**Conceptualizing Family and Career Woman in Lithuania: the standpoint of young people**

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## Introduction

After restoration of Independent Lithuanian state in 1990 the country faces cardinal changes in family life and patterns. Decrease of marriage as well as marriage postponement, postponement of parenthood, increase in divorce and the numbers of young people living in consensual unions are among them. Cohabitation until the recent years was considered as „deviant" partnership and was quite infrequent phenomenon in Lithuania. Since 1990s this phenomenon resembles a shape of explosion.

In the Soviet period women were viewed as rather taking care of the family than work, working part-time, devoting more to the household duties and the family; woman's as a homemaker's role was viewed as the most desirable from the perspective of woman, family, society. In recent years the proportion of women who preferred to be involved in professional activities with a high salary increased.

The question of how to understand and articulate the essential characteristics of "family", "cohabitation", "career woman" becomes a task of critical importance.

Since recent years the problem of conceptualizing family has caused amazement in Lithuania, as majority of family researchers just "know" what family is. Not much attention was paid to the concept of family, rather research studies were focused on the problems of fertility, household and family policy as the fields of social engineering. Demography got the biggest credits in the analysis of family matters. Evidently, it was the result of long-lasting worshipping of macro level problems, not much attention was paid to the intimate relationships and individual itself as well as the "practical reasoning", accomplishing everyday lives and artful practices whereby a person produce a small-scale interactional or personal structure.

It must be said that family research studies in Lithuania for 50 years were strongly influenced by "soviet family" ideology. Structural functionalism perspective prevailed. Family has usually been identified with a household, and even terms 'family' and 'marriage' have been used as synonyms; the concept of nuclear family has enjoyed a privileged status, while studies of other forms of family like partnership have made only the first steps.

At present family discourse in Lithuania is gaining momentum. There is an interest in both the traditional and new forms of family like partnership; new terms for designating new phenomena are suggested. Lithuanian family researchers raise a question what is the normative Lithuanian family. It is argued that the concept of the family based on traditions, customary law and religious constructs loses it's "normativeness", and the everyday life is increasingly oriented towards one's personal family concept rather than a socially accepted family concept. There are studies which analyze the normative usage of the terms "marriage" and "family" in Lithuanian sociological and legal literature, try to catch the meanings of the "general" and the "normative" family concepts as well as the personal family concept. The interface of these concepts are discussed and their links with different family lifestyles. Moreover, new family like partnership, such as Living Apart Together (LAT) are studied, different Lithuanian terms to denote such partnerships are suggested [15].

A Bill on Partnership – Cohabitation without marriage was proposed on the 1 July, 2004. In other words, cohabitation is going to be accepted as another social institution in the nearest future (alongside marriage). At the same time we argue that much contemporary research and theorizing about family and woman in Lithuania still proceeds from a deeply problematic conceptual frameworks or lack it at all.

The paper presents the results of the sociological survey of young people studying at the Business Management Faculty, conducted in November-December, 2003 by the Department of Sociology at Vilnius University in collaboration with Vilnius College in Higher Education, Faculty of Business Management.

The project is distinguished by the fact that sociological research programme, questionary, collection and analysis of data as well as drafting of research report were initiated and performed by the team of sociology students. Involvement of students in such exercises aims to prepare them for professional practice, cultivate independent work skills. Three-tier sturtucture of the research team – it included Master, Bachelor, and undergraduate students – ensured cooperation among participants with a range of professionally-advanced backgrounds. In this context, traditional academic instruction (e.g. lectures, seminars) were complemented by 'natural' exchange of knowledge, the shaping of skills through common activities.

For empirical study, we have chosen the quantitative research methodology. 500 full-time students of all years and different study areas took part in a survey. The initial intention was to cover all the students in focus, however, due to a number of objective reasons, a part of student body remained 'out of reach'. The level of responsiveness is 61%. The survey was carried out by employing group questioning technique.

The results of the survey were analyzed using SPSS statistical software.

The statistical error of survey results at the confidence level of 95% is +/– 1.5%.

The paper has two major objectives, namely, the research data on family-like partnership and career woman are analyzed.

## Family-like partnership

If nuclear family is to be considered one of possible types of family-like partnerships, we could distinguish new priorities: attention is devoted to individual self-expression and self-constitution, to attempts to distance oneself from normative roles and commitments. Family sociologists offer a new terms for defining family-like partnerships: for example, "anti-marriage" (R.Thery), "wider family" (T.Marciano and M.B.Sussman), "diversity model" (R.Rapoport), "postmodern family" (J.Stacey), "primary relationships" (J.Scanzoni and W.Marsiglio).

The idea of modernization and its development in the context of analyzing the evolution of interpersonal relationships revives the concept of intimacy, which is contrasted to social normativity. In works of various authors, intimacy is identified selectively with love and interpersonal relations within a couple. While some authors associate modernization with formalization and de-humanization of intimate relations, utilitarian individualism [3], others paint a more optimistic vision crediting modernization with precipitating a shift to 'romantic love' and reorganization of interpersonal relations on the principle of 'confluent love" [6; 9]. Besides, [sociologists] offer new approaches: for example, rationalization and individualism are regarded to be not the destructive elements of interpersonal relations, but rather sources of risk linked to the choice of partner and transformation of intimacy. In other words, it is believed that risk permeates the areas of life, which guarantee the safety of individual in unstable and de-personalized world of the Late Modernity [4].

**Theoretical premises and methodology of the survey**. Despite the long-standing traditions of family sociology and numerous publications coming under woman discourse, 21st century family sociologists in the US and Western Europe note stagnation in many areas of family research and encourage to reconsider the opportunities for innovating and integrating theoretical approaches [7]. In preparing theoretical methodological part of the

sociological research on family-like partnerships, we consulted the works of J.Trost, J.A.Holstein and J.F.Gubrium, R.Sternberg, L.Bumpass, N.D.Glenn and H.T.Reis.

Young people's attitudes towards family-like partnership were analyzed by distinguishing 3 levels: first, assessment of the normative power of components of family-like partnerships; second, ascription of social groups to a family; third, assessment of family-like partnership as a totality of interpersonal relations. The research also analyzed the influence of youngsters' social demographic characteristics on the modeling of famlily-like partnerships as well as the influence of interpersonal relations in parents' family on specific features of children's (i.e. students') family-like partnerships.

In assessing the normative power of the components of family-like partnership – marriage, the beginning of sexual relations, the birth of the first child and mowing in together in a single household, we adopted the assumption of J.Trost [19] that from the second part of the 20th century, these elements have been steadily loosing their normative power and becoming independent of each other in normative terms. In other words, we wanted to establish: first, whether marriage is considered to be a necessary instrument for legitimating relations between partners or whether marriage is regarded as one of possible types of partnerships. Second, is the beginning of sexual relations associated with marriage, e.g. the day of its legitimation. Third, is the birth of a child linked to a marriage or does a child constitute an autonomous value. Fourth, is family-like partnership tied with a single household or do the concepts of family and household delineate different spaces.

In analyzing the ascription of different configurations of dyads we employed the approach proposed by J.Trost [15]. Our aim was to establish which dyadic configurations respondents considered to be families. Groups differed in their structures, kinship and marriage relations of its members, number of households, gender relations inside a couple. We assumed that by ascribing a social group to family category respondent will reveal his/her opinion on what he/she consider to be a family. We also included questions on whether domestic animals – cats, dogs, etc. – and deceased persons could be considered family members.

In assessing family-like partnership from the perspective of interpersonal relations, we used R.Sternberg's [18] multi-dimensional theory of interpersonal relations. The research team prepared questions intended to reveal the attitudes of youngsters towards 3 components of interpersonal relations: intimacy, passion, and commitment as well as their views on interpersonal relations in the families of their parents. Following the works of L.Bumpass [5], N.D. Glenn [12] and H.T.Reis [17], we judged the experience from the families of respondents' parents to exert a critical influence on children's (students') modeling of family-like partnerships. The research team maintained social constructionism as methodological principle for research study [14].

**The results of the survey**. The results of the research have revealed that 67,4% of respondents indicated that marriage was not essencial condition to start family-like partnerships; 89,8% thought that sexual relations between partners were possible before the wedding; 42,2% adopted the statement that children could be born outside the marriage; 30,8% did not associate family relations with a single household. We can conclude that 4 components of family-like partnership do not possess strict normative power any more and are not interrelated. Marriage is not the synonim of a family, but just one of possible types of partnership. A part of respondents view a child as constituting an autonomous value and do not link the intentions of having a baby to the marriage. Sexual relations, in the view of a majority, posses an independent value, which is not related directly to the marriage. Common household is still regared to be an attribute of a "proper" couple, even though the third of respondents did not consider this component to be important.

All the respondents refered to a married couple with a child – a nuclear family – as a family; in the case of married couple without children – 80,2%; remarried couple with a child – 86,2%; a couple after divorce – 2,6% of respondents did so. 76,2% of respondents regarded cohabiting couple with a child to be a family; 32,0% – cohabiting couple without children. A married couple with children, when one child permanently lives in another household, was defined as a family by 87,0%. 81,4% of respondents ascribed brothers and sisters living in the single household to be a family. Gay couples were regarded as a family by 26,8 % respondents; lesbian couples – by 29,4% respondents. More than half of surveyed participants indicated that they would consider animals (69,2%) and deceased persons (62,8%) members of family.

Results of the research studies, conducted in 1996 and repeated in 1998, revealed that some groups were classified as a family by few respondents, namely, a spousal unit as divorced couple, spousal unit as separated couple with a parent-child unit, spousal unit as cohabiting couple of gays and spousal unit as cohabiting couple of lesbians with a parent-child unit. They got the label of „unfavorable" groups. These groups were defined by respondents as „deviant". „Deviance" was primarily related to divorce, separation and the same sex couples.

On the other hand, several groups were defined as a family by majority of respondents, namely, spousal unit as married couple, spousal unit as married couple with a parent-child unit, spousal unit as remarried couple with a parent-child unit. The respondents defined „favorable" groups as „normal". These had common characteristics, such as legal marriage and opposite sex couples. The data, which came up of the survey, carried out in 2005, were very much the same.

In assessing family-like partnerships from a perspective of interpersonal relations – intimacy, passion, and commitment – respondents were grouped into 3 clusters labeled 'romantic' (41,2%), 'liberal' (40,2%), and 'indifferent' (18,6%) type. Respondents of a 'romantic' type think that partners must completely trust and respect each other, share their experiences and most secret thoughts (high indicators on the intimacy scale). Sexual attraction and passion are not viewed as the most important elements in the partnership, nevertheless, sexual infidelity is perceived to be a betrayal. The respondents in this group have grown up in the families, where the issues of intimate life and sexual relations were not discussed openly. There were instances of arguments about reneged commitments, 'crises' in interpersonal relations, and spells of jealousy in the parents' families. To conclude, we can claim that 'romantics' are people who strive for the highest ideals in interpersonal relations.

Respondents grouped under the 'liberal' type thought that honesty and trust between partners are necessary, but not 100% (mid-level indicators on the intimacy scale). Upon distinguishing between sexual and spiritual infidelity, interviewed youngsters would justify only sexual infidelity. In parents' families experiences were shared, but at the same time there was a respect for a 'private space'. Relations between parents, on the whole, were frank, but each of them retained his/her own 'secrets'. Discussions about sexual relations were avoided. We could state that the 'liberals' are people who, inside the partnership, aim for personal freedom and space and tolerate other people's right to autonomy.

The 'indifferents' do not consider sexual attraction and passion to be the most important aspects of interpersonal relations, they would much easier forgive sexual infidelity rather than spiritual one. The intimacy scale shows that these respondents don't have clear priorities on interpersonal relations inside a couple. The situation in their parents' families was complicated: parents often ran into conflicts, were engaged in extra-marital affairs; while living together, they cohabited in 'separate worlds'. Interviewed individuals did not share their experiences with parents, they did not feel understood and did not have discussions with their parents on sexual relations and sex. "Indifferent" respondents can be defined as lacking

clear position or expressing contradictory opinions about interpersonal relations inside a couple.

**Conclusions.** The results of the research demonstrated that the 4 components of family-like partnership (marriage, the beginning of sexual relations, the birth of a first child and the beginning of cohabitation in a single household) do not possess strict normative power and are not interrelated.

A social group is defined as a family on the basis of various criteria: they include structure, emotional ties as well as everyday interaction. Nuclear family still remains a 'standard' type of family-like partnerhip; the presence of children plays an important part in the ascription of a group to a family. Kinship and cohabitation in a single household are important criteria, though the later is less important. Gender relations within a couple (heterosexual/homosexual) do not play an important role in defining group as a family for almost a third of interviewees – lesbian partnerships received a better approval. It is necessary to note that, with a help of imagination and emotional ties, every second respondent connects living and deceased persons, humans and animals in the concept of a family.

In assessing family-like partnership from the perspective of interpersonal relations – intimacy, passion, and commitment – three types were distinguished: the 'romantic', 'liberal', and 'indifferent' one.

Career woman

**Having had analyzed the results of research coming under woman discourse, presented from 1994 to 2003 in 52 scientific publications, we can claim that alongside the traditional problems of the post-communist period, concerning women participation in a labor market and change of roles, more and more attention is devoted to the conceptualization of "career woman" and to the research on the peculiarities of her occupation. For a long period in Lithuania was propagated ideology of "soviet woman" as an alternative to the idea of "traditional woman"; the image of modern woman as a "career woman" just comes into being. While the theme of love/commitment continues to remain under wide consideration, it can be distinguished new types of socially active woman – 'super woman', 'extra woman', 'strong and aggressive woman' – that contain love/commitment antithesis as only one of possible tensions. One observes the new tendencies in patterning interpersonal gender relations, they are viewed through the prism of mutual compliment.**

**Theoretical premises and methodology of the survey.** In preparing theoretical methodological part of the sociological survey on career woman, we consulted the theoretical insights of U.Beck, A.Giddens, J Baudrillard, J.Butler, J.Kristeva, S.Jackson.

We followed U.Beck's metaphor of the individualization spiral, which is widely discussed in the works of Western sociologists, pointing to the connections among labor market, education, mobility, family and career planning, and 'positional gender war' metaphor asserting the leakage of individualization in gender relations [2]. We have envisaged the references to the manifestations of the 'transformation of intimacy', such as autonomy of private life, construction of the project of reflective 'self', and growing domination of 'pure relationship' in the works of A.Giddens [10; 11]. In the pattern of gender interpersonal relationship, based on intimacy, we were interested in the equilibrium of mutual

intimacy, partners' autonomy, genders' symmetry, relations of self-expression and commitment, confidence, candour and openness to the 'other'. Besides, A.Giddens' works demonstrate that "Both – life planning and the adoption of lifestyle options become (in principle) integrated with bodily regimes" [10: 102].

Representation of the body, as the idea of social construct, in the form of social capital and fetish is discussed in J.Baudrillard's model of consumer society [1]. The perception of functional body and beauty, deliberated and calculated sexuality, peculiarities of the body as a 'commodity' determined our willingness, preparation to include the dimension of competitive body in the survey on career woman.

We followed methodological attitude towards the principle that gender is constructed; the idea that woman is an active designer of her 'self' (J.Butler, J.Kristeva, S.Jackson and others). Analysis of the surveys on socially active woman led us to distinguish two aspects of a sociological research on career woman: image and interpersonal relationships. We fixated two levels of career woman's image. The first one is the level of power relations: leadership position, struggling against difficulties, imitation of 'masculine identity', privilege given to professional career. The second level presents the general characterization of career woman by distinguishing significance of indicators of material welfare, social status, family/career antithesis, significance of the family (everyday life), woman's appearance and professional occupation.

Interpersonal relationships are examined through the tensions of family/professional occupation and conjunction/disjunction. On the basis of A.Giddens' [9; 10], K.Gerson's [8], C.Hakim's [13], and J.Reingardien•'s [16] works, we excluded 4 strategies, which are chosen by woman in resolving the family/professional activity dilemma, namely, self-expression, postponed marriage (partnership), 'familial happiness', and 'super woman'.

**The results of the survey**. From the perspective of power relations, 'career woman' is characterized as a perfect professional, not necessarily a leader (53,4%). A woman that successfully climbs the 'career ladder' is not regarded as a 'masculine woman' who copies the model of a successful 'career man' (76,6%). Woman inevitably faces difficulties in interpersonal relationships (82,2%); 50,6% think that woman for success in her professional life is less successful in her family.

For a woman that actively pursues professional career, the main motive is material welfare (84,0%) and desire to work in the area of interest (83,0%). Hence, they want to do well-paid and well- liked work. Desire to achieve high social status in a society (80,6%) and to demonstrate that woman is capable to achieve no less than a man, is a motive of no less importance. It is interesting to notice that 32,8% of respondents would view negatively woman's decision – in a pursuit of a career – to delegate domestic chores and childcare to a husband/partner, housekeeper and others.

Upon the factors analysis, it was distinguished 4 types of career woman denoting different structure of career motives: 1) 'super woman' – balancing of career and family life; 2) materially-incited career woman – the main incentive of woman's career is material welfare; 3) 'family breadwinner' – professional activity is perceived as an opportunity to earn money for family needs; 4) 'feminine' career woman – the emphasis is put on the importance of a competitive body. The first type corresponds to 'segmentation', while the third type – to 'overlapping' types in Lambert typology [20].

While examining interpersonal relationships from the perspective of conjunction/disjunction, it was determined that 79,2% of interviewed students indicated that career woman will have less time to devote to childcare; 52,4% of respondents thought that woman's successful career might lead to a bigger number of enemies. Otherwise, 78,2% think that career woman will not lose friends because of the lack of time, while 60,0% – that career

will not infringe on her privacy. The survey also revealed that participating individuals express conflicting opinions about whether career woman could end up alone (42,4% agree and 51,2% disagree), would deteriorate her relations with a partner (48,4% and 43,0%) and that she would have strictly to plan the number of children (48,6% and 45,2%).

In resolving the family/professional activity dilemma, 2,8% of respondents would choose 'self-creation' strategy – they would not aspire to combine anything, but would rather pursue desired professional occupation and would not necessarily associate partnership and the presence of children with a family; 35,2% would opt for the 'postponed marriage/partnership' strategy – they would first establish themselves in a professional field; 10,0% - for the 'familial happiness' strategy, which indicates that woman should not sacrifice familial happiness in the name of a career; 52,0% remarked that woman does not have to center family against career, she can reconcile both options. This is the strategy of 'super woman'.

The results of the research have demonstrated that we could distinguish 'feminine' and 'masculine' images of career woman – there were selected statistically significant characteristics. In girls' opinion, career woman does not strive to be manlike and does not copy the behavior of a 'career man', on the contrary, she has opportunities for employing 'feminine' power, which is linked to, first of all, fashionable and stylish look that does not contradict to the image of an organizational employee. According to girls, career woman aspires to receive a good remuneration for performed work, have a chance to wear luxurious clothes and use beauty products of high quality, travel around the world, socialize with influential individuals. On the other hand, for career woman professional activity gives a possibility for self-expression, that leads to self-confidence, public recognition of professional skills.

In the view of guys, career woman aspires to be 'manlike' and copies the behavior of a successful 'career man', she associates career objectives with an opportunity to acquire upscale real estate, high social status in a society, possession of power to take important decisions. Male respondents think that career woman should look sexy in a 'womanly' way, young and sporty. Yet, they are also convinced that a price, which woman has to pay for success at work diminishes her success in a family life.

Despite the different images of career woman, respondents of both sexes thought that 'segmentation' and 'overlapping' types (according to Lambert) are best suited for a woman, who has a family and pursues a career.

The results of the survey have demonstrated that we could distinguish between 'feminine' and 'masculine' attitudes towards interpersonal relations in familial partnership (differences are statistically significant). Though both – girls and boys consider mutual relations (mutual understanding, confidence, etc.) to be important, girls think that career woman can face difficulties concerned with passion and sexual relations inside a couple and that these issues will become problematic and will call for special attention. Meanwhile, boys indicated that woman will have to plan strictly the number of children; moreover, career can negatively affect her relations with a husband/partner or she even could end up being alone. The views of female and male respondents especially clearly diverge on the question of what kind of life woman should choose. Females are inclined to opt for 'super woman' strategy, e.g. to combine the demands of career and family life, or 'self-creation' strategy, primarily pursuing a professional career. Meanwhile, in the opinion of males, woman should give preference to a family, and not to a career ('family happiness' strategy).

**Conclusions**

Career woman discourse in Lithuania is intensifying. It is considered to be a part of a woman discourse, in general, changing gender roles come in the centre of attention. In

recent years the problems of conceptualizing career woman come on the agenda of sociological investigations.

From the perspective of power relations, career woman is not necessarily associated with the status of an executive, her career is not a repetition of the 'masculine way' and she is not considered a 'manlike woman'. Therefore, career is not unequivocally attributed only to male by sex, is not exclusively 'masculine' occupational feature. It can be supposed that career aspiration will bring a whole range of tensions of interpersonal relations up-to-date.

The general characterization of career woman demonstrated that, in the view of youth, woman pursues career, first of all, to secure material welfare, self-expression and high social status. It was distinguished following types of career woman: 'super woman', materially incited woman, 'family breadwinner', and 'feminine' career woman. It was identified 'feminine' and 'masculine' images of career woman as well as attitudes towards interpersonal relations in a family.

# Note

Family/career partition types according to Lambert [20]:

*Adjustment type*: [woman] distances herself from daily chores, household duties, and childcare – delegating these functions to others.

*Overlapping type*: [woman] does not set professional matters against family, because they can be reconciled.

*Segmentation type*: [woman] aspires to gain career woman status in a family, to point that she is not just children's and husband's caretaker, but also has her personal life.

*Compensatory type*: [woman] seeks to devote more attention and time to a family, when professional occupation causes dissatisfaction.

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