis I have sought to answer the following research questions: *What are socially vulnerable families' and social workers' perceptions and experiences of family in Lithuania.*

More specifically, the research questions were:

- How do vulnerable families and social workers define 'family'?
- How do vulnerable families and social workers perceive 'ideal family'?
- How are vulnerable families and social workers 'doing family'?
- How do vulnerable families and social workers perceive the intergenerational relations within the family?

This study has demonstrated how the research participants define their family and family members and what aspects are crucial in defining the family composition. The research participants also defined what they considered to be a traditional family in Lithuanian society, identifying the criteria they considered to describe compliance or non-compliance with ideas of a 'normal' family in society. Finally, the participants revealed their everyday family practices, which involved an interpersonal and intergenerational relationships and gender roles within the family, perceptions on child-rearing and child's positioning within the family, family daily routines and experiences of stigma. In this chapter I will summarize the empirical findings of the study. In addition, I will offer the recommendations for further researchers, employees working with the families, and policy makers.

8.1.1. The main findings of the study

8.1.1.1. Family definition

The research data shows that socially vulnerable families and social workers consider people with whom they have the closest connection as members of their family. It turned out that the research participants define their family based on the strength of emotional relationships and family practices. It can therefore be assumed that the nature of communication has become a stronger criterion for defining a family than blood ties or kinship. The data confirmed that it is more important to look at how people are 'doing' family, rather than to perceive individuals as

'being' one (Morgan, 2011). Thus, the family can be defined by its interrelationships, conversations and similar practices. In addition, the results of this study indicated that place of residence is not a crucial criterion in one's definition of family. Therefore, family and household in this study revealed as not being synonymous.

The research participants broaden the concept of family by including people outside the biological and legal families. Such families can be called 'intentional' (Galvin, 2006) or 'fictive kinship' (Abebe & Aasen, 2007). They created social relationships that allowed them to cooperate with each other at normal times and during periods of stress. One of the social workers included two of her colleagues, who she claimed to be just like her daughters. Another social worker included her close friend which she can always ask for help and support. One participant currently living in a shelter said that his closest family is his partner. They support each other emotionally and financially, on the back of it, they are working together to overcome the difficulties of life. Another study participant also said that his family is the people who surround him in the shelter. According to him, they are connected by similar life experiences. These social relationships can be perceived as family by choice and can perform family functions. Another important finding in exploring the definition of a family was that nuclear family definition stood out from a normative one. One of the research participants defined nuclear family consisting of her and her son, based on the fact that they are the closest persons to each other.

The research data also revealed what Finch (2009) identified as family fluidity over time. The family composition of the participants and the intensity of their relationships changed over time. For some, these changes included only weakened or altered relationships with family members, but the family composition of several study participants has changed completely over the time.

8.1.1.2. Traditional Lithuanian family

The study explored the attitudes of the research participants about what kind of family is socially acceptable in Lithuanian society, and revealed the aspects on which the family is identified as 'normal' in contemporary society. Study findings highlighted that participants' perceptions of family differ from normative ideas. The data showed that the composition and definition of families of the participants differed from what they defined as being a traditional Lithuanian family. The participants, both families and social workers, shared their views on marriage, sexual orientation in the family, the relationship between age and maturity, social status in society, the importance of education, and the 'appropriate' way of applying these

practices, as well as distinguishing addictions and domestic violence as totally unacceptable behaviour for one's family.

Based on the research data it can be assumed that the traditional family model can no longer be defined as dominant as most of participants live in cohabitation, and other types of families, such as single parents, divorced or widowed, which also emerged. However, participants' stories revealed that legal definitions and societal expectations for the family do not always coincide with the real family situation in Lithuania. Most of participants defined traditional Lithuanian family as a married heterosexual couple, where both are employed and their children are well educated. As described in the second chapter, the laws of the Republic of Lithuania define the nuclear family as a value, and the ecclesiastical marriage is emphasized as an important aspect of family stability, and the transfer of values. In this way, the nuclear family still remains an important aspect while meeting the societal demands for the family. Discrimination against homosexual couples in relation to the family in Lithuania is evident - there is no possibility of partnership, marriage and adoption of children, so they remain invisible when planning a family. The laws of the family of the Republic of Lithuania are clearly directed against families of non-traditional sexual orientation, as well as defining the ecclesiastical marriage as a value, which therefore diminishes families having civil marriage or living in cohabitation. It can be assumed that these Lithuanian laws do not correspond to the current family situation in the country and must be changed in order to serve the welfare of families.

Defining the criteria used to describe the 'normality' of the family, the economic welfare of the family, including housing and employment, as well as education of both parents and children emerged as the most important. Considering that 'good', 'proper' or 'successful' is still measured by the standards and practices of well-resourced middle-class families, middle-class displays tend to be 'successful' when working-class families are seen as 'failing' (Heaphy, 2011). The social workers expressed a view that the importance of the material situation overshadows other very important aspects of the family, such as the mutual emotional relationship.

The study shows that socially vulnerable families often do not meet the demands of society because they do not meet the criteria of employment, and economic well-being of the family. Poverty has not been identified by the social workers as the main cause of families being defined as 'at risk', but they have expressed the view that poor living conditions influence the

emergence of other problems in the family, such as poor nutrition, emotional tension in the family, and the emergence of addictions.

Another important finding is that several of the social workers rely on both biological and behavioral determinism when evaluating their clients' situation. They claim that vulnerable families bring or inherit their lifestyle and 'inappropriate' values from their parents, despite that, as Skolnick and Skolnick (2011) claim, parental determinism can be perceived as one of the myths about the family. Both children and adults develop and improve their generational identities through daily interactions with each other (Alanen, 2009), as well they are affected by various structural and contextual factors (see Bourdieu, 1994; Qvortrup, 2009), and both children and adults are active participants in constructing their personal lives. Based on these considerations parental determinism becomes unlikely.

It has been observed that various stereotypes and labels (laziness, addiction, low hygiene, etc.) are applied to socially vulnerable families. According to the participants (families), 'social risk' as a negative attribute apply to all family members, including children, regardless of the individuality of each family member. Similarly, the 'social risk family' is commonly used as a generalized term adapting the same characteristics to all families so defined, irrespective of the uniqueness of each family.

8.1.1.3. Family practices

In regard family practices, the data material revealed that intergenerational communication and assistance to each other is an important value in Lithuanian society. Both groups of participants in the study expressed the view that family values should be passed on from one generation to the next, and it is also important that children feel respect for their parents, be aware of their duties, such as helping parents in performing domestic tasks, helping them in case of illness or misfortune, taking care of their parents when old age. The participants evaluated the type of collectivistic family as positive, while individualistic being valued as destroying family values and traditions. The approach to the responsibilities of children differs from many Western countries, as the duties of children to their parents are legally defined in the laws of the Republic of Lithuania, as shown in chapter 2. However, in this part, social workers' deterministic approach to 'inappropriate' values passed from generation to generation among socially vulnerable families was evident.

Both groups of participants argued that the changed approach to the child and the increased attitudes towards the child as the right holder made it difficult for parents to educate and discipline their children. According to them, modern children manipulate their rights to frighten their parents to get what they want or to avoid discipline. In this way, the participants of the study expressed an attitude that contradicts the child's right to be heard, make decisions and be active participant in the construction of his/her life. Rather it was expressed the children should blindly listen to the parental requirements, in such way positioning the child as a passive participant in family life – 'human becomings' (see Qvortrup, 2009).

The findings of the study also indicate a rather traditional approach to gender distribution in terms of household tasks and child-rearing. The women from families involved in the study said that 'womanly' tasks are food preparation, home care, laundry, childcare, while 'manly' tasks can be defined housework such as firewood preparation, car maintenance and household appliances. The social workers did not make the clear distinction between 'womanly' and 'manly' domestic tasks, as they claimed to be sharing tasks as cooking, cleaning and etc.

The vast majority of participants said that they are consulted on decision-making jointly with all family members, including children, but their views are rarely taken into account in decision-making. According to the participants, women in families have more power to make the final decision.

It is evident in this study that family practices, that is both their communication and their daily routines, seem to be a personal matter for every family, which should not be seen as universal. However, in the narratives of the research participants, especially in the definition of social workers, what requirements should be met, it seems as if they go back to normative criteria - what is 'self-evident' and 'must' be done by each family. Economic welfare of the family, employment, quality of the housing, cleanliness and order at home, supplying the children with the tools they need, were more highlighted by the social workers as a necessity for the family, rather than the emotional welfare of the family. These criteria can also be linked to the requirements of a good citizen already mentioned, which would benefit society and the extent to which it would meet the needs of the family itself is unclear.

The results of the study showed that vulnerable families feel stigmatized. Because of the labels affixed to the families they avoid community meetings or other public events. According to the participants, children from socially vulnerable families are more likely to experience bullying

at school or from their peers in relation to their parents' risk definition. In addition, the nature of some services, such as grocery shopping under the supervision of social workers, leads families feeling underestimated. Social workers agree that this type of service is ineffective and that alternatives should be sought to help empower families and promote their independence, and whose nature should be less controlling.

Clarke and Hughes (2010), states the ways in which vulnerable families are exhibited within policy debate, bespeaking the risks and fixating on the by-product of social inequalities which are generally misstated as individually, rather than socially derived. They are accounting that policies are more focused on consequences rather than the causes. Of particular concern is the approach to family problems, regardless of their distinctness as strengths and resilience. It is necessary to understand the reality of family life and to recognize the possible limitations of family-based normative images, if family-focused services seek to engage socially excluded families and provide effective implementation.

Finally, the study revealed that while socially vulnerable families receive social services to ensure the welfare of children in their families, the study data showed that social workers are more focused on the 'problems' of parents, and in the ways of solving it, when providing assistance. It can be assumed that social workers do not sufficiently involve children in order to solve their family struggles that directly affect the welfare of the child growing up in that particular family.

Final words

In summary, it can be stated that the study revealed that the definition of research families differs from the definition of a family in the laws of the republic of Lithuania, and also differs from a discursive definition of 'normal' family in prevailing in the society. The family should not be defined in universal terms, as each family is unique, just as the family should not be subject to universal normative requirements. It also emerged that attitudes towards children as active rights holders and active participants in constructing their own lives and those of their families are still relatively new among the participants in the study.

8.2. Recommendations

Recommendations for the further researchers:

- Based on the results of the study, it is recommended to include children and men in further research to provide a comprehensive approach to the family. The recommendation is based on the limitations of this study, which led to a great lack of male family members and children, so the concept and ideas of the family were presented mainly by female mothers. This recommendation is also based on the suggestion (Alanen, 2009) that both children and adults are interrelated and exposed to generational practices, so it is important to include all family members in the study.
- Based on the results of this study, it is recommended to conduct researches within the framework of childhood studies in Lithuania. This recommendation is based on this study data showing that children, as expressed by the vast majority of participants, are perceived as passive members of Lithuanian society. Though, children are social and cultural actors in many ways, they produce and reproduce culture in everyday life in different places. They are the co-constructors of their childhood and active agents who have established relationships with adults as well as with other children. They are caring subjects and embodied beings that emotionally contribute to their own and others' well-being and quality of life (Kjørholt, 2007). In order to change the attitude towards the child and the lack of perspectives within the childhood studies in Lithuania, such studies are recommended as crucial.
- It is recommended to investigate the Lithuanian family by involving families of non-traditional sexual orientation in the research, because there is a lack of their perspectives in Lithuanian family research. The results of this study also suggest that these families are potentially discriminated against.

Recommendations for the employees working with the families in Lithuania:

- Data from the study showed that social workers and other professionals working with families in Lithuania may be recommended to involve children in the preparation of an aid plan, to take into account their opinions and requests, and to involve children more closely in informing them about their family situation. This recommendation is based on the results of this study, which have identified that social workers devote most of their supervision time to the parents rather than children.

- Social workers are recommended to take into account each family situation individually, without prejudice, to assess family needs in the light of family opinion and without having to rely on universal requirements, especially on their personal opinion.

Recommendations for the policy makers:

- It is recommended that individuals and institutions that are responsible for the development and amending of the laws of the Republic of Lithuania to change the family definition specified in the law, which does not correspond to the current situation of families in Lithuania.
- It is recommended that individuals and institutions responsible for developing and amending Lithuanian laws to review family laws that discriminate families of non-traditional sexual orientation and families living in cohabitation. These require changes that are more in line with the current family situation in Lithuania.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Approval letter from NSD

Appendix B. Informed consent (for families)

Appendix C. Informed consent (for social workers)

Appendix D. Interview guide

Appendix A.



Marit Ursin

7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 03.07.2018

Vår ref: 61064 / 3 / HJT

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

Tilråding fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 7-27

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 09.06.2018 for prosjektet:

61064	<i>Understanding different family concepts – Exploring the perspectives of social workers and socially vulnerable families</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Marit Ursin
Student	Ieva Salkauskiene

Vurdering

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er unntatt konsesjonsplikt og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:

- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke [endringer](#) du må melde, samt endringskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i [Meldingsarkivet](#).

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Ved prosjektslutt 30.09.2018 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.



Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 61064

Vennlig hilsen

Dag Klberg

Håkon Jørgen Tranvåg

Kontaktperson: Håkon Jørgen Tranvåg tlf: 55 58 20 43 / Håkon.Tranvag@ntnu.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: [Ieva Salkauskiene, IevaS@stud.ntnu.no](mailto:Ieva.Salkauskiene@stud.ntnu.no)

PURPOSE
The purpose of the project is to study diverse constructions of a family concept.

SAMPLE AND RECRUITMENT
The sample consists of social workers and families who use social services. All contestants are over 18 years old. They are recruited through a center for social services. Please note that names and contact information for possible participants should not be forwarded to the student without the participant's consent. This is due to the social service workers' duty of confidentiality. The Data Protection Official presupposes that the recruitment process is carried out in a way that fulfills the requirement of voluntary participation and confidentiality.

METHOD
The methods proposed in the study are interviews, both personal and in groups, and observation of the participants.

INFORMATION AND CONSENT
According to your notification form the sample will receive written information and will give their consent to participate. The information letter we have received is well formulated.

SENSITIVE PERSONAL DATA
It is indicated that you intend to process sensitive personal data about the alth.

INFORMATION SECURITY
The Data Protection Official pre-supposes that you will process all data according to the NTNU internal guideline/s/roulines for information security. We presuppose that the use of a mobile storage device/cloud storage is in accordance with these guidelines.

END DATE OF PROJECT AND ANONYMISATION
The estimated end date of the project is 30.09.2018. According to your notification form you intend to anonymise the collected data by this date.
Making the data anonymous entails processing it in such a way that no individuals can be identified. This is done by:
- deleting all direct personal data (such as names/lists of reference numbers)
- deleting/re-writing indirectly identifiable personal data (i.e. an identifying combination of background variables, such as residence/work place, age and gender)

Appendix B.

Request for participation in research project

Contemporary understandings of 'family' among socially vulnerable families and social workers in Lithuania

Background and Purpose

My name is Ieva Salkauskiene, I am a student researcher from Norwegian University of Science and Technology and I will be writing Master's thesis about different understandings of what does it mean to be a family. I believe that there is no universal understanding of 'family', but rather perceive 'family' as self-determined and unique to each child/adult. In this project I therefore aim to explore the relation between the understandings of how families *should be* within specific socio-historical contexts, and the empirical diversity of how family life *actually is*.

It would be very helpful and appreciating if you can help by sharing your experiences with me.

What does participation in the project imply?

Your participation entails interviews and my observations. You can decide how much time you are able to spend for our talks. Interviews are going to be recorded and data will be used just only for research purpose. By participating in this project you would help me to understand:

- How do you perceive the concept of a family?
- What are your everyday family life experiences?

What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only me and the project leader will have access to your personal data. Data will be safely stored to ensure confidentiality. It is my responsibility to ensure that information about you is going to be made anonymous.

The project is scheduled for completion by 30.09.2018

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact researcher: Ieva Salkauskiene, 96732148, or the project leader: Marit Ursin, 73596360.

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate (interview)

(Signed by participant, date)

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate (home visits and observations)

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix C.

Request for participation in research project

Contemporary understandings of ‘family’ among socially vulnerable families and social workers in Lithuania

Background and Purpose

My name is Ieva Salkauskiene, I am a student researcher from Norwegian University of Science and Technology and I will be writing Master’s thesis about different understandings of what does it mean to be a family. I believe that there is no universal understanding of ‘family’, but rather perceive ‘family’ as self-determined and unique to each child/adult. Theoretically, or lawfully defined family concept can be misinterpreted and not applicable to modern day family situation – day-to-day experiences, family structures, etc. Therefore, this project will explore individual experiences of being a family, and a general understanding of what are the social expectations of a traditional Lithuanian family, whilst calling on socially vulnerable families and social workers’ outlook and experience.

In this project I therefore aim to explore the relation between the understandings of how families *should be* within specific socio-historical contexts, and the empirical diversity of how family life *actually is*.

It would be very helpful and appreciating if you can help by sharing your experiences with me.

What does participation in the project imply?

Your participation entails interviews and my observations. You can decide how much time you are able to spend for our talks. Interviews are going to be recorded and data will be used only for research purpose. By participating in this project you would help me to understand:

- How do you perceive the concept of a family?
- What are your everyday family life experiences?
- What have you experienced whilst working with socially vulnerable families?

What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only I and the project leader will have

access to your personal data. Data will be safely stored to ensure confidentiality. It is my responsibility to ensure that information about you is going to be made anonymous.

The project is scheduled for completion by 30.09.2018

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact researcher: Ieva Salkauskiene, 96732148, or the project leader: Marit Ursin, 73596360.

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate (interview)

(Signed by participant, date)

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate (home visits and observations)

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix D.

Interview guide

1. General information about the project and research setting:

- Around 10 minutes of introduction
- General information about the researcher and the study programme.
Explanation of what is a researcher and a research itself, for those who found it new
- Explaining what does the participation entails

2. Ethical explanations

- Explanation about the data anonymizing, confidentiality and the purpose of its collection
- Explaining once more that participation is voluntary, that they can choose whether they want to answer questions that are going to be asked, and that they can opt out from the project anytime, all the data are going to be anonymized.
- Do you have any questions before we start? If anything is unclear do not hesitate to ask or contact me for further explanations

Note. All of the questions were adjusted during the interview and applied depending on the participant, the information provided and the situation during the process of interview. Some questions have been expanded or included new ones, some have been dropped.

3. Family definition

- a. Family type
- b. What is a family in general?
- c. Who would you define as your family? and why?
- d. Can you tell a little about each of your family member?
- e. What in your opinion are the family values?

4. Living conditions (house, shared accommodation, city, urban or rural, etc.)

- a. Who do you live with now?
- b. Where do other relatives live?
- c. How in your opinion distance have an impact on a family relationship?

5. Relationships within the family

- a. Who is the head of the family?
- b. Who is responsible for the finances of the family?
- c. Who makes the decisions and whose opinion matters the most in making decisions?
- d. Explain the division of the domestic responsibilities?
- e. Who is responsible for educating the child? (emotional, social, and financial)
- f. Do you interact with any relatives? How often?
- g. How would you define your relationship with relatives?
- h. How would you define your relationship with your children?
- i. Who would you ask for help? Financially/ emotional support/ help with the kids or look after the kids?

6. Relationship with the institutions (questions were given only for the families)

- a. How long is your family receiving support?
- b. how would you describe your relationship with the social workers/ child rights protection institution
- c. What, in your opinion, do they think of your family?
- d. Did you had a chance to explain the situation within your family? Do you reckon that institutions understood it from your perspective/ to what extent it was taken into account? Which main parts been ignored by them (if the answer to the previous question was yes)
- e. Who do you think can express their opinion about (your) family matters?
- f. Do you think the services uses the right methods to fully service family needs?
- g. Do all the family members interact within making decision in the family? (are included in receiving help for social workers or other institutions)

7. Social work experience? (questions were given only for the social workers)

- a. What, in your opinion, are the main reason that families become defined as vulnerable? What problems do they face and why, in your opinion?
- b. What criteria families must meet in order to be 'out of the risk'? Is it difficult to meet the established criteria?
- c. How often, from your experience, families fulfil all of the requirements? And how often services are discontinued due to the results achieved?

8. Family in Lithuanian context

- a. What in your opinion is an ideal Lithuanian family?
- b. Do you think your family can be described by the definition you just gave?
- c. What family qualities would not be perceived by the society as fitting 'proper' family definition? (Question is only for the social workers)

9. Generations

- a. Who you lived with when you were a child?
- b. how would you define your family?
- c. Can you share any childhood memories?
- d. Would you think that in last 30 years Lithuanian family has changed in any way? If yes, how?

10. End of the interview

- a. Do you want to add something?
- b. How did you find these questions?
- c. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me and thank you for your time. Do not hesitate to contact me if any questions.