

Roberta Motiečienė

Constructing child and family social work discursive practices in the context of Lithuania



LAPIN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

ROBERTA MOTIEČIENĖ

**CONSTRUCTING CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL
WORK DISCURSIVE PRACTICES
IN THE CONTEXT OF LITHUANIA**

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LAPIN YLIOPISTO
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University of Lapland
Faculty of Social Sciences

Supervised by

Professor Merja Laitinen, University of Lapland
University Lecturer Pia Skaffari, University of Lapland

Reviewed by

Professor Katherine Tyson McCrea from Loyola University Chicago, USA
Professor Lennart Nygren from Umeå University, Sweden

Opponent

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ABSTRACT

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In the context of Lithuania, this study explores the daily work of family social workers' practices with children and their parents by focusing on their home visits and commentary about professional experiences. Child and family social work is a prevalent public discourse, but family social workers' voices are minimally heard in Lithuania. In order to explore this topic, twenty-five family social workers were invited from the three largest cities in Lithuania to construct everyday child and family social work practices together.

This study addresses the three following research questions: 1) how do family social workers construct their workday while working with the child and family in home settings? 2) how do family social workers construct their own and clients' roles? And, 3) what kind of professional challenges have they experienced as family social workers?

Society has many expectations on family social workers while safeguarding the child and family's rights. Nowadays, family social work practices face a lot of systemic changes in the context of Lithuania as more and more family social work is constructed via the public domain. This study aims to provide research-based knowledge about everyday practices in family social work in order to conceptualise social work professionals' experiences in the field of family social work while providing specialised social services. This thesis consists of four peer-reviewed articles and a concluding chapter. The theoretical domain on which it stands is social constructionism, by following Foucault's, Burr's and Witkin's ideas about social constructionism.

Among Lithuanian researchers, we could say that this study is the continuity of Dr Julija Eidukevičiūtė's dissertation, which studied family social work in the context of a transitional society. Therefore, this study seeks to advance this by analysing child and family social work practices nowadays within a neoliberal society as contextualised by Lithuania. Also, researchers such as Dr Rasa Naujanienė, and Dr Gedas Malinauskas, who carried out the studies with new methodological approaches, guided the research as they applied discourse and narrative analyses in

their research. Thus, this piece of research intends to advance qualitative social work research on child and family social work (e.g. Ferguson, 2016, 2017, 2018). The aim is to deepen the understanding of these practices in the specific context of rapid political, financial and societal changes after Lithuanian independence.

This study is a qualitative one. As mentioned above, twenty-five family social workers were invited from the three biggest cities in Lithuania: Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda. For data gathering, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted. The data were analysed via thematic and discourse analysis.

The first of the four published articles was focused on the analysis of social service discourses. It sets out to answer the raised question: “How do professional social workers construct family social work when they are providing social services for families?” The second article reveals interpretative repertoires of roles of family social workers in the context of Lithuania. Social work professionals’ roles appear among professional, public and organisational discourses. Writing the second article, the question to be answered was: “What kind of roles do social workers take and give in family social work?” This article discloses what professional roles of family social workers are constructed concerning different everyday practice encounters that depend on situated language use in the contexts in which they take place. The third article analyses the different type of constructions of “good” and “bad” motherhood. The article answers the question “How does the positioning of a *risk family* woman through conversation with a social worker about the social work process with the family deploy different categories of motherhood and social worker’s positions?” The fourth article focuses on the construction of every day ethics and ethical questions that emerge through their daily practices. Their everyday experiences were analysed in the framework of “doing ethics”. The article answers the question: “What kind of ethical questions must family social workers consider when providing social services in the client’s homes?” This article opens the gaps between micro-social work practices and social policy in Lithuania. Family social workers are facing difficulties due to structural problems within society and are burdened to act with ethical considerations while lacking external resources.

Family social workers construct their everyday work experiences while working with the child and parent at the individual level to understand the meanings of what is going on in the practice field. Family social work daily work practices were recognised in the framework of the neoliberal model, where individualism performs the primary role, and social services efficiency is highlighted. Family social workers thus feel pressured to be as efficient as possible without any consideration of *how* this could be achieved, especially when a society is lacking resources. During interviews, family social workers were easily able to disclose how they act in the field when asked, but it became more complicated when talking about specific methods applied to their practice. Data revealed that family social workers’ creativity and personal resources sometimes become a way to help a child and their parents. Thus, family

social workers are working in applying features of psychological service discourses rather than alternative ones, where child and family rights are the focus of the social work practice. Family social workers build their client profile, highlighting their weaknesses, such as having a lack of social or parenting skills, like with alcoholism or ex-convicts. Thus, stating that their applied interventions are *child-focused* is misleading given that the real focus is on the parents' behaviour.

The biggest professional challenges are faced with ethical considerations in family social work practice encounters. Family social workers are trying to respond to the ethical questions considered when confronting social problems, such as a lack of professional and structural resources to help clients, and when confronting social problems, such as evaluation and decision-making in contradictory settings: family home's, organisations and societies. In the final chapter, the insights for family social work practice development are provided. The recommendations are based on the findings of my carried research and theoretical readings.

Keywords: child and family social work, family social workers, home visits, social services' discourses, everyday ethics, interpretative repertoires of professional roles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am proud to be a social worker. I am proud to say that social work is a science. This idea has driven me to continue my education in Social Work beyond my Master's degree, bringing me on a journey from Lithuania (Vytautas Magnus University) to Finland (University of Lapland). My favourite approach and perspective as a social worker was built on social constructionism perspective, as I feel it be an accurate way to analyse the issues at hand.

In 2010, in my final year of my Master in Social Work program taken at Vytautas University, I interned in London, where I was working with clients in a leisure-time centre. Reflecting on this experience, I remember the crazy thoughts and anxieties swirling through my mind: *what I am doing there?* While I was over twenty, the context from which I came in comparison to London was dramatically different. My experience in London, I can say that I was depopulated: I was in a completely different historical, cultural and social context. I came from a different dominant knowledge discourse. As Witkin (2017) would say in this case, I needed transformative change in my beliefs, thoughts and knowledge, understanding that there is no one truth in the world and each has their own historical, cultural and social realities.

From the beginning of my graduate studies, my professional interests were family social work. So, have been studying the topic since 2008. Given that my English is homemade, it was challenging for me to read and to understand philosophical texts, and books about perspectives and theories in social work. Nevertheless, I persevered: reading and re-reading the same texts many times over in order to understand how these ideas can be researched in Lithuania – how could they be transferred to *my* context? I wrote my Master's thesis on family social workers' critical reflections and their experiences while working with families. My supervisor, Associate Professor Rasa Naujaniene, was leading me through this challenging path, amazingly creating possibilities for new ways of thinking, lighting a spark within me! As a young researcher, I received unconditional support in my research. And thus, I discovered the social constructionism perspective which now serves as my philosophical foundation.

Several years later, after teaching at Vytautas Magnus University, I felt that I needed to move forward. I wished to be a student again. Social work as a science is still lingering between official borders within Lithuania; and so, I decided to apply to Lapland University and to send my research project to be considered in the competition, and as fate would have it, I was accepted. I still remember Professor Juha Perttula's pressing question to me on that day: *Roberta, why do you need THIS?* He warned me of the efforts required to embark on such a journey, and that this would not be an easy task. My answer to this led to a long discussion regarding LOVE and PASSION and following these to the world's end. I was full of energy

and ideas on how this could get done. Professor Perttula was right: this way was uniquely different from everything that I had done in the past.

Because of my wonderful scientist companions from Lapland University's Faculty of Social Sciences, such as Professor Merja Laitinen and University Lecturer Pia Skaffari, I have continued to feel supported in this venture. They created opportunities for me to soar to new heights: to study mostly international contexts while participating in numeral international summer schools, conferences and international projects. Witkin (2017) provided valuable ideas which I took to heart in my international summer schools at Lapland University. He argues (2017) that keeping social work knowledge as a scientific knowledge distinguishes social work as science from charity, altruism, and the expression of the religious philanthropy. My colleagues from Vytautas Magnus University are like my professional parents, they built the foundations for me as a social worker.

The Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania was signed in on the 11th of March, 1990. For many years, our state was occupied by the Soviet Union and this has had a large impact on our thinking, while constructing our daily lives. It is important to emphasise because this historical background also affected me. Background such as living in occupied society conditions has been critical in shaping my personality through internalisation. Now, in 2020 our society is looking forward to development in all sectors: business, social, agriculture and so on.

Furthermore, these changes started more intensively when Lithuania became a member of the European Union on May 1st, 2004. I wrote this here because during my first consultation at the University of Lapland, Emeritus Professor Kyösti Urponen (personally named as my methodological father) asked me *how I see the society in which I live*, and interesting idea asking to stop and look beyond my yard, my beloved city and my country.

I recognised that neoliberalist policy ideas dominant within Lithuanian society at the beginning of the twenty-first century, making it influential on social services' organisations and the practice of social work. In 2010, I conducted my second bit of research regarding family social work. The economisation of social services and an increasing number of social services receivers determined the direction of the research. Performing this research, I tried to find out how the participants of the social service system (family social workers and families) reflect the processes of social services provision and recipience. The results of the study were useful for knowledge production on social work practice development. The object of the research was critically reflected as was the perceived experience of the participants of the social service system. The purpose of the research was to reveal the experiences of social services provision and recipience, which was critically reflected and perceived by family social workers and clients. The objectives of the research were: 1) to reveal how participants of social services perceive the involvement of clients in social service systems; 2) to reveal how the participants of the social service system

perceives the complexity of social work services; and, 3) to define the development of social services guidelines from the perspective of social workers and families.

I conducted participatory action research. The background of the research methodology was based on interpretative-constructivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. Five social workers and five families took part in the research. The data of the research were analysed according to the case study analysis method, constructing conceptual categories and using theme analysis. Data analysis revealed that family social workers and families reflected had different reasons for the client's involvement in the social service system. The families emphasised structural, environmental and financial reasons. However, family social workers emphasised the weaknesses of the families and expressed a lack of confidence in the resources in the clients' environment. During the critical reflection, the lack of dialogue between family social workers and clients was revealed. Clients' perceived social services provision through understanding the roles and functions of social workers. Data analysis revealed that families could be active participants in the provision of social services and their experience in the social services system let them construct and develop the guidelines for the development of the system of social services.

This research can be seen as a pilot of this larger work, especially since I received many questions about the study and its design methodology. That thesis was cited many times by other students and young researchers. Before preparing a plan for a new research proposal, the first article was prepared together with associated Professor Rasa Naujanienė. The article was about construction of *good* and *bad* motherhood. After that, a research plan for more significant research was developed and approved by the University of Lapland. And, once my journey towards family social work was concretised, I moved more broadly into the Lithuanian context. My research was spread throughout the three largest Lithuanian cities: Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda.

By ending this short introduction to my journey, I am grateful for the supervisors from Lapland University, editors and reviewers of the journals for their significant remarks, which allowed me to grow and construct my identity as a researcher. It was an honor to have such pre-examiners as Professors Lennart Nygren from Umeå University, Sweden, and Katherine Tyson McCrea from Loyola University Chicago, USA. Both of them provided valuable comments and feedback on the final text of this dissertation. I am grateful to Katherine Tyson McCrea for acting as my Opponent. All of you are very important to me, but I cannot forget to thank my beloved ones – my husband Saulius, and sons Mantas and Justas – for their unconditional support, without which I would not have been able to finish this study. You are a part of this thesis as your emotional support has aided me throughout this journey. Thank you for creating a private space for me as a researcher.

Kaunas, 30.08.2020

Roberta Motiečienė

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS¹:

Dissertation thesis is based on these original articles I-IV:

- I. Motieciene, Roberta, Naujaniene, Rasa (2012). Construction of “Good” and “Bad” motherhood during the study of critical reflection on experiences of social work with families at social risk. *Social work. Experience and methods*, 9(1), 171–194.
- II. Motieciene, Roberta & Laitinen, Merja (2016). Constructing service discourses in Lithuanian family social work. *Social work. Experience and methods*, 17(1), 11–33.
- III. Motieciene, Roberta, Laitinen, Merja & Skaffari, Pia (2018). Interpretative repertoires of roles of FSWs’ in the context of Lithuania. *Tiltai*. 1, 13–26.
- IV. Motieciene, Roberta, Laitinen, Merja & Skaffari, Pia (2019). “The constructions of everyday ethics in Lithuanian FSWPs”, *Socialinė teorija, empirija, politika ir praktika*, 18, 46–58. doi: 10.15388/STEPP.2019.3.

¹ All the publishers gave the permission to republish the articles in the dissertation.

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1.	The number of families experiencing social risk factors in 2016–2018	22
Table 2.	Types of social services	24
Table 3.	Research participants' characteristics with interview information	50
Table 4.	Sub-studies and their main results.....	63
Figure 1.	Circulative process of research implementation.....	48
Figure 2.	Data analysis stages.....	53
Figure 3.	Thematic map.....	54
Figure 4.	Criteria of validity	60
Figure 5.	Service discourses in Lithuanian family social work.....	70
Figure 6.	Interpretative repertoires of roles of FSWs	79

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	12
1.1. The context of child and family social work research.....	15
1.2. Legislation and types of social services for child and family in Lithuania.....	20
2. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORK	26
2.1. Postmodernist and social constructionism ideas in discursive social work practice.....	26
2.2. International research on child and family social work.....	35
3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY	45
3.1. Research design and research questions.....	45
3.2. Research process and methods of gathering data.....	47
3.3. Data Analysis Method and Stages.....	52
3.4. Ethical principles.....	56
3.4. Validity and Reliability.....	58
4. THE SUB-STUDIES AND THEIR MAIN RESULTS	62
5. DECONSTRUCTED EVERYDAY WORK PRACTICES OF FSWS	68
5.1. Family social work within a changing society.....	68
5.2. Moral aspects of family social work: contradictory views of performed professional roles.....	73
5.3. Towards professional ethics work in family social work.....	80
6. CONCLUSIONS	86
References	90

1. INTRODUCTION

The practice of family social work experiences a lot of systemic and structural changes within Lithuania. There is no research in the field and a lack of research-based knowledge; and so, this research was conducted in order to begin closing the gap. The research participants discussed are family social workers (FSWs) working in the statutory social services agencies. The subjects have been invited to individual interviews where the aim is to construct knowledge about family social work practices (FSWPs). Their clients are children below the ages of 18, along with their parents.

Neoliberalism complicates the realisation of social organisations' activities in the practice field of family social work. According to Walker (2001), the political face of neoliberalism reflects minimal state interference in the organisation of social services and highlights self-help and individual autonomy of social service recipients. Social organisations that are organising and providing social services are stumbling across a liberal market where performance is measured by earned profit, and quantitative indicators rather than qualitative indicators. Guogis (2005) states that social services must be oriented towards the lowest costs, but the result of provided social services should be optimal for the recipient of social services: this was the main focus of this research, carried out in contemporary Lithuanian society.

While analysing family policy in European countries, it was recognised that family policy is monitored through national laws that define the framework, and financial and organisational issues of the social security system. At the same time, the European Commission independently provides recommendations for countries according to the state's situations. It can encompass not only the economic but also social sectors. However, Jančaitytė (2008) states that the status of family policy in European countries is quite different. For example, in Scandinavian countries, and some French states that possess common features, they are strongly keen on family support services which are taken for granted.

On the other hand, in Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain it is recognised that the state should take care of the family all the while defining family as a private sphere; thus, the state is allowed to interfere only then when the family is not able to overcome problems independently. In Catholic countries, such as Italy or Ireland, the role of the church is highlighted when family support is organised based on the principle of subsidiarity, where the main responsibility for implementing family policy is left to the non-governmental sector. Interestingly, the Baltic States' constitutions emphasise the state's responsibility for family care (Jančaitytė, 2004).

Family policy-making processes have not been a priority in the development of a standard European policy, because the focus was on trade policy, and only since 1983 has the European Parliament formulated a resolution that emphasised that family policy must become an integral part of the European Community's policies (Hantrais, 2007). In 1974, the challenges posed by the Council of Europe Resolution "On the Social Action Program" began to lead the social union, which sought to improve employment, living and working conditions to improve social, economic and employment decisions (Bernotas, Guogis, 2006). For several years, the Council of Europe has not taken any steps to develop family policies: only through the increasing number of statements about changes in families was a network of 12 independent national experts set-up in 1989. It was named the European Observatory on National Family Policies, and it monitored, analysed and collected demographic data on European families. The experts were asked to provide information not only on demographic data but also on the need for specialists in the context of family situations and issues. While analysing the European Social Charter (1996), it is possible to recognise different approaches to family. It states that "the family as a fundamental unit of society has the right to appropriate social, legal and economic protection to ensure its full development" (European Social Charter, 1996 part 1, article 16).

During the past two decades in Europe, the principle of social services decentralisation has become visible: when organising social services, more and more functions are located in local municipalities (Žalimienė, 2003). Scientific knowledge production may significantly influence scientific, political discourses, fulfilling the lack of knowledge for policy formation and implementation (Guogis, 2000). The development of social services is directly related to the political model of each country. From the political point of view, social policy models (social welfare models) can be divided as liberal, social-democratic, or corporate-conservative. The *liberal model*, where the priority is given for a market, guarantees only minimum support for civilians on behalf of the state and argues that each individual is guaranteed welfare by relying on the market. For the *social-democratic* welfare type states, the priority is given to the state, which assumes responsibility for the welfare of the citizen, ensuring an employment policy, guaranteeing minimal income for each individual. Such states are trying to eliminate problems such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality, not by preventing them from occurring, but by promoting the prevention of these problems. The *corporate-conservative* model is committed to protecting a family according to traditions, and social services are provided only when the family is no longer able to cope with the problem (Bernotas, Guogis, 2003). The state of Lithuania operates as a *corporate-clientelism* model where social support is limited, and additional special governmental benefits exist (Guogis, 2000; Bernotas, Guogis, 2003); moreover, social support is limited and connected with the person's minimal income per month. In this model, those who are meeting minimal incomes

thresholds are not available to get social benefits or compensations for energy and, special governmental benefits exist for scientists, officers and soldiers, who can get special pensions while their work experience in the field is lower when compared with other civilians.

Lithuania's social security system is administered at two levels: state and municipal. Social protection consists of three main groups: social insurance, social assistance and special (additional) social benefits. The following standard features can be distinguished when analysing the social assistance of the European Union states: financing from the state budget, assessment of the person's material condition, and payment of support is not related to the payment of contributions (Guogis, 2008). In Lithuania, the social system can be divided into two main groups: social support and social services. In this research carried out in Lithuania, I am analysing FSWPs with the child and parents in the framework of specialised social services, meaning that provided social services are not based on the voluntarism principle; instead, they are compulsory.

The purpose of social services is to enable a family to develop or strengthen their abilities and opportunities to solve their social problems, to maintain social relations with society, and to help to overcome social exclusion. Social services are provided to prevent the social problems of a person, family or community, as well as to ensure public safety (Law on Social Services, 2006). While providing social services in Lithuania, the focus is on helping weaker people, and at the same time, there is an expectation to contribute to the improvement and development of the country's social welfare, as well as to the common good, such as common public safety. Such a definition of social services supposes the narrow definition of social services when social assistance is oriented to certain groups of society.

Kriauzaitė (2007) evaluated the quality of social services and provided two definitions of social services, which reflect the narrow and broad approaches. She states that a broad approach to social services definition is recognisable in Germany, France and other European countries, where social services are treated as *society* services, covering various societal spheres, such as education, culture, personal and property protection, health security, transport and relationships, IT services and so on. Alternatively, in the narrow approach, social services are treated as social assistance for the weaker civilians of society. Guogis (2005) analysed organisational procedures of social services in Lithuania and revealed that social services alleviate the effects of poverty, but at the same time are targeted to weaker persons in society, thus highlighting to the narrow approach.

According to the Law on Social Services (2006, NR. 17-589; Žalimienė, 2003), the right to social services is implemented in these cases: experiencing poverty; custody issues exist; facing homelessness and unemployment; temporary or prolonged loss of working capacity; for families, who are experiencing social problems when raising children; dealing with different kinds of addictions; returning from prison, and

other cases when the need for social assistance appears. In every case, social workers are evaluating the need for social services and other interventions.

Finally, it is possible to recognise that each country independently regulates social services according to the inner legal acts and practices whose background is built on ideological features. In the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania adopted by Lithuanians in the 1992 referendum, Article 38 stipulates that “The family shall be the basis of society and the State. Family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood shall be under the protection and care of the State”, a powerful conservative ideology, of which there is no doubt that it influences the development of social services and FSWP.

In the next part, the global and national contexts of child and family social work, the legislation according to the child and family social work in the context of Lithuania is analysed. Further, social constructionism is discussed as a theoretical framework for understanding the FSWP field. Also, an overview of international research according to child and family social work will be provided.

1.1. The context of child and family social work research

In the previous research, child and family social work have had a central role in targeting FSWs’ professional roles, every day ethics and discourses of social services. In this part of the text, I will shed light on different contextual factors and definitions of the target problems and family based on the previous research. Researches on child and family social work reveal how structural problems of everyday life create personal problems. These problems cover the underdeveloped country’s economy, poverty, racial and gender discrimination, alcohol and psychotropic substance abuse, and domestic violence. Social work practitioners mediate and intervene in this world, addressing emerging social problems. Clients of social workers become part of structural problems, which are created by neoliberalism and consumerism (Denzin, 2002). Kondrotaitė (2006) highlights that inequalities within a society affect many of its parts: children and their parents appear in the fields of social tensions.

Social work as a profession and official legislation according to social issues were approved only in the 1990s; political changes influenced late development of social work in the period of 19th to 20th centuries. Before official legislation, social work was recognised through caricature activities that were organised by churches. In the context of Lithuania, under the state’s independency period, from the 1990s onwards, only some scientific pieces of research in family social work field were carried out. In 2013, Eidukevičiūtė did research and published the book “FSWPs in the Context of Transitional Lithuanian society”. Her research was focused on the social worker’s construction of help for parents in the framework of the child protection system

in Lithuania. Eidukevčiūtė (2013) concluded that throughout the transformation process, social work with families could be seen as diffuse, rough, controversial, conflicting and unclear, albeit social workers adopted the forms of professional posture. It was revealed that past experiences and historical development strongly influence social workers in their daily work. Nygren, Naujanienė, Nygren (2018) did comparative research on the notion of the family while analysing Swedish and Lithuanian social legislation. The analysis of legislation revealed how general welfare systems create fundamentally different conditions for social work practice. Also, authors (2018) disclosed that *family* in Lithuanian law is more explicit and regulated than it is in Swedish law.

Additionally, family social work has been the focus of some graduate theses (Dobilienė, 2009; Žičkuvienė, 2012, Motiečienė, 2010). The emphasis of such research was: an analysis of family social work in rural areas of Lithuania; a model for improving the quality of social services for families, and its theoretical and empirical implementation; the evaluation of provided social services for families; and, FSWs' critically reflected experience while providing social services. These works revealed that participants of the social services' system, social workers and clients, reflect different discourses about the process of clienthood, and its becoming. Social workers, service providers assess the reasons at the individual level, emphasising the shortcomings of the recipients and expressing distrust of the client's resources. Conclusively, the main reason for which families become involved in the social services system is the evaluation made by other professionals, usually child rights specialists working under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Child rights specialists have the primary right and power over children's situations, they accept the decisions to take the child from the family or they involve FSWs in the help processes asking to evaluate the need for social services. Usually, FSWs face issues such as child neglect, parental alcoholism or just a request for evaluation for the need of social services. Particular focus is given to issues where a newborn is involved. These situations occur when doctors first announce to child rights specialists that they see something unfit occurring on behalf of or for the parents. There are some cases where families are involved in the system temporarily. However, certainly, when someone alerts child rights specialists as to potential situations, they must always verify through visiting the family's home. If the information is not right and the situation in the families are normal, they do not start any legal procedures.

In previous Lithuanian research, families were categorised as dysfunctional, social risk families or families at social risk (Eidukuvičiūtė, 2013; Motiečienė, 2012, Naujanienė et al., 2018). Those categorisations of families were introduced by the Law of Social Services (2006). Labels aid to further push families to be stigmatised. To understand why this occurs, we must recall the time of Aristotle, when civilians were divided into categories of rich and poor. He, Aristotle, believed that only

rich people could participate in social life, vote, be educated, and make use or take advantage of the laws bestowed upon society. Even at that period, since that era, and until now, life chances have not been equal amongst all; inequality still exists in postmodern societies. Dahrendorf (1996) also states that there is no such society, in which men, women or children would have equal rights and be satisfied by an equal division of resources. He speaks about excluded social classes in a society who have specific characteristics. According to him, social classes emerge from these key factors: weak relationships with the labour market, child neglect, drug abuse or psychotropic substance abuse, long-term dependence on social support, and men's tendency to criminal activity. Until 2018, the concept of *social risk family* was used in Lithuanian legislation. From 2018 until now, a new definition of family has emerged: a family experiencing social risk factors is now used in legal acts.

Authors Matos and Sousa (2004) state that in a family facing social risk factors, a chaotic interaction between family members exists, and so a continuous sequence of problems can be found to affect all family members. These families are struggling with problems such as child neglect, alcoholism, human trafficking, crime, drug use, depression, psychosis, and so on. Also, such categorisation of families may be associated with an excluded class in society, where, due to survival and livelihood, they forcibly behave inadequately. Such a situation is analysed through the lens of involvement in society, which has been leading humanity for centuries, as claimed by Dahrendorf (1996). He argues that the unequal distribution of life chances is the result of government structures, where some can create laws and, based on them, evaluate the situation of individual groups of society. This conflict could only be managed when the resources would be distributed more equally among civilians in society (Dahrendorf, 1996). Internal family problems exist in the family circle, while external problems fuse the family with the community in which they live. When analysing internal family problems, it is noted that family members are often confused by the roles they perform. Often, there are communication difficulties within the family and conflicting relationships associated with negative interactions exist. On the other hand, external problems are more related to the interpretation of modern conflict in society, and the search for reasons in the fields of economics and education. According to Dahrendorf (1996), jobs are entry tickets to the world which determine people's incomes, their social status, their self-esteem and how they organise their lives. Families are also involved in ongoing social conflict, which often has negative expectations of the social service system. The sentiment that many forces are going to define the individuality of a person or family poses some resistance to the existing system. Internal and external problems lead to family crises. In those moments of familial crisis, a need for urgent support usually appears. Families are able to ask for a help individually without extra community support. Researchers have noticed that there is no continuity between organisations, such as social services, and the family in the absence of a family crisis. The multiproblem

family has the instinct to survive, protecting itself from contacting social service organisations (Matos, Sousa, 2004).

The term social risk family was changed to multiproblem families in international literature. The term *multiproblem family* began to be used in 1950 in the field of family research by social scientists (Matos, Sousa, 2004). Kaplan (1986) states that the multiproblem family varies in size, structure, location, survival problems and involvement in social service organisations. According to Kaplan (1986), multiproblem families were characterised by different types of features. For example, Kaplan drew attention to the fact that sometimes family itself may not be able to identify a problem. So, the family usually does not use existing social services in the community in which it lives. Most often, the family is redirected towards social services due to one family member, but later on, the necessity of complex support for the entire family becomes apparent.

Kaplan (1986) revealed family attitudes towards social services and FSWs and argued that social service providers could sometimes deepen family crises if social services are provided in an uncoordinated manner or focus on one of the family members. Sometimes, families have internal anger caused by their inability to independently solve problems, which can then be defensively transferred onto social workers. In such situations, social workers or the entire team working with the family should understand the purpose of working with family and seek to establish a trust-based relationship with the recipient of the social services. Naturally, the family may experience inner conflicts when the FSW is visiting. When analysing the attitudes of social workers towards social risk families, concepts such as stubbornness, ability to change, inadequacy, unreliability, motivation, loss of hope, and difficulty in establishing contact, were encountered (Kaplan, 1986).

Kondrotaitė (2006) analysis uncovers the potential many forces in the context of Lithuania. A researcher (2006) analysed the situation of social risk families who emerge from negative social risk factors, such as poverty, unemployment, limited access to the labour market, alcoholism, crime, child neglect, long-term dependence on social support, and so on. The author (2006) argues that families became a negative social phenomenon, which was mainly dealt with at the national level, focusing on a single solution: social support expressed in monetary form. According to Dahrendorf (1996), this leads to social pathology that manifests itself through a lack of working skills due to unemployment and dependence on social support.

Summarising how the contextual factors have been changed into a historical point of view, recently, child and family social work is focused on changing economic circumstances where social services need to be organised throughout economic rationality. The State Family Concept, adopted in 2008, states that the family institute is experiencing a crisis that has been affected by socio-economic instability, new opportunities, and challenges. Notably, social services and family support are focused on the payment of social benefits and not on prevention or provision of

family services. Social services are becoming an increasingly prominent research subject. FSWs are facing a lot of structural inequalities in order to intervene in child and family.

In the global context, scholars have approached child and family social work using different research designs in the multiple settings. Child and family welfare and social work practices with children and their families have been one of the most popular research areas in social work (Parton, 2020; Pösö, 2018; Smith et al., 2017). Some of the researches have focused on policy level phenomena (Gilbert, 2011; Pösö, 2018) and others on practical and clinical issues (Parton, 2020, Lonne et al., 2020). I have chosen to focus on family social work process, particularly from the viewpoint of social workers, but recognizing the clients' perspectives and needs for the encounters. I am interested in micro level family social work practices; however, in the data analysis, I focused on broader historical, political, societal, cultural and economic contexts. My research has similar features to Bank's (2006; 2008; 2016), Healy's (2004; 2005; 2009), Parton's (2002, 2007, 2012, 2020), Smith's (2017) and Gilbert's (2011) works. The recent studies, such as the one by Higgins (2019), have addressed the question of how a contemporary child and family social workers need to pay attention to an ethical "turn" in order to avoid "automatic" thinking and hearing the voices of those who are in need of their help. In my study, I have leaned on the idea of the ethical turn. It is important to produce research knowledge on everyday life of a child and family social work.

International research discussions also address many other important themes, such as assessment procedures, practice models in child and family social work, modes of interventions and intersectional collaboration. For example, with regard to evaluation in child and family social work, Lonne et al. (2020) consider traditional roles and functions of the front door professionals and state that professionals tend to focus more on children at risk rather than on children in need. This leads to different views taken in assessment procedures. It is important whether a child being at risk or the need of a child is seen first. Previous research has highlighted that it is the full narration about a child and family that is of crucial importance in the evaluation processes. In addition, family strengths, stories of success of their private life should be used in the intervention process, not only at the assessment stage.

Child and family social work is often highlighted in the relationship-based practice model, where the relationships between practitioners and clients are characterized as hostile and bound by mutual suspicion (Smith et al., 2017). In my research, I aim to shed light on these complex relations and social workers' professional roles. I am interested in advancing scientific discussion on how the demands of neoliberalism affect child and family social work practices. I refer to Smith and others (2017), who talk about the notion of social suffering experienced by social workers when fulfilling the moral and emotional dimensions, which is revealed by social workers' critical reflection.

Family social workers have their own ethical code in Lithuania, but, for example, Pösö (2018) argues that it is not enough to recognize a child's individual need and participation. According to the international convention, children's participation at national level has been limited so far. Family social workers are able to meet a child's needs, but there have been no cases where a child's participation in social services delivery process would have been revealed when expressing their voices or attitudes.

Parton (2020) analyses child maltreatment in different child protection systems. He follows the work by Gilbert et al. (2011) focusing on the role of the state according to child maltreatment. The researcher discusses three different modes of the state's role: a child protection orientation, a family service orientation and a child-focused orientation. Family social workers argue that families need assistance in order to protect or reduce harm for the family members, which brings family social workers from a family service orientation back to a child protection orientation. In my study, I focused on and analysed poverty issues, inequality within society and how all this influence child and family social work practices. My study reveals quite individualized family social work practices, where individual decisions or solutions of family social workers are applied to child and family social work practices. However, my focus is on the ways how family social workers can switch from a family service orientation to a child-focused orientation. In this case, child well-being achieved through social investment and equality becomes the aim of intervention. This study also describes and highlights early preventative social work in child and family social work.

In the next part of the text, new changes into legislation and a changed concept of social risk family will be analysed in the framework of social services.

1.2. Legislation and types of social services for child and family in Lithuania

Family social work is becoming increasingly recognised, as with the passing of new bills such as in July, 2018. However, the documents presented by the administration are contradictory, especially in the manner in which they present the workload of the case worker. So, while there is a concerted effort to increase the addressing of system efficiency, stemming from a neoliberal influence, there is still no clear roadmap. In Lithuania, family social work becomes increasingly credible in practice. Notably, neoliberalism has influenced much of the policy, leaving little space for the inefficiency of services: every three to six months, new evaluation procedures appear, and sometimes more often than not, case review meetings are organised depending on the familial situation. In the 2016–2017 Social Report, it is underlined that in

order to improve the quality of services provided to families, the workload of social workers has been significantly reduced as compared to 2017, with no more fifteen families per social worker (Approval of the Case Management Procedure, 2018).

Since July 1st, 2018, the concept of the social risk family legally changed. Now, a need for social services is determined through an assessment of child welfare risks. Those assessments are done by caseworkers together with FSWs. Assessments of child welfare risks consist of three blocks: child development, parenting skills, and social factors. Each of these pillars has several evaluation criteria, such as health care provision, child education, emotional support, and so on. According to the *Law on Social Services* (2006), social risks are factors and circumstances causing individuals or families to be at risk of social exclusion. Such situations can arise when parents are lacking social skills and are failing to ensure the full physical, mental, spiritual, moral development and safety conditions of the child, adopted or otherwise, within the family. In some practical cases, psychological, physical or sexual abuse is the reason to involve social services. Moreover, social problems such as violence, involvement in human trafficking, or tendency to engage in criminal activity are common issues found in family engaging with social services. Nowadays, the tendency and the main reason for parents to not be able to safeguard their child stems from the use of alcohol, narcotics, and psychotropic substances.

When evaluating the need for child and family social services when facing social risk factors, FSWs' help alone is not sufficient. Families often deal with complex problems. Thus, the description of the *Common Procedures for Working with Families* was approved in 2016 after being signed by four ministers and was employed by each municipality via inter-institutional coordinators who coordinated the standard procedures. The approved procedures aimed to ensure the municipally coordinated provision of social, education, healthcare, community and law enforcement assistance to families in order to strengthen their responsibility, ability, and opportunity. Moreover, they aim to increase family independence in problem-solving, and, help to overcome social exclusion. The document sets out the principles of organisation and provision of assistance to families (including pregnant mothers), the organisation of joint work in municipalities, participants and their functions in different situations, and a monitoring mechanism. Again, this document exhibits neoliberalist tendencies because it declares that a person is individually responsible of their familial well-being in society.

According to the Social Report (2016), the largest cohort (25.6%) of employed FSWs have been working in the field since the pre-2007 era. Given the increased need for FSWs, the second-largest cohort of FSWs (18.9%) have only been on the field since 2016. Almost 97% of FSWs were employed in statutory agencies, while only 3% were employed in non-governmental organisations. The reasons for the unequal distributions are not known or detailed. The average number of families for one FSW was 13 families (Social Report, 2016–2017).

At the end of 2017, there were 9.8 thousand families, in which grew 18.4 thousand children. Compared to 2016, the number of families increased by one-hundred-and-ten (1%), while the number of children growing in them decreased by three-hundred-and-forty-one (2.1%). There are two main reasons as to why families are receiving social services: lack of parenting skills, and alcohol consumption.

Table 1. The number of families experiencing social risk factors in 2016–2018

	2016	2017	2018
Number of families	9 700	9 800	9 235
Number of children in them	18 800	18 400	17 430

Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2019 (<https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize#/>)

According to the Law on Social Services (2006), social care for families is funded not only from state grants but also from the municipal budgets. The critical task for municipalities is to ensure the provision of these social services, appointing the necessary funding and attention to the FSWs and their departments, such as providing workplaces, transport tickets to reach the families, provide mobile phones for communication, and assess occupational risks.

The Minister of Social Security and Labour accepted new order number A1-296, on June 19th, 2018. From this data, a new order concerning the approval of the case management procedures came into force. The prepared order determines how case management should be applied in order to help a child and their family. Case management as a tool for providing assistance to a child and family is legitimised by the Law on Fundamental Rights of the Child (1996). By this renewed legal act, the child rights protection system was centralised in order to guarantee common standards, apply the same social work methods in the FSWP field, and to keep unified case management practice.

The central institution for the protection and defence of the rights of the child which implemented the Child Rights protection Policy became The State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service, together with its territorial structural divisions. The State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service are under the purview of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Its functions were approved by Resolution Number two-hundred-and-ninety-three of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the 28th of March, 2018.

The Law on Social Services (2006), article number four defines the principles of social services in Lithuania. The first one is *cooperation*; this principle of social services focuses on the involvement of the social service recipient as an equal partner in the process of providing social services. Broadly, the management, appointment and provision of social services are based on the cooperation and mutual assistance

of the individual, family, community, organisations protecting the interests and rights of social groups, social services, municipalities and state institutions. The second principle of social services is *participation*, meaning that social services management, appointment and provision issues are addressed together with social service recipients and their representatives, and organisations protecting the interests and rights of humans. The third principle of social services is *complexity*. It argues that the provision of social services to a person is combined with the provision of social services to a family. Reading this principle, a broader explanation is needed, because the principle of complexity states that not only official forms for situation's evaluation are enough, but also the involvement of other specialists in order to evaluate a need for social services adequately is needed. The fourth principle of social services is *accessibility*. Social services are managed, assigned and provided in such a way as to ensure access to social services for a person (family) as close as possible to their place of residence. The fifth principle of social services highlights *social justice*. It states that a person's (family's) financial ability to pay for social services does not affect a person's (family's) access to social services. The sixth principle is *relevance*. A person (family) gets social services that meet the needs of the individual and the family. The seventh principle is *effectiveness*. It states that social services should be managed, assigned and provided for excellent results and rational use of available resources. Social services agencies have to be effective and spend less money, but maintain the quality of social services. The last principle is *comprehensiveness*. Social services are managed, assigned and provided in combination with monetary social assistance, protection of the rights of the child, employment, health care, education and training, social housing, and special assistance measures.

In Lithuania, there are separate laws regulating family support policy, and it is implemented by both state and non-governmental organisations. For the purpose of their activities, family policy supporters seek to create conditions for the normal functioning of families; to support families to help them realize their functions (Stankūnienė et al., 2001).

The right social policy is an important guarantee of the security and stability of every democratic state. Family is a guarantor of society and the state, which is protected and guarded by the state (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992). Article 39 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania states that the State shall provide support to families raising children at home in accordance with the procedure established by law. Section 3.3 (2) of the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania (Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania, Official Gazette, 2000, No. 74-2262) states that "family laws and their application must ensure the strengthening of the family and its significance in society, the responsibility of family members for the preservation of the family and the upbringing of children, for all family members to properly exercise their rights and protect minors from inappropriate influence of other family members and other persons and other factors".

The provision of social services is aimed at “enabling the person (family) to develop or strengthen their abilities and opportunities to independently solve their social problems, to maintain social relations within the society, as well as to help overcome social exclusion” (Official Gazette, 2006, No. 17-589, Art., 2). Organizers of social services are mainly municipalities, and social services are evaluated by case managers together with social workers. The need for social services can be assessed by general social services or special social services.

Table 2. Types of social services

Types of social services		
General	Special	
	Social attendance	Social care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Consultation • Mediation and representation • Catering organisation • Provision of essential clothing and footwear • Transport organisation • Sociocultural services • Personal hygiene and care services • Open youth work • Mobile work with youth • Street work with youth • Other general services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance at home • Development, maintenance and restoration of social skills • Lodging in independent living house • Temporary lodging • Intensive assistance for crisis management • Psychosocial support • Lodging in shelters or crisis centres • Help for carers, guardians, adopters and family members • Lodging in the protected house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daycare • Short-term care • Long-term care

Source: Catalogue of Social Services, 2006

The need for social services is determined individually according to the person’s self-sufficiency and possibilities to self-educate or compensate for social services corresponding to the interests and needs according to the criteria for determining the need for social services. Based on a person’s (family’s) social service assessment form, a person’s (family’s) social autonomy (skills, abilities, and communication) is assessed according to the following points: how to manage in the household; how to communicate positively in the family, with the neighbours, and the community; how conduct is in personal and social life-related functions while caring for juvenile family members; and whether or not the family has problems with housing, violence, abuse or other social problems. Social work with families usually requires special social services when social skills development and maintenance services are provided in the family’s home.

FSWP has since shifted its focus away from parent-focus and towards a more child-centred approach. The position of clients is seen through the collaborative participation between FSWs, caseworkers, educators and other specialists who

are associated with the family. Public discourse about child and family's active participation came into context, as this participation is in line with the ideas of post-modern social work, where the emphasis and implementation of the discussion has a direct impact on social policy and social work practice. Social work becomes a dialogue – a reflective interaction between the client and FSW in the use of language and social constructs of meaning, in order to define the parameters of the help process (Walker 2001).

According to Matos and Sousa (2004), involvement in a social service system takes place when a family is looking for help. On its own initiative, the family is seeking help because it knows the organisations that provide social services and the nature of their services. Or, sometimes, it could be to the contrary: social service organisations identifying families. Through interinstitutional cooperation, one learns about the family and its situation, so that the social worker is directed to the family home. In these cases, families themselves do not seek help out of fear, shame and stigmatisation. Also, a visit may be triggered by third-party information. These can be the first reports of relatives or community members. The family can be forwarded to other people who know where social services are provided. There is also a delegation of relatives when relatives are asked to contact and make the first contact.

Family members as recipients of social services can be seen as active clients in the roles of social agents. *Social agents* are socially constructed, but their actions are not entirely socially determinative (Fairclough, 2003). They have their own inner powers, which are often reduced or depressed in the social environment in which the family lives. The empowerment of the family and the promotion of social participation are particularly relevant. Ruškus, Mažeikis (2007), distinguish two main directions of social participation. Both of them can be applied in social work with families. The first is an attempt to build relationships for greater cooperation between social service providers and social service receivers. Secondly, it is important to empower a person to engage in public life, which would emphasise the strengths of the family by helping them to develop competences, to help them understand that they are equal partners in the process of providing social services. The provision of social services to participants in the service system must be understood as mutual learning, where social participation is promoted and a sense of community is strengthened. The realisation of the concept and principles of provision of social services in practice is possible by engaging families through activities in the nearest social environment. This is the landscape of child and family social work within the framework of social services.

2. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORK

2.1. Postmodernist and social constructionism ideas in discursive social work practice

This research aims to understand the discursive practices in family social work, and how these are constructed and then reconstructed by other social practices within dominant Lithuanian social discourses. In order to understand discursive FSOWPs, the importance of language cannot be questioned, given that it is a fundamental tool used to understand our surroundings. This text will address *constructive social work*, where the meaning of the word *constructive* means having a meaningful purpose or being helpful (Ah Hin, Laffer, Parton, Turnell, 2003). Constructive social work itself contains an essential feature of social work: the collaborative process, meaning that in this process, it is imperative to pay attention to the meaning and language utilised given that these insights create new knowledge throughout the working process. Most simplistically, it is a way to externalise an individual or the family's problems. In such encounters, new perspectives on how to deal with the externalised problem can be created.

As there are no fixed meanings, there are no fixed family social work discursive practices. Fawcett (2013) opens a scientific dialogue about postmodernism and its origins by pushing a postmodernist to question their understanding of the conditions of an analysed object. Postmodernism appeared in the 19th century with origins relating to the arts. In the context of the social sciences, the year 1950 was highly significant, as it signalled the moving from modernism to postmodernism. New thinking about knowledge creation appeared, taking into account that they are not only a reflection of reality but also a historical and cultural byproduct of vicissitudes of social intercourse and language which shapes our realities (Witkin, 2017). When looking back to the historical context of Lithuania and how the definition of the family has been changed during this time, it becomes visible that family social work was related to these postmodern ideas, especially regarding the role of language.

Alvesson (2002) considers five themes of postmodernism: discourse, fragmented identities, the illusion of language as representation, the loss of foundations and grand narratives, and the power-knowledge connection. Thus, the centrality of discourse is highlighted; language is a constitutive force and object of the world; fragmented identities are recognisable and individuals are seen as multiple selves. Moreover, the critique of the idea of representation is visible. There exists a tradition to emphasise the arbitrary links between words, what they are assumed to represent,

and the rejection of language as a *mirror of nature*. Knowledge is considered as local, temporal, and historically and culturally contingent (Alvesson, 2002). Such a position invites us to consider multiple voices. The power-knowledge connection is highlighted because it rejects the notion of neutral or value-free knowledge and considers different accounts always to favour understanding and action above all.

The language we use creates and shapes the reality in which we live. For postmodernists, discourses are local and ethnocentric and knowledge is created by the active process found between speaker and listener. The way we understand the world is through social constructions created through the use of language and the traditional and cultural beliefs that such language reflects (Witkin, 2017); meaning, FSWs can understand the families only when they are actively listening and understanding their stories in a broader scope than simply in the home settings. Another important point of postmodernism is an issue of power. FSWs are facing control from the state, accountability, monitoring and evaluation from organisational and municipality encounters. This is an issue because it is very complex, containing powerful invisible relations on different micro, macro, and mezzo levels. Dominant discourse within society is a resource to disclose power relations through the practices and the meanings of language. Butt and Parton (2005) discuss that at the practice level, it becomes more and more difficult because in those contexts appear hierarchical control, accountability, monitoring, and evaluation. Those ideas become very important in order to understand what is going on in the praxis.

According to Burr (2015) and Wulf and George (2012), social constructionism is separated into two different levels: micro-social constructionism and macro-social constructionism. Micro-social constructionism is defined by social constructions that take place within everyday work practices, specifically those appearing in interactions meaning that there are many multiple discourses between FSWs and families (proof of which is in text form). Therefore, there are implicit realities beyond our understanding and descriptions. Also, micro-level is a context in which a discourse is about how FSWs use language to coordinate their actions and to accomplish things, how they co-construct understandings about values, aesthetics, truths, and realities. The emphasis is on interpersonal interaction between FSWs and the child and their parents.

Meanwhile, macro-social constructionism highlights the power of language. The power comes from social structures, social relations, or institutionalised practices. Macro-contexts are informed by French philosopher Foucault (1998). He expanded the concept including how the language is inscribed within organisations and institutions. Discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which we speak. Discourses are never neutral and are intimately related to power. So, it becomes essential to recognise embodied discourses within the FSW narrations, given that through language, it is possible to research FSWPs through a postmodernist lens.

Notably, this spread of social constructionism into family social work research is related to the works and writings of Foucault (1998). In this respect, it is also essential to discuss how FSWs see the child and their parents. We, as persons, have different emotions leading to our varied behavior towards others: for social constructionists, this is an apparent reality. Social constructionists understand personality as many forms to be displayed which are dependent upon the particular historical, cultural and relational circumstances in which we are bounded (Burr, 2015). These ideas become very important to family social work, especially in practice, where many interactions and multiple identities in different contexts exist. That means, for researchers, that there are no two same clients and FSWs, considering that each of them has different historical, cultural and relational circumstances behind.

“The meaning of what we say depends on the context, the general conceptual framework in which our word is embedded” (Burr 2015, p.78). Burr (2015) states that discourse could be not only written text but also thoughts which can be *read*. For example, people’s clothes or living conditions can tell for a FSW lots of information, but in order to understand this discourse, it is necessary to understand where those discourses appear. So, meaning is contestable. According to Burr (2015) discourse is refereed with a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, statements and so on, that these produce a particular version of events. Thus, discourses constitute not only what we are thinking or saying about ourselves or the world in which we live, but it can also constitute our inner world: it is our desires, feelings, and actions. Discourses are ultimately connected with institutional and social practices (Burr, 2015). They can make a deep influence on how we behave, talk, and live our lives. Such institutions as education, law, marriage, and family shape our daily lives. In such conditions appear positions and statuses.

So, it becomes a complex issue to understand the truth. According to Witkin (2017), the truth is plural, contextual and communal. Meanwhile, Foucault (1998) developed a concept of discourse: the meaning is about how different beliefs and ways of understanding become dominant in different historical periods and how these discourses impact our thinking. With this in mind, I began trying to understand whether FSWs are considering the historical periods and approaches concerning the child and family. Andrews (2012) states that knowledge comes through the institutionalised experience, and later on from generation to generation, that knowledge becomes an objective. Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that two concepts define objective reality: realism and relativism. And so, this research upholds the idea that we live in the world where multiple realities and social phenomena exist and can be constructed by different truths, which depend on the context and individual experience where the knowledge is constructed. Multiple interpretations appear in those contexts where child and family live and interact with each other.

Witkin (2017) suggest an alternative view to human rights, suggesting to explore new vocabularies for its expression, by changing our minimal understanding of

social life, and revisiting its foundation in modernists' notion of truth. The truth for social constructionists is the meanings of it and how it functions in social life. Weinberg (2014) says that social workers' identity is changing and depends on the moment in context with others there are working together. In order to disclose constructions of identity, discourse analysis was used to try to shed light on the idea that object identity is fragmentary and fluid in construction. Discourse analysis is like an umbrella, under which different kinds of social sciences are interconnected. Ideas from psychology, linguistics, and philosophy to theoretical approaches to knowledge with post-structural thinking are intertwined. Our understanding of reality is shaped and constructed by various social processes, such as events in media, the use of power, ideology and others (Thompson, 2010). This is a significant statement for family social work practice because it becomes prevalent to construct family social work based on public discourse.

As the research was conducted in statutory agencies, ideas from Parton (2007) were used. Parton (2007) states that social work, especially in statutory agencies, became little more than labour in the service of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. His careful approach to modernism in social work practice and especially on evidence-based practice led him to develop the notion of constructive social work practice. He argued that the meaning of the word *constructive* reflects a wish to develop a perspective based on a positive approach where the key idea is construction. In Latin, the word *constructione* means the *building* or *putting together*. While concentrating on the language used, our capacity to listen and ability to communicate creates the meanings and the understanding of the matters with which we are challenging. Parton (2007) says that in direct practice social work, practitioners are encouraged to hold an interdependent stance with the proactive, working notion of *rule finding*, thus disengaging dependence on the rules and norms of bureaucratic procedures and guidance.

Working with children and their parents who somehow are disadvantaged by oppressive social arrangements, FSWs should incorporate the perspective of person-in-environment, which talks about sensitivity to differences in life and at the same time spreads the idea of respect to all and to observe these differences. This is highly related to the strengths perspective where the focus is on the hidden or visible strengths of each individual, and an individual is seen in different contexts beyond the home setting. As Witkin (2017) highlighted, the strengths perspective invites us to see the person as a unique individual whose dignity is respected, to see complicated situations or life stories as catalysts of growth, and to see disadvantaged or marginalised people as teachers of resilience and heroism. Working in direct practice with such a practical approach supports FSWs to define family strengths and opens alternative ways of working.

For social constructionists, motives, emotions, reasons and intentions are not interior states of the self, but exterior properties of contexts and actions. Such an

approach suggests that practices, actions, activities, and interactions rather than persons should be at the centre of analytic attention. Social constructionists endorse the view that emotions, desires, intentions and so on, are social constructs rather than aspects of individual experience and subjective mental states. Closely allied with social constructionism is the perspective known as postmodernism which insights that the self is ephemeral, fragmented and discontinuous. These ideas become very important nowadays in the field of family social work, where the emphasis is on the family as an individual and its ability to live in society. While keeping in mind all the processes of changes in society, it becomes more and more challenging to live independently, primarily where a lot of structural social problems exists. Then the question about personality is raised. Layder (2004) wrote about the concept of self and self-identity, developing a view of the self as having a measure of freedom from the grip of language and discourse, while also recognising the importance and influence of such factors. Layder (2004) states that personal identity is not a simple social construct, but has a definite, individual, and subjective existence partly independent of social forces.

Witkin (2012) states that dominant discourses in our society are not only alive in the language we use, but also in such encounters as institutional settings (services). Witkin (2012) highlights that those institutions influence our lives, and it encompasses not only material but also, regulatory structures. As we are human beings in this world, it also affects our values and the way we interpret the life we live. Witkin (2012) defining social constructionism highlights the importance of considering our participation in *world-making*, the realities we and others experience. The strong dimension of language and two dialogue appears to concern the social origins of what is regarded to be true, rational, and moral and concerns the practices that these dialogues generate and maintain. Social constructionism also has a broader dimension of social construction. The emphasis goes on *what* and *how*: the *what* constitutes a socially constructed product, for example, mental illness, family, childhood and their connection to historical, cultural and social factors. In this process, *how* things become socially constructed is examined. For example, how FSWs construct factual accounts through the dialogic process. Language is the primary way in which we regulated our actions with others.

According to Hall (2012), social constructionism is a philosophical approach maintaining that reality is unequally experienced, interpreted, and created through relationships. He explores how facts are constructed, describing social constructionism in four main areas: the meaning is not inherent in an object, event or relationships; we bring meaning to events, objects, and relationships; meaning is controlled by language; language and meaning are negotiated. The meaning is placed on the object once the object is interpreted.

Dean (2012) emphasised that the language we use is a form of political and social action. Meanwhile, Gardner (2012) describes that this may be the many

ways of interpreting. She writes about reflexivity as a tool in the understanding of how people construct their understandings and are impacted by the social understandings of others. Reflexivity, like social construction, invites FSWs to see the world from many perspectives rather than a dominant narrative. Major (2012) suggests that social workers should see things more than from one perspective. Social constructionism ideas are particularly well suited to practice with families in the child welfare system because this perspective emphasises the notion of meaning and its understanding of the societal context. As social constructionism can offer a way to see different attitudes, truths and realities in this research, it was imperative to reveal the different types of attitudes of FSWs and labels according to the child and their parents. It is essential to disclose these, because if those labels become part of identities or social workers attitudes' towards their evaluation work, it may have direct impacts on their social work practices. It becomes essential for FSWs to ask themselves *how* to investigate and understand the child and their parents' identities. All meanings are contextual and perspectival, that means that meaning will vary on those perspectives which are salient. According to Stanley (2017) risk is considered a historically, culturally and socially generated reality. He discusses that people who are named risky are considered as potential dangers to themselves or others. Within neoliberalism, the risk is individualised: the emphasis goes on individual responsibility to the neglect of the influence of structural inequalities (Stanley, 2017).

Parton (2012) analyses sensitive social practices throughout the world and states, as practitioners must now rethink the way they work, paying attention to new procedures. Usually, in FSWs' rhetoric, families and their members are necessarily seen as lacking something. Parton (2012) argues that social and economic factors play significant roles. Postmodern perspectives are primarily united by several cultural projects that proclaim a commitment to heterogeneity, fragmentation, and differences. Affirmative postmodernism cannot offer the truth, but it is not without content. It is interpretative, and its focus is receptivity, dialogue and listening to and talking with others. It also suggests that social work could be (re)interpreted as being postmodern all along.

The acknowledgement of uncertainty is central to the framework of postmodern social work. This position of uncertainty means that social workers approach each situation respectfully keeping in mind differences, complexity and ambiguity. Partnership and participation are essential between client and FSW. Parton (2012) states that definitions and interpretations are historically contingent and context bounded, hence: fluid. The constructive approach emphasises process, the plurality of both language and voice, possibility, and the relational quality of knowledge. Defining the families' categories into legislation means that those social categories are seen as historically and culturally specific. So, recalling previous texts written in the past, the terms social risk family and the multiproblem family have a history

themselves and clear cultural differences within different societies where language on the same object is used differently. Such categorisation of people leads to social classes and divisiveness. Also, it influences people's personal lives, especially beliefs on social issues appearing in the family as a temporal problem.

Our knowledge and understanding of this world is developed among people in their daily interactions. Practitioners have a right to feel comfortable with not knowing the answer (Walsh, 2012). In these uncertain practical situations, social constructionism helps in every day knowing: to understand the perceptions of reality from our daily behaviour and relations. FSWs, with their shared and hidden narratives, are subjective realities from which this research can construct multiple identities of social work practices.

Once one understands that the world is socially constructed, it turns them towards alternative thinking in many ways, especially in their methods of acting in social work practices. Knowledge is historically and culturally specific, but social work practice is contextually bounded. Families who are experiencing social risk factors as social construction are placed in social categories created by the legal acts in Lithuania. All the social categories within society create reality; and, if we understand that it is fluid, it becomes essential to discuss the construction of knowledge. Authors, Berger and Luckman (1999) and Potter (1996) see the social world as the life world of individuals answering the question: how do a person's experiences take a solid form as enduring entities and structures? In this case, what is being stressed is a contract of parts of the standard or storybook view which treats science as producing increasingly accurate and compelling descriptions of an external reality.

Besthorn (2007) states that we construct worlds through the various conceptualisations, perceptions, values, explanations, language experiences, narrative, dialogue, and conversations that appear in interacting with others. Also, Hammersley (1992) states that reality is socially described together with the subjective experience of everyday life when the world is not understood as an objective reality of the natural world. Constructionists have concentrated on *incomplete knowledge*. People do not use descriptions just for their own sake. Descriptions are performed as parts of actions which are, in turn, embedded in broader sequences of interaction. Scientific descriptions are produced in a context of different theoretical and practical concerns, and scientific descriptions are successful in so far as they build on those concerns. This research sought to consider the explanations and attributions in terms of the actions involving FSWs. As Potter (1996) would say, the social world of science is produced in the speech and writing of the different scientists.

In the Lithuanian public discourse, family social work is considered as a dangerous profession given that practitioners have to work under challenging circumstances, such as psychological and physical violence, societal pressure, fears concerning child safety, and sometimes hopelessness while working in complex practical situations. Stanford (2011) researched risky ideas and how those ideas are constituted and

incorporated into social workers' interventions. Eighteen research participants from different practice contexts took part in this qualitative research. A Researcher, the same as in this research, was asking research participants to provide practical examples of their practice. This had a significant result for the social worker and, at the same time, it was challenging or considered as difficult to answer. Research data revealed that risk operated as a complex moral construct, which influenced practitioners with risk-based dilemmas when put into practice contexts. According to Stanley (2017), the spread of risk consciousness is directly related to the dominant discourses in society, particularly globalisation and neoliberal discourses. Social workers' direct practice with child and parents provided critical contextual information that enriched the meaning while understanding the concept of families who are in a high-risk environment. In most cases, the risk environment is the consequence of many structural problems faced by families, be it poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, or lack of various institutional support.

A person can be described in many social positions because the identities are multiple and it depends on the context. Our identities are not fixed; they are always changing. The woman who states she may be a *bad mother* may be helped with support in recognising herself as a *good mother* through the lens of political implications (Burr, 2015). Burr explains that women who are taking care of children at home, spending much time with them, cooking, cleaning the house is seen as *good*, while women working as does their partner are named as *perfectionists* or carrier seekers. In those cases, especially while working with mothers, practitioners should support the mother to find ways to construct herself outside of such damaging motherhood. The critical question here becomes: what kind of motherhood is *good* for *you*? Here, such cases can be analysed through the discourse of womanhood. The family is socially constructed but can take different forms of participation. Dominelli (2004), claims that the emerging forms of families promote the stigmatisation of families and affix the labels of either *good* or *bad* families. She denies such a distinction, arguing that not all parents have the same resources needed for adequate living conditions (Dominelli, 2004).

Social constructionism raises several topics that were born through the development of constructionist social work practices. Parton (2003) distinguishes six key areas that reflect the paradigm of social constructionism in the fields of social work as science and practice. He states that it is essential to recognise the terms we use to understand the world around us and ourselves. Social constructionism requires the development of a critical position in light of our interpretations of world perception. In the practice of social work with families, family members are invited to analyse their daily routines and move them from home context to broader social contexts. When applying these perspective ideas into practice, we find that many therapies support FSWs to reach this aim. Solutions such as brief therapy, narrative therapy and other therapies that focus on the language we use can be applied.

The social world, involving us as individuals, is a product of social processes that reveals that nothing is in itself a gift or determined in nature. There are no essential things in people that would be hidden and determined by people to be as they are. The family facing structural problems in society is a product of the politics that exist. The family itself was not determined to live such a life and this is a critical statement for FSWs, because a lot of psychologised stories in the public discourse exist, especially in mass media. Social categories and concepts are seen in historically and culturally specific contexts. We cannot believe that our perception is inevitably the same as others and is closer to the truth. Social constructionism states that there are multiple realities and they are not fixed or kept as total truths. This idea is fundamental in FSWP. It is not easy to live in this neoliberalist society, as blaming culture is becoming more and more visible. The discursive thoughts that *luck is self-made* widely exists.

Oko (2008) argues that reflection involves *thinking about something*, whether it is a concept or idea, feelings or behavioural consequences, it involves questioning skills. Reflection is a process in which experience is explored to increase understanding, sensitivity, ability to analyse, and compassion. The question is whether families who are experiencing difficulties can think and act critically. Brown and Rutter (2006) argue that critical thinking includes a reflective dimension, and in social work practice, family members can reflect on what situations they are experiencing. One of the ideas of a social constructionism perspective that FSWs have to understand in practice is that the role of the family is equal to him or her, and here the competence of listening and questioning is essential. A social worker, as a mediator should help families promote their activities through targetting, and should raise the awareness of families and the ability to express their experience based on arguments arising from life experiences. An active person, able to overcome difficulties in the social environment, finds the causes of problems and resources to solve these problems. There is an essential context in the perspective of social constructionism. If the client resists, he or she wants to control his or her life. The ability to reflect stimulates learning from experience. Reflexivity is particularly emphasised in social work practice because a reflexive FSW can integrate knowledge, values, abilities into his or her work while at the same time learning from gained experience. Adams, Dominelli and Payne (2003) claim that reflection refers to being in a cyclical process in which social workers analyse the experience arising from the field of social work practice. By emphasising reflexivity in the process of social work, we can understand and construct or reconstruct life-like aspects that arise from people's problems. A FSW, becoming reflexive with a family who has debts, may notice how the destructive fear of debt can have a direct connection with the ability to establish new relationships (Adams et al. 2002). Constructive social work practice can empower families to become active agents of their lives.

Social constructionism recognises that there are different meanings constructed about factors and events, for example, the context in which the social services

provided may affect the existing constructs (Oko, 2008). Individuals have practical knowledge of the world and transfer this practical knowledge to their usual activities (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 2003). *Social knowledge* baggage is a family's knowledge of its situation and its limitations (Berger, Luckmann, 1999). In order to understand the discourses, their interpretation is necessary. Therefore the connection between the experience of social service recipients, the existing constructs and the interpretation of the researcher becomes relevant after the analysis of the data obtained during the research.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) analyse the characteristics of social constructs and the recognition of them in social work practice can be significant in developing new knowledge and helpful strategies. Social work with families enables FSWs to work in practice through creative experience, knowledge and skills. Social work with families has for a long time raised a professional issue of how to work effectively and how to achieve positive changes in families' lives. Families need to become active recipients of services when they realise that they are receiving social services, aware of the reason for their being targeted, and try to solve the difficulties they encounter in the process of receiving social services.

In this chapter, theoretical considerations of postmodernism and social constructionism were discussed; moreover, these ideas were described as they are seen and used for this specific research. In concluding this chapter, we must acknowledge that when writing this text, the FSWPs are changing further, because these are not static actions carried by computers or technical workers. FSWs together with families themselves and their multiple identities, are changing FSWPs. Even at this moment, while reading this text, the practices are changing. In the next chapter, an overview of international research on family social work will be presented.

2.2. International research on child and family social work

As it may look, social constructionists do not believe that families who are experiencing social risk factors may be categorized in some way. According to authors such as Hall, Juhila, Parton, and Pösö (2003), there are no universal clients in social work, using term clienthood instead of the category of universal client. Social work is a profession intertwined with many interactions. People communicate, are changing their opinions, arguing with each other, and providing stories. In those cases, they construct social realities and negotiate these. In this research, it was possible to be familiar with this reality by analysing interpretations of FSWs in everyday practice cases. In this chapter, international researches carried out on the FSWP field will be analysed. In the presented researches' results, the contextual factors of Lithuanian FSWPs will be considered.

Powell (2013) states that *social work* itself has power: this is true. Families themselves are open about the private spheres of their home settings, their personal life stories, and the difficulties with which they live. In most cases, social services are not voluntary. Different kinds of power relations circulate in the context where FSWs are working with complicated families' situations. Power relations may be expressed in discourses that are influenced by legislation, institutional rules, or they can appear in face-to-face interactions between FSWs and clients. Following the ideas of social constructionists, it can be discussed that this reality can be disclosed through experienced relationships and interactions (Cooper, 2001) where knowledge is a result of participants' assumptions and anticipations of the world.

Lithuanian FSWs purely express their opinions in the public domain, they stay on the organisational level, and more on an individual level, keeping their opinion in silence, not discussing their experiences publically, for example in TV, newspapers, social networks. Jundälv (2019), conducted a study in Sweden, in which over one 1500 social workers took part. The key idea was to analyse how social workers see themselves in the eye of public discourse, especially when what they and their experiences are addressed in the press. Research results show that social workers are avoiding expressing their opinions in order not to be blamed, harassed or bullied. Research participants also stated that, due to their positions and in order to safeguard their jobs, they largely fear the position of politicians. So, they do not express their opinions in the press or other platforms. It can be said that the situation is prevalent, especially when comparing the data with the research data of this dissertation.

Relating to this topic to be blamed or work in silence, Vyvey et al. (2014) discuss a critical topic regarding the meaning of the word *risk* and how it has impacted the direct social work practice within families. Nowadays, family social work has become more controlling, managing, beholden of responsibility, and focused on securing the social work practice, rather than focusing on the needs of the individual family members. Vyvey et al. (2019) discussed that the current system tends to be composed of *anxious* professionals. Researching in Belgium, they focused on social workers in order to start a conversation about the stressful practical cases and their impacts on social workers' well-being. The authors state that practitioners are working in fear of blame from organisations or society itself. Being frontline workers, who are facing the culture of blame, FSWs deal with moral dilemmas in order to act professionally, purposefully, and meaningfully. This way of working utilises the more radical and logical working methods, blocking alternative points of view of the complicate, private, familial situations. The reflective practitioner disappears in these practice encounters and is blocking personally from working according to a logic of risk avoidance. The Belgium context which was described by Vyvey et al. (2019) seems to be very similar to the Lithuanian context. While reading this research, I recognised our research participants' FSWs, narrations exhibiting commonalities, especially while speaking on the culture of blame.

As FSWs deal with moral dilemmas the topic about interpretative repertoires of roles of FSWs was revealed. Research results revealed that Lithuanian FSWs interpretative repertoires of roles appears among professional, public and organisational discourses. Interesting research relating this topic was carried out by Juhila in 2009. A conducted study with social workers who were working with homeless women — trying to answer the research question: what kind of interpretative repertoires are written into their diaries with an attitude to relationships which appear between the social worker and the client was done. As interpretative repertoires are defined as a relatively coherent way of talking about the same objects, Juhila (2009) revealed six interpretative repertoires according to their everyday practices with homeless women. As a key ontological research object was relationships, such interpretative repertoires were revealed: the repertoire of care, the repertoire of assessment, the repertoire of control, the repertoire of therapy, the repertoire of service provision, and the repertoire of fellowship. Juhila (2009) ended her study with clear conclusions: social work practices are not suited by modern societies' need for the results of welfare to work promptly. In fact, long-term services are necessary, keeping in mind how deeply the client is confused in his or her personal lives.

Each social work practice case is individual; no one can estimate how quickly the results will be reached. Also, social work as a discipline is a macro-scale social institution with prescribed norms, and rules (Juhila, Mäkitalo, Noordegraaf, 2014). Mäkitalo (2014) speaks about categorisation in daily interactions. Talks are categorised themselves and the role of the social worker becomes to recognise those categories and to be ready to respond and build interventions based on this. For example, she provided an example of clients' categorisation in groups such as mentally ill clients, and victims of violence — the research families used for this dissertation experience various social risk factors. Categorisation also leads to connecting clients into pairs, like wife-husband, child-parents, child-mother-child-father, and so on. It is essential to legitimise professional talk in institutional practices as it becomes necessary for FSWs to know how to do this professionally. Their daily talks are sensitive, so in order to be disclosed whether or not a child is at risk requires the performance of a role such as a legitimate knower, which allows the intervention in the lives' of private families. In this carried research, categorisation was analysed into reported practical cases, which were done by FSWs and the most important category pair was found to be the social worker – family relationship.

Social work is like a bridge between government initiatives and private client lives (Hall, Juhila, Matarese, Nijnatten, 2014). Social workers perform a crucial role while managing social problems within society. Excellent communication skills for FSWs are a crucial professional skill needed in their everyday face-to-face client interactions (Hall, Juhila, Matarese, Nijnatten, 2014). FSWs are working with different types of encounters, for example, clients' homes: they must meet organisational

requirements and also experience the boundaries of their professional roles. In many cases, this leads to FSWs having a lot of interactions; therefore, the language used for interpersonal communication is the primary professional tool in the field of social work practice. Those interactions require a lot of efforts and professional knowledge, especially when FSWs are providing counselling services. An increasing number of daily interactions and dialogue requires a lot of strength within FSWs. As Hall, Juhila, Matarese, Nijnatten (2014) state that talk and interaction is the backbone of social work. Furthermore, in negotiating and direct interactions with each other in social work, it is necessary not to become an advice-giver, because as Hall and Slembrouck (2014) argue, in such cases, professional dilemmas will ensue. Discourse analysts say that advice-giving may be a part of longer-term agreements between social worker and client. This process creates an opportunity for not only agreement but also for long-term thinking. Forrester *et al.* did a study in 2019 and measured the quality of practice focusing on the working skills, which were related to seven groups and divided into three dimensions: relationship building, proper authority, and evocation of inner motivation. They made a statement that, currently, there is a gap in understanding social work practice because researchers are not focusing on how much key professional skills are important to direct practice and what type of meaningful outcomes they support. Research findings show that for relationship-building empathy, collaboration and autonomy are *the* key professional skills and this relate a lot with this study carried out in Lithuania. Good relationships make an influence on parents' engagement for a positive change. Social workers' engagement in their direct work is also a key factor contributing to changes in private family lives and purposeful acting.

In the research carried out in this dissertation, the clients' categorisation is revealed when FSWs define their clients by categorising them according to the specific features like: *unmotivated, addicted, mentally ill, lacking of social and parenting skills*, and so on. In social work practice, there are many cases when stigmatised talk occurs and this happens with involuntary clienthood (Juhila, Caswell, Raitakari, 2014). For example, a family may resist participating in the program while the FSW is trying to involve them in it. In those cases, two different sides are visible: the FSWs are trying to follow policies while families are not willing to participate. FSWs reporting discussions about their daily work practices is evidence-based knowledge that this is not just talking about the past, but it creates the possibilities to talk about the changes in the present time (Juhila, Jokinen, Saario, 2014).

Other researchers, Nijnatten and Hofstede (2003), did a study about clients' identities which were constructed under the supervised family sessions and care plans management. In one of these cases, quality of parenthood and its identities were constructed and clustered into three basic groups such as social skills, pedagogical skills, and economic management. The results of this study are not suggested to be generalised for all possible cases into practice, but still, there is a point which

is similar in other cases and even in the context of Lithuania their research results are similar with the study I did: they made a conclusion and discussed that the clients' identities are usually constructed through (in)capabilities. For example, lack of social, parenting, pedagogical or financial management skills, leading to the construction of negative identities which are constructed when encountering parenthood. Nijnatten and Hofstede (2003) argue that the main role of family supervision sessions becomes to empower family members to think about the future and their profile, given that this discloses internal motivation factors for change in their personal lives.

As with this dissertation, I missed FSWs voices about the children stories. Basically, they were concentrated on the mother above other members of the family. I found Nikander (2003), Ferguson (2017) and White (2003) studies, where engaging texts about how the decisions and construction of the clients are made when the client is absent. Client categorisations were set in two clear directions: clients' categorisation in institutional encounters and the decisions made in action. White (2003) expanded the idea of child voices, believing that childrens' stories can more deeply shed light on the lived reality of the family. Ferguson (2017) speaks about the invisible child in FSWP encounters. Ferguson (2017) was trying to understand why, in direct social work practice, children become invisible. This issue was also highlighted in Lithuanian family social work narrations; basically, interventions are focused on parents, and especially on mothers. As Ferguson (2017) states, social workers do not succeed to connect with a child because they are more parent-focused rather than child-focused. Ferguson (2017) is not blaming social workers for not being skilful or not having professional competences; however, he argues that when children in families become invisible, detachment from children occurs.

Williams (2019) also stated that relationship and strength-based approaches to the families influence the engagement into services and its effects. She focuses on a restorative approach which is mostly applied nowadays towards child and family services in the United Kingdom (UK). The key idea of the restorative approach focuses more on restoring the relationships of the families and children who are faced with multiple problems. Williams (2019) did a study with the TAF (Team around the Family) in Welsh and used focus groups and observations of family visits for data gathering. Research data showed that this method put into practice helps to not only to focus on a person as a problem, but invites practitioners to look around and try to answer how the current situation affects family, and what type of resources are needed to rectify. The restorative practice approach involves aspects from solution-focused therapy, elements from motivational interviewing, and features from the strength-based perspective. This study is very important compared with the research carried out in this dissertation. When asking what type of methods FSWs apply to individual family cases, we saw that FSWs paused and pondered, in some cases not yielding any answers to the question, as it is seemingly too complicated. It was

understood that FSWs are weak to speak about working methods, disclosing a lack of professional knowledge.

In Sweden, Ryding and Wernersson (2019) analysed family support social workers' experiences while applying the family-centred Family Check-UP (FCU) model, specifically on its possibilities for practitioners' reflections. It is known that reflection is an essential and necessary tool for social workers' self-awareness because it deters from burnout, and helps to understand feelings, emotions and thoughts. In order to help others and to provide qualified social services, FSWs must take care of their professional well-being. Reflection supports FSWs to understand their actions, or at least to consider their experiences in the broadest context. It is important to create a space for practitioners to reflect because this leads to the professional growth and to the learning organisation's profile. In the context of Lithuania, the main tool for reflection is supervised sessions that, according to the legislation, are compulsory while working with families. At least three academic hours per month for supervision should be allocated. However, not only group supervision sessions are used in practice; very commonly, FSWs reflect after the home visits, either individually or in meetings with their closely related colleague: research data revealed that FSWs like to talk and reflect in pairs with colleagues.

Regarding workers who are working in helping professions, as Weinberg (2018) discusses, they continuously encounter situations necessitating the pondering of professional skills and how to act ethically to meet the norms of society. She states that nowadays, dominant discourses are principle-based and relationship-based, but in the field of social work, the second one is dominant and most recognised in institutional settings. It is more familiar to the field of social work because it addresses features dialogically and is contextually bounded. The relationship-based discourse to ethical behaviour included emotions and differences (Banks, 2004). In this discourse analysis, the concept of equality is crucial, as it keeps in mind how clients who have fewer opportunities and access to societal resources struggle with power relations. The key idea is to change such a structure and to help the clients to their goals. For professionals, the structure helps in giving the ability to recognise the limitations and insufficiencies of the actions carried out.

Furthermore, as the social work profession is based on a *collaborative practice model* and oriented to the needs of the family, it becomes essential for individual family members to be involved in the decision making process. FSWs are following the norms of legislation and regulation in order to meet societal standards; but, on the other hand, caring professionals are needed to help the clients to accept the least damage inflicting decisions. In those cases, FSWs perform the professional role of advocacy in order to motivate the clients and to make they are aware of the potential resources that may be distributed to reach the client's needs. Following the discourse of the relationship-based model, the key focus is on the practice context where FSWs act, joining the community members, following values,

creativity and courage as the key principles of help for ethical action (Weinberg, 2018).

As previously mentioned, Weinberg (2018) argues that it is essential to involve clients in decisions making processes. O'Connor and Leonard (2014) conducted a qualitative study analysing the factors that influence this process. Carried out in the UK, the research participants were frontline social workers. The decision-making process is a very important part of the family social work practice as it internally involves decisions according to the assessments done, methods applied or individual help-plan construction. O'Connor and Leonard (2014) found that the passing of time, the impact of emotions, and the strength of voice are the most powerful factors which influence the decision-making process. In the context of Lithuania, decisions according to the family situation are accepted into family case review meetings. From the stories which were shared, we understood that FSWs are the primary influence on the decisions made, and family members as active participants in the decision-making process were not recognised.

Schietecat, Roets and Vandebroek (2015) analysed one of the discursive social problems in social work: poverty. In the context of Lithuania, especially within the field of the family social work practice, poverty is a crucial social problem faced by FSWs in their everyday practice. Issues of poverty are becoming increasingly popular in political discussion. While analysing literature, the concept of social investment and its practical implementation while constructing poverty as a problem in social work is highlighted. Following the ideas of this concept, parents' engagement and education are the main practical guidelines on how to overcome poverty issues and their effects on child well-being. Children who are living in deplorable living conditions are not receiving adequate nutrition, education or other necessary services.

Schietecat et al. (2015) open the floor to discussing whether or not social work can address the issue of poverty, or is it the role of the state, policy instruments, or perhaps the EU? Within the realm of International social policy, child poverty is addressed and highlighted; however, many countries continue to struggle with this issue. In the context of Lithuania, many households are living under conditions of extreme poverty where the discourse about child well-being is minimally present and limited to a discourse of acceptable minimal resources that can be recognised in families, especially divorced ones. As the parenting discourse in European family policy appeared in the 1990s, individual responsibility according to the parents was emphasised nearly twenty years ago. This tendency leads towards parents, especially the underprivileged, to become controlled by the state, while attempting to overcome their poverty issues.

Furthermore, the discourse of parenting became a public one, leading to the ideology that social investment in early childhood education has long term positive outcomes leading to the overcoming of poverty issues (Schietecat, et al., 2015). A

discourse of individualism according to the position in the society is therefore clearly visible within Lithuania society. A scenario where private lives are personal matters and where discourse is about unequal opportunities or structural inequalities to participation in society does not exist in broader terms than family or institutional settings. Meanwhile, Mikkonen et al. (2020) researched the topic of child abuse and neglect, developing the concept of moral agency by analysing different qualitative studies where the targets were children and their parents. Different forms of moral agency were described and presented. Individual levels were revealed when comparing the study's data with this dissertation's research, highlighting the sensitivity of social workers. Authors (2020) highlighted that on an individual level when social work practice cases are associated with child abuse and neglect, the emphasis of moral work is driven by the social workers' sensitivity towards individual family situations. Mikkonen et al. (2020) concluded that this is very important in social work practice, FSWs should have such professional skills to be individually sensitive, culturally translative, politically engaged, and globally aware.

Moving forward, Gümüşcü, Nygren and Khoo (2018, 2014) researched the family's definition and the management of complexities in the child welfare system. They analysed social workers' professional skills how they deal with complexities in their everyday work encounters within children, families and organisational settings. They argued that complexity may not only be personal or individual to the family, as with, for example, child neglect, or lack of parenting skills, but it can also be faced within the *adult* world, where the problems are faced are those of poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, as examples. Gümüşcü, Nygren and Khoo (2018) argue that social work with families with complex needs is a complicated practice field because social workers have to involve elements from systems –thinking, and evidence-involved practice, while at the same time dealing with moral areas in order to find the reasoning to their decisions. While comparing the situation with Lithuanian family social work and this dissertation's carried out research in this context, some similarities and differences were found. In summary, in the context of Lithuania, FSWs are keen to follow systematic thinking and legislative guidelines. However, the most problematic issues arise when no solution can be offered to clients, especially when parents are dealing with adult world problems. Here, the cycle begins: it is not enough to have excellent parenting skills, parents also need other resources in order to take care of their children, such as adequate living conditions, and universal services for child and parent. The main difference being those investigations are usually built on parents' experiences rather than the children's; but, the situation is changing slightly, and a child-centred approach is increasingly dominant within the practice of family social work while working with families with complex needs.

Olteidal and Nygren (2019) did a cross-national study in Chile, England, Lithuania and Norway investigating family social work intervention processes while focusing on how social workers balance child and parent rights with social policies

in eligible ways. Two different types of discourses, like private and public family, were analysed. In the context of Lithuania, social workers' views on child and parent are private, and family policy typology, according to Hantrais (2004), remains re-familiarized. Under this thematic analysis, four major themes were revealed: definition, complexity and acceptable family practice; children's and parents' rights and roles; and, finally, resources, which extend at the discretion of the family and social workers.

Pösö, Pekkarinen, Helavirta and Laakso (2018) researched voluntary and involuntary child welfare. The research findings are sensitive and drive pondering on the matter: the authors discuss how the Finnish child welfare system is not only family-oriented, child-centricity is at its lowest level, and the system is overwhelmed with power and force structures imposed upon children and parents. While in the Lithuanian context, this topic is unexplored, especially from the perspective of children and parents. FSWs do not take children from the families, this is the function of child rights specialists, but FSWs have to write reports about the situation in the family and, based on this information, child rights specialists are preparing the documents for the administrative court. There are always two poles, but in these cases, the child is first in order to safeguard their right to live safely rather than in harmful environments. Foster care campaigns become more and more popular in the context of Lithuania in order for children to not be raised in statutory care. Still, the results are not ideal, especially in rural areas.

In my research one of the topic of everyday ethics is central. Social work is a part of public policy, meaning that the ethics of practice are very important for social workers, not only on an institutional level, but also on a societal level. FSWs at their practice have considerable responsibilities towards their clients according to their environment: promoting client well-being, thinking of innovative ways for the client to live, choosing which method to apply, how to motivate clients for a change, or how to promote their active participation in society. Clark (2000) speaks on the responsibilities of social workers, emphasising issues of poverty (and the handling of these), and the development of care for the child when the family is dealing with social risk factors. Also Slembrouck, Hall (2014) talk about guidelines, expectations and rules which are ethical and technical standards met by workers in the organisation. Boundaries can be a professional boundary, as between client and social worker, and boundaries of the workplace, such as between social care worker and supervisor. This research focuses on both poles. Boundary work was analysed throughout the professional roles and everyday ethics in the FSWP field. Boundary work has two primary poles, but still, boundaries are not static, and they are changing throughout time. Everything depends on negotiation between the FSW and the client, or between social worker and supervisor.

Family social workers nowadays are under strong economic focus, where the emphasis goes on long-lasting effective results and the high quality of provided

social services. There is less and less space for self-awareness and professional development left for practitioners. In order to improve the quality of social services and be aware of family social workers, professional development organisations' are very important. When there is an understanding that human resources are the most important for the organisations' development, a discourse regarding higher quality social services can be constructed. Recently many debates in social work are about accountability. In the context of Lithuania, this is of most importance while providing the reports of what has been carried out every quarter. This is also about the clients' accountability encounters in everyday practice – this is what is going to be agreed upon and achieved. Matarese and Caswell (2014) differ on two accounts: the first is accounting *for* actions and the second is an accounting *of* actions. The key difference between these classifications is that when we are talking about accounting *for* actions, the object will be focused on someone's reprehensible behaviour. On the other hand, accounting *of* actions means that the objects are stories about the events.

In summary, this chapter demonstrates that family social work as a field for research is quite popular. Contrasting with the other researches carried out on the international floor, this study provides new knowledge about moral spheres in family social work, while also focusing on the importance of professional roles within different encounters at home, in institutions and in societal settings. As social constructionism highlights: meaning is not the same everywhere, and knowledge cannot be automatically transferred to different contexts. So, this research provides new knowledge specifically regarding Lithuanian family social work discursive practices, focusing on the social services discourses (psychological, sociological and alternative ones), professional roles and ethical acting. In the next chapter, the research methodology is described.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1. Research design and research questions

The research design was developed according to the ideas of social constructionism. It is understood that both written and spoken language as constructions of the world are oriented towards social action, and the language used is always context bounded (Jorgensen, Phillips, 2002). Social constructionists state that attitudes are formed through social activities. Thus, within this study, attitudes are not seen as stable, but as products of social interaction. Following these ideas, many articles and books were analysed, which led to the choice of a qualitative approach. Family social work practices were analysed not only at the micro-level but also discussed using the research data within a broader context. In order to do this, the discourses of those within the field were analysed through the use of research questions.

Researcher and the research participants in this research, who were FSWs, revealed FSWP discourses in the context of Lithuania, trying both to generate and actively reflect on knowledge creation and production (Butt, Parton, 2005). Thus, knowledge was encapsulated into scientific articles discussing how this data can be interpreted and used in scientific or practice areas. We see research as a co-production of knowledge between the researchers and research participants. The Researcher is the one who holds the research material, the one who tests theories and interprets the results with the co-authors. This study implements the idea that our subjective experience is provided by the discourses in which we are embedded. Each of us has a position in a discourse, and this tells a lot about our subjectivity. Discussing subject positions, we have to outline that some of them might be long-term positions while others might be temporary. They are changing in our negotiation between social interactions.

The Researcher's position in discourses highlighted above is of utmost importance as it forces the research designer to stop and think about the type of discourses are embedded within me. When I was writing my research proposal for my Doctorate studies at Lapland University, I stated that social work is like jazz: the music is dynamic, always changing, not stable, and dependent on the audience. As a Researcher, it was recognised that the interest in a qualitative research design was due to the Researcher's prior experiences, which were gained through the implementation of qualitative researches. And so, capitalizing on author strengths, such as active listening and questioning in sensitive topics, the methodology took form. Moreover, we acknowledge our personal involvement in the field, having

gained two years of practical experience in the family social work field, during which work was done directly with families who were facing social risk factors in their daily lives.

The background of the research methodology is based on interpretive-constructivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology, in order to keep in mind that social phenomena do not occur themselves; instead, they are constructed by different social actors: individual persons, groups, communities, researchers, and so on. The origin of social constructions is associated with interpretative thinking (Andrews, 2012). Social reality is understood by its interpretations done by the Researcher and research participants. There are many types of cognition in subjectivist epistemology, but in this research, the emancipatory type of cognition is chosen because it focuses on social justice, the independence of research participants to be a part of this study, equality, and power balance (Bryman, 2008). Gilgun (2012) argues that qualitative research is action-oriented and highlights that researchers usually want to contribute to the social well-being of individuals and families. The world is recognised throughout those interactions, which are subjective and value-based. A set of fundamental principles underpin social actions.

The main research question is to reveal *how FSWs construct their everyday practices and interpret them in professional, public and organisational discourses*. In order to reveal the object of the study, the main question was divided into following *research sub-questions*: 1) how do FSWs construct their workday while working with the child and family in home settings? 2) how do family social workers construct their own and clients' roles? And, 3) what kind of professional challenges have they experienced as FSWs?

The study aims to shed light on family social work through analysing the constructions of FSWPs in Lithuania, focusing on social service discourses, ethical considerations and professional acting. *The object of the study* is discursive FSWPs in Lithuania.

When the research design was created, we recognised that the concept of social welfare in this study reflects the institutional position, meaning that the social problem is seen broadly, as the weaknesses in the public system. In the Lithuanian context, there is still a negative attitude on receiving social services, because the dominant discourse in the media is constructed such that if people are a part of the social service system, they are labelled as having problems which they are incapable of solving independently. The position taken in this paper is that each person has a right to social services in order to live a dignified life, regardless of the structural issues affecting the individual, family, group or community.

Social work practices can be researched within human social interactions yielding qualitative data which is later on interpreted and analysed. Knowledge production is a subjectivist way of understanding the social world we construct. In this research, research participants are held as the experts of their professional activity field, while

the Researcher is the bridge connecting FSWs to the broader society through writing about co-constructed family social work discursive practices in the context of Lithuania. In the next part of the text, the research process and methods of gathering data are described.

3.2. Research process and methods of gathering data

The first stage of the research began in 2012. Data were collected both with FSWs and clients. Five FSWs and five families participated in this stage of the study. The transcriptions totalled over one-hundred-and-fifty pages. After the completion of this stage, a new design for data collection was developed and implemented. The new data were collected in the three largest cities of Lithuania (Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda) from November 2014 to November 2015. These cities were chosen because they had the largest number of families receiving social services at the time. Moreover, Vilnius is the fastest-growing city in Lithuania. The most significant number of FSWs are working in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda given the need for social services for families who are dealing with social risk factors. Usually, lack of parenting skills, addiction, and cases of violence, are the consequences that mostly those families live in, leading to impoverished home environments, which are vulnerable to unemployment and huge poverty issues. It is important to note that the aim was not to compare cities but to provide wide-ranging data on family social work. Seven interviews were conducted in Kaunas, twelve in Vilnius and six in Klaipėda. First, the data was collected in Kaunas city, later on in Klaipėda, and at finally in Vilnius.

Based on the number of inhabitants, Kaunas city is the second-largest city in Lithuania. The number of inhabitants is nearly three hundred thousand. The city is usually known as a student city. Also, Kaunas is recognised as a large centre of industry and business, where, in 2017, 31% of existing economic entities were in wholesale or retail trade. According to the number of inhabitants, Klaipėda city is the third-largest city in Lithuania, with nearly one-hundred-and-fifty-thousand inhabitants. The city is known as a coastal city because it has the only port in Lithuania. The strong industrial competencies in shipbuilding, metal structures, chemicals and plastics, food, beverages and tobacco, wood processing and furniture are found in this area. Lastly, Vilnius is the capital of Lithuania and is its largest city with over half a million inhabitants. The city is recognised as the heart of business with a lot of small and large national and international companies.

The implementation of the research design was iterative and followed the structure shown in Figure 1, below. It is necessary to mention that the preparation for the study took time given that the research design was created and recreated several times until the final decision according to the research object and the

implementation territory of data gathering was taken. After, the preparation and discussions with supervisors, data began to be collected in this field. After collecting data in each city, consultations with supervisors were conducted. During collection, there was much reflection upon the collected data, focusing on data processing and analyses, meaning that the key ideas and findings that arose from each stage within the research process were reflected and discussed. The research was conducted openly in view of the public in order to gain feedback. After all of the articles were published, a final chapter was written. Everything in the research process was cyclical, but the goal was to implement a study and to finalise everything in a final report.

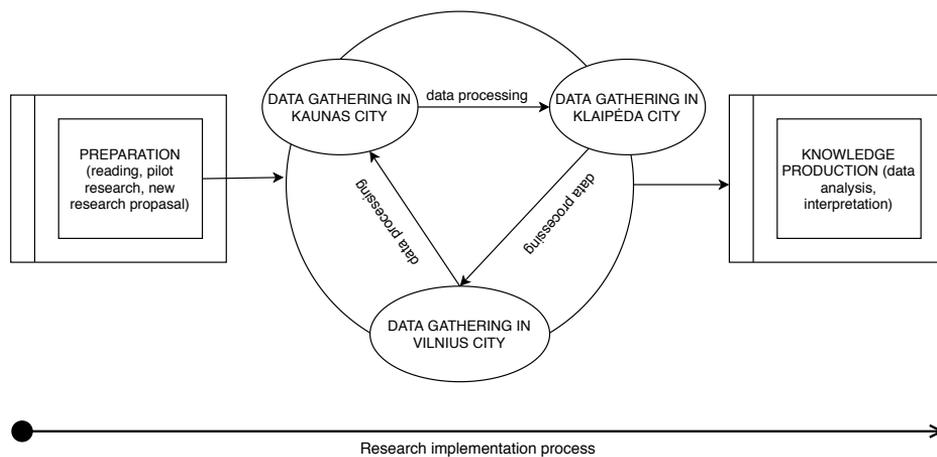


Figure 1. Circulative process of research implementation

Research participants. Family social workers from the statutory social service centres were involved in the study. In order to reach social workers who fit the criteria, an informational email was sent to the heads of the social service agencies as a form of recruitment. With regards to criteria selections, criterion sampling was chosen given that it ensures that research participants have rich, practical case information and are able to talk about the weaknesses of the system, which is an opportunity for improvement of FSWPs in the context of Lithuania (Parton, 2002). Also, criterion sampling is a way to ensure that quality data is gathered. The selection criteria for the FSWs were as follows: 1) gained at least a bachelor's degree in social work; 2) had a minimum of three years of job experience in the field of family social work; and, 3) was working in a statutory agency that provides social services for families at the time of the recruitment. In the family social work sector, there is high employee turnover due to the massive levels of stress caused by the practicality of the field. So, in order to gather qualitative data, these criteria

were created and applied. Parton (2002) states, there are no rules for size inquiry in qualitative research strategies, but everything depends on the purpose of the study. The intention was that FSWs fitting the criteria would volunteer to participate in the research.

In order to contact supervisors, the project was supported by a university colleague who wrote the first e-mails signalling this project's existence. The heads of the agencies were informed about the research aim, object and research questions. Also, the criteria for the FSWs were explained. Afterwards, emails were received from the heads, with the mobile phone of each FSW provided. Those who fit the criteria and volunteered to participate in the study were enrolled. Later on, FSWs were contacted and provided with more detailed information and gathered their informed consent forms to participate in the research. For flexibility, research participants were asked to select their available schedule and preferred location for the interview. Most of the interviews were conducted in the social workers' workplaces (Klaipėda and Vilnius) and others in public areas, such as a park, or a coffee bar. The average age of the participants was 36.64 (ranging from twenty-six to fifty-seven). All research participants had at least one degree in social work. Nine FSWs had completed a Master's degree in Social Work (MSW), sixteen FSWs had completed their studies at the Bachelor level and had finished their social work study program. The average number of years of their practice experience in the field of family social work was 6.72. Later on in the text, each FSW is coded and referred to in the following way: SW1, SW2, SW3...SW25. All research participants are presented in Table 3, provided below.

Table 3. Research participants' characteristics with interview information

City	Age	Work Experience	Education	Interview time
Kaunas	35	7	MSW*	09.11.2014
Kaunas	31	7	MSW	09.11.2014
Kaunas	29	7	BA in SW*	11.11.2014
Kaunas	41	7	MSW	11.11.2014
Kaunas	26	4	BA in SW	12.11.2014
Kaunas	43	8	BA in SW	12.11.2014
Kaunas	30	8	BA in SW	06.02.2015
Klaipėda	29	5	MSW	15.06.2015
Klaipėda	28	3	MSW	15.06.2015
Klaipėda	37	8	BA in SW	15.06.2015
Klaipėda	27	3	BA in SW	15.06.2015
Klaipėda	35	8	BA in SW	16.06.2015
Klaipėda	37	8	BA in SW	16.06.2015
Vilnius	29	4	BA in SW	04.11.2015
Vilnius	57	8	MSW	04.11.2015
Vilnius	52	6	BA in SW	04.11.2015
Vilnius	32	8	MSW	05.11.2015
Vilnius	32	5	BA in SW	05.11.2015
Vilnius	34	8	BA in SW	06.11.2015
Vilnius	30	6	BA in SW	06.11.2015
Vilnius	33	8	MSW	06.11.2015
Vilnius	35	8	MSW	08.11.2015
Vilnius	30	8	BA in SW	11.11.2015
Vilnius	30	8	BA in SW	11.11.2015
Vilnius	39	8	BA in SW	12.11.2015

MSW* – Master's degree in Social Work; BA in SW* – Bachelor's degree in Social Work

The study sought to reveal its aim through the analyses of the constructions of FSWPs in Lithuania while focusing on social service discourses, ethical considerations and professional conduct by using the semi-structured, dialogical interviews as a method for data gathering (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). All twenty-five interviews took place face-to-face and one-on-one. Before each interview, introductions were made to explain for what purpose the data will be used. Each of the interviews were done in a flexible manner and with a fluid-structure, giving opportunity for the discovery of unexpected themes. A relatively informal style was used given that the interview was not only composed of formal questioning, such as question and answer interactions; rather, they were conversational. Open-ended questions were

developed and categorized into three separate blocks aiming to cover the object of study, keeping in mind that knowledge is situated and contextual (Mason, 2007). So, the interviews were steered to be more dialogue-driven interactions to ensure that context could be captured and focused upon while co-producing knowledge. This interaction actively involved both the interviewer and interviewee.

Qualitative interviewing as a method for data gathering was chosen as the primary method given that we were interested in discursive constructions of FSWPs on the bases of FSWs' everyday activities. This way of gathering data was optimal in order to listen to FSWs, to ask them questions, to observe their articulations and analyse their language when constructing a discourse. Semi-structured interviews as a tool for data gathering was used. Flick (2018) states that semi-structured interviews help researchers to disclose *subjective theory*, or, the research participants' sophisticated stock of knowledge about the research object which is going to be studied. In this way, the project seeks to reconstruct their subjective theory about discursive FSWPs.

This type of interview was used as it allowed for the discussion of unexpected topics regarding everyday practices in family social work to arise. FSWs were intensively asked to provide practical cases in order to gain a deeper understanding of the study object. The interviews always ended with the following questions: what question should be asked that was not asked here today regarding the topic? What additional question would you provide to the next research participant? And, finally: Using three words, how would you describe social work with families? This last question was provided in order to come back to the beginning stage of an interview and in order to summarise the subjective story stage which was constructed throughout the interview. All the research participants were pleased with this question. Some of them were laughing, some of them stayed in active thinking position, but all of them answered this question very seriously and with a sense of responsibility, as felt by the interviewer.

It is difficult to conduct a good qualitative interview, it is hard work (Mason, 2007; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). The interviewer played an active role along with the research participant as a co-producer of knowledge production. Ethical questions were considered and will be presented in a later section entitled Ethical Research Principles. However, it is worth mentioning that to conduct ethical research, previous researchers' understandings were used as support. Moreover, the Researcher's academic experience in qualitative research methods and practical experience working as an FSW added dimensions to the study. Also, the knowledge gained from a 2017 summer school program hosted by the Vilnius University and organised by the Nordic-Baltic Doctoral Network in Social Work (NBSW) dedicated to user involvement and ethics in social work research helped to frame this study. Discussing the data with other researchers from Nordic countries helped in broadening knowledge on ethical questions, transferring ethical considerations from the research design and implementation process in the qualitative study to the actual field of family social work.

3.3. Data Analysis Method and Stages

The first step was the audio recording of the interviews. Second, upon finishing the interviews in a city, the interviews were immediately transcribed. Third, a careful reading of the transcripts was done; these were then used for coding the material and data analysis. The length of the interviews varied from one- to nearly two-and-a-half hours. The transcriptions totalled over five-hundred pages of transcriptions. Interviews were transcribed twice given that the first transcriptions were lost, causing a crisis moment in the research implementation period, but later on realised that this aided with data familiarisation. Therefore, it was better for the analytical process, not considering the efforts to do it again. Afterwards, the new transcriptions were immediately transferred to the research supervisor and were saved at Lapland University. In order to maintain the quality of the transcriptions, a transcription foot pedal was used.

Qualitative research requires a data analysis method, which clearly explains arguments, and involves understanding complexity, details and context (Mason, 2007). The data analysis aimed to produce contextual understandings with detailed and informed consent data. There are several versions of discourse analysis such as critical discourse analysis (CDA) referred to as Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA), narrative analysis, discursive psychology, sociolinguistics, thematic analysis and others analytic versions. In this study, two types of analytic versions were applied: discursive psychology and thematic analysis. From the discursive psychology point of view, FSWs' everyday activities such as justification, rationalisation, categorisation, attribution, naming, and blaming as understood by Willig (2013) are ways in which research participants manage their stake in social interactions in everyday contexts. It is associated with discourse practices. Discourse analysis has been developed from various backgrounds and is focusing on how something is said as a relevant approach (Flick, 2018). Also, discourse analysis was chosen because it is not limited to naturally occurring interactions but involves such data as texts, such as interview materials where both participants need to provide answers to the questions. Mason (2007) states that discourse analysis covers a range of things, where some forms are associated with postmodernism. Willig (2014) argues that researchers who apply discourse analysis are particularly paying attention to used words in order to express or describe the social realities.

In this research, we used a discourse analytic version to social psychology developed by Wetherell and Potter. Nowadays, and usually, in the literature, this method is known as discursive psychology. Potter and Wetherell's scientific works were followed as they are key persons in developed discursive psychology. They outline a discourse as *interpretative repertoires*. Discursive psychology focuses on the analysis of speech in interaction. It might be a direct conversation during staff meetings, cases in conferences, or it can be especially for research designed questions

(Burr, 2015). The concern of discursive psychology is how people build defensible identities, how they construct and present version of themselves as *factual*, and how they legitimise their actions. “If we think of ideology as a society’s *common sense*, the beliefs and assumptions that just seem obviously unquestionable to people, then it is clear that this ideology must get imparted and reproduced through language, through people talking to each other, and become part of our psychology by our own use of them in our talk” (Burr, 2015, 187).

Thematic analysis as an analytic tool for data analysis was applied during the first phase of analysis. This analytical tool for data analysis was developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The following stages were followed during the analysis:

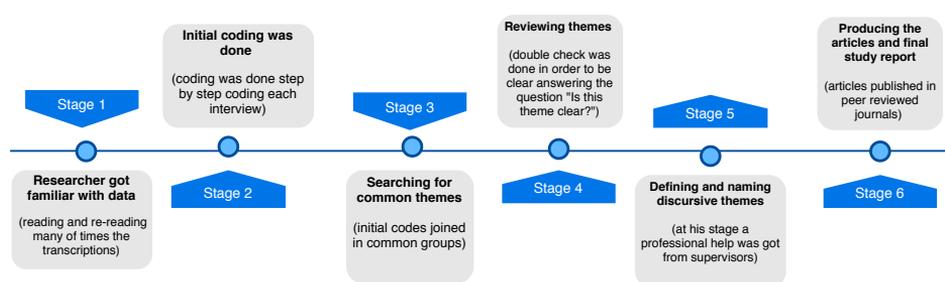


Figure 2. Data analysis stages

The analysis began with the reading and re-reading of the transcribed texts. The first step in applying discourse analysis after transcribing was coding in order to identify common themes which appeared in the text fragments’ categorisations. The themes appeared not only from theoretical reading but also directly from the reading of the transcripts of the interviews. The text was coded according to the service discourses that were theoretically described by Healy (2005). During the analysis process, the constructionists’ sensitivities and assumptions about language, interactions and society, as well as the theoretical underpinnings and the research question, were taken into account. Also, in one part of the research, the data were coded based on the accounts given by social workers concerning ethical problems and their considerations in confronting a family’s need for help. In the second phase of data analysis, discursive themes were elaborated upon, which were related to ethical considerations regarding the dignity of the client and societal inequalities, especially issues of poverty and social control and support functions.

Thematic analysis as an analytical tool was chosen in order to work with research material systematically in order to produce an informed description of the research phenomenon. Working with the text in a line process as provided in a figure above, the most challenging stage was not to group commonly coded texts into meaning

groups, but rather to cluster those meaning groups in higher-order themes. It was decided that core themes, according to social service discourses and the constructions of everyday ethics baked into FSWPs, will be involved in the analysis process as the main themes. An inductive (theme of everyday ethics was constructed inductively) and deductive approach to analysis was applied.

Once the interview transcripts were prepared, meaning units were joined into codes. Meaning units consist of features which were mainly related to the interests of the study, which was implemented when an inductive analysis was done. This was approached differently when the theme of social service discourse was elaborated upon. A deductive way in categorising social service discourses was used because a pre-existing coding frame existed. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that constructed codes should be connected into initial thematic maps. Below, an example of one of the first thematic maps according to the theme of everyday ethics is provided:

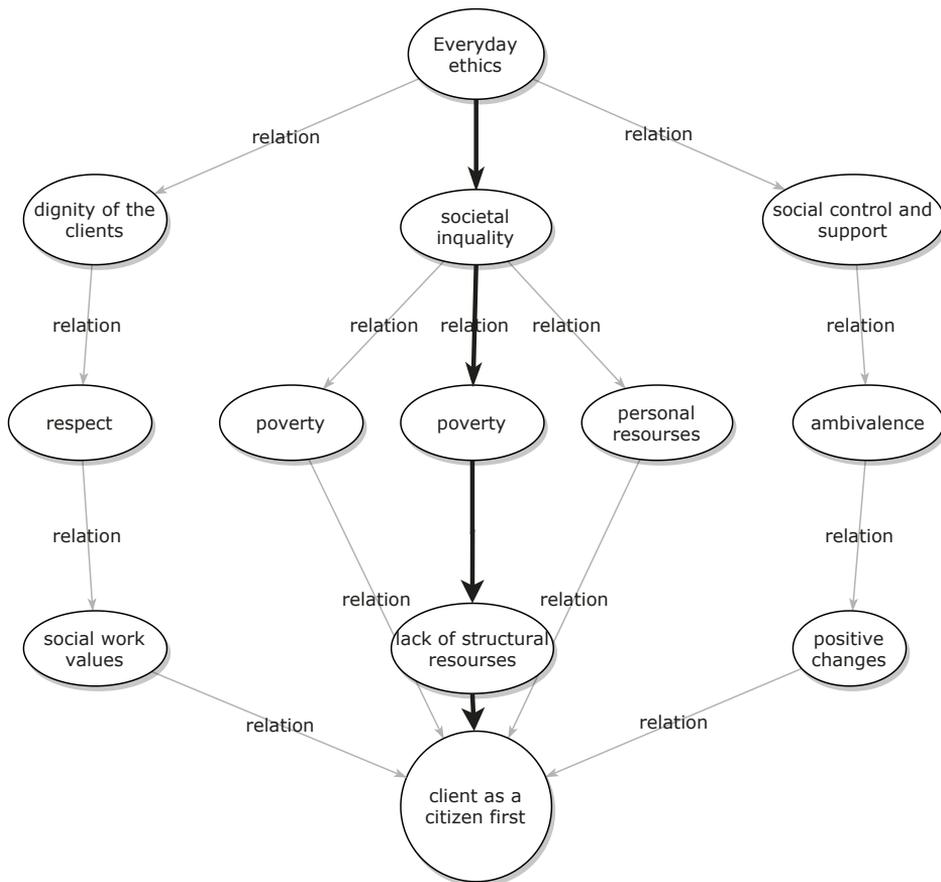


Figure 3. Thematic map

Reading from the left to the right side, *ethical principles* were coded in accordance with FSWs narrations. In the middle of the map, the bold line refers to structural social problems faced by practitioners in direct practice when reaching the main goal to see empowered client, which is coded as *client as a citizen first*. The right side of the map highlights the main function delegated by the state to FSWs — social control and support. Performing this function, frontline workers express a sense of ambivalence, but they strongly believe that it is possible to achieve positive changes in the lives of an individual child and parents.

The second phase of analysis was based on the interpretative repertoires analytical approach. Thus, using this analytical approach, the following were targeted: crisis points, figures of speech, categories, and the constructions of everyday practice events and their representation. *Interpretative repertoires*, used in FSWP constructions, were analysed. Crisis points, as Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) wrote, are the moments where signs appear to indicate that something is wrong with an interaction. After interviewing all participants, a particular *interpretative repertoire* was sought. During the analytical, there was a focus on context, variability, and constructions in the text (Flick, 2018). Interpretative repertoires used in the text were finally analysed.

Afterwards, the social positioning of the constructed FSWs interpretative repertoires were described in the context of broader discourses. An essential function was to pay attention to the action orientation of the speech. For example, when a FSW receives a task from the Department Head and wonders about the legitimacy of such behaviour, we looked toward the crossroads cases, what discursive strategies for actions appear to be trying to answer to the question: *what is this text doing?*.

Applying interpretative repertoire analysis to the research produced knowledge about the discursive practices of family social work which surface throughout particular interpretative repertoires. In the analysis process, the text was analysed for overall contradictions. Later on, interpretive repertoires were analysed into mezzo and macro structures of society in order to justify FSWs' everyday practices at the micro-level of social work practice. The key metaphor for analysis was that *FSWs can solve any societal problem*; this was discussed this with FSWs in order to identify patterns of the variability in direct conversations focusing on core metaphors throughout the analysis of practical cases. These patterns are considered as interpretative repertoires.

Also, data collection is much easier than data analysis, as the latter requires a lot of personal efforts and energy, spending much time reading, discussing, and pondering the same questions over and over again, while still sensing that another researcher could interpret the data in an entirely different way. Thus, this qualitative report seeks to produce knowledge regardless of its subjectivity, given prior experiences in the FSWP field which have been influential in data analysis. Of course, this

brings about strengths and limitations. Researchers feel very strongly in knowing the context from which discursive FSWPs are constructed. And so, this dissertation holds much respect from the practitioners who both read and discuss the data from the texts.

3.4. Ethical principles

The social world as a product of social processes is full of different bodies of knowledge, which can be understood and interpreted differently by each person in his or her situated circumstances. Mikkonen, Laitinen,^à and Hill (2017) explore five ethical notions and their connections with the knowledge production process. They highlighted the importance of *recognising hidden and silenced knowledge, reflecting on the limits of understanding and knowing, understanding social hierarchies among research participants, understanding gender inequality and patriarchal restrictions, and producing good*. For this research, it was crucial to keep in mind the ethical responsibility continuously. Social constructionism takes a critical stance on taken-for-granted knowledge. So, thinking about the ethically conducted study is not an episodic moment, but constant. For example, social work practice with families could be discussed in different discourses and meaning settings, where *only one* truth does not exist. For example, the notion of family has changed over the decades and has different meanings in different contexts (Burr, 2015). Thus, the question surfaces regarding ethical researching and how to become familiar with the world in which we live. Can this be answered simply by asking? In wondering how to ask ethically, how to be an active listener and be how to be involved in the active thinking process arose. In this part of the methodology, ethical principles which were essential to the research will be described as they were involved in the entire research process.

First, an ethical consideration which should be answered before moving forward to the details of the ethical principle descriptions applied to this study will be explored. During the process, when collecting the data, seven out of twenty-five research participants asked not to have certain parts of their interviews publicly disseminated. Some of them questioned the future use of the transcripts and the records. All the research participants were informed that they control the information that they wish to share. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) presented different ethical issues, such as informed consent, privacy, harm, exploitation and consequences for future research considering three different diverse perspectives. The research found itself in *ethical situationism* as a diverse perspective, which highlights an emphasis on the avoidance of serious harm to research participants, and insists on the legitimacy of research. Altemmark (2012) was writing about the issue of privacy, arguing that research participants have a right to control information

relating to them, and they must give their permission for particular uses of it by researchers: this was the final answer to the questions regarding the recorded data. We researchers are responsible for the writing ethically, and for ensuring the security of the data. Research participants' choices and their right to express their ability to participate were respected throughout this study.

The study complied with general research ethics guidelines and ethical research principles (Peled, Leichtentritt, 2002; Bryman, 2008). Every research participant was respected with their right to autonomy accepting the decision to participate in the research or not. As mentioned above, each participant, after the agency administration permitted for a research implementation in their agency, got an email or was reached by mobile phone and was invited to take part in the study.

The principle of confidentiality was applied. As Israel and Hay (2006) state, the principle of confidentiality is often a question of discussion in the field of bioethics where the doctor and patient relationship according to the confidentiality is discussed. In the studies carried out in the social sciences field, the principle of confidentiality is crucial, especially because research participants were being invited for interactions in the context of research and asked to disclose their personal experiences gained in the field, meaning that some private data may be revealed. In order not to rethink the names of research participants, a researcher decided to code the research participants as SW (social worker), providing them with a unique number acting as their identifier. The numbers ranging from one to twenty-five. In order to maintain trust, it is recognised that consequentialist arguments will be applied when applying the principle of confidentiality. As the principle of confidentiality is rights-based, researchers were always thinking about the informational, physical and proprietary privacy. Privacy means that the project was respecting research participants' autonomy and dignity. Participation in the research was not obligatory but only based on the principle of free will. This research principle derives from the human right to freely decide upon one's actions.

This research took on the responsibility for the ethical and dignified interpretation and presentation of the data (Bryman, 2008). Before starting to talk with research participants, each of them was informed that the data obtained during the study will be used for the final theses of doctoral studies and will be published in scientific journals. The information provided by the research participants was accepted and analysed without compromising on human dignity and respect, as each research participant's experience is unique and respected.

Another research ethics principle applied to this project was the avoidance of harm towards research participants (Bryman, 2008). This principle may be considered more during the research of sensitive research topics, but, it remains applicable to this project; namely, in considering how to render the interview process a comfortable experience for participants. Research participants should not feel exploited or discomfited but should feel open to dialoguing with the aims

to maximize the benefits to society as a whole, especially for those who are somehow related with the FSWP field (Israel, Hay, 2006).

Thus, an expectation was set: all involved research participants would be as Piper and Simons (2011) named intended participants. The concept of informed consent was applied in this study. Each research participant was informed about the aim of the study and possible harms such as tiredness or emotional embarrassment. Also, all the questions raised by interviewees were answered before the beginning of the talk. Almost, all the entirety of the research participants were interested in were the data would be published.

An interview is an interaction, so it took effort on behalf of both interviewer and interviewee. As Patton would say (2002), an interview is like an intervention, which affects both sides, but concentration on the purpose of the research was critical in order to collect high-quality data. In order to reflect the feelings and write down initial thoughts after each of interview, a researcher was writing a diary or sometimes making calls to university colleagues to reflect the ideas raised after each of interview. Also, e-mails, for supervisors were sent, and the feedback from them was the inspiration to move forward.

Qualitative research always requires a new approach from the researcher: the ability to collect research data and analyse it inductively. Thus, also recognised are the limitations that arise in this particular study. For the first time, a researcher chooses to extract discursive social work practices within the family social work field. When this research was occurring, it was important to give voices to FSWs who have been silenced for many years. Such a methodological was chosen in order to support research participants' subjectivity and situationality, but be able to recognise the context in which family social work is carried out.

3.4. Validity and Reliability

As stated by Silverman (2005), validity can be replaced by the word *true*. The word *valere* in Latin means "to be strong, good, effective, having a power and having value". Angen (2000) states that validity is described as the approval process. Throughout this research, I have been asking myself why the readers of this study should believe that everything I have written is true and reliable. Some questions related to the quality assurance in this research have already been answered in other methodology description parts, but in this section, I would like to shed light on the procedures that were applied in order to keep the criteria of validation. Also, in this part of the work, questions related to reliability are discussed and described.

In this research, I applied both types of validity: internal and external. Research participants were involved in research implementation process from the beginning to the end; it was important to keep a relationship in order to discuss and obtain

their views on the findings and questions that arose in the process. Research participants' attitude towards the data and the studied field is essential for internal validity. Thus, I was a part of the research because I performed an active role at all research stages. As mentioned above, mechanical recording and storage devices were used in the research. As the findings were published in separate articles, which were peer reviewed, other scientists (supervisors) were involved in the data analysis process. The high level of discussions about the data and meanings of interpretation, so that they would be comprehensible to other researchers despite the country they come from, allowed me to reach the internal validity criterion — the involvement of other researchers in data analysis process. External validity was reached by providing informed consent that included information about the research object and place, my role as the researcher and completeness of all the research stages. Further, I would like to clarify the approaches of validity that were applied in this study.

My study relies on the transactional and transformational approach to validity (Cho, Trent, 2006). The transactional approach is based on active interaction between the researcher and the research participants. The transactional approach to validity in qualitative research can be defined as an interactive process between the researcher, the research participants and the research data, which helps to achieve a relatively high level of accuracy and consensus of the facts, feelings, experiences and values (Cho, Trent, 2006). The transformational approach is associated with the clarification of the bias of the researcher (reflexivity). I kept a researcher's diary for self-reflection. The transformational quality of the study was also ensured by returning the research data to the research participants. Some of them, asked me to inform them on the publication of the articles. However, one problem was encountered: basically, all the research participants did not read in English. So, this was a barrier for the research participants to reach the study results, which was considered as the greatest limitation of the research. In order to fill this gap, I participated in national conferences.

I followed the criteria of validity described by Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001).

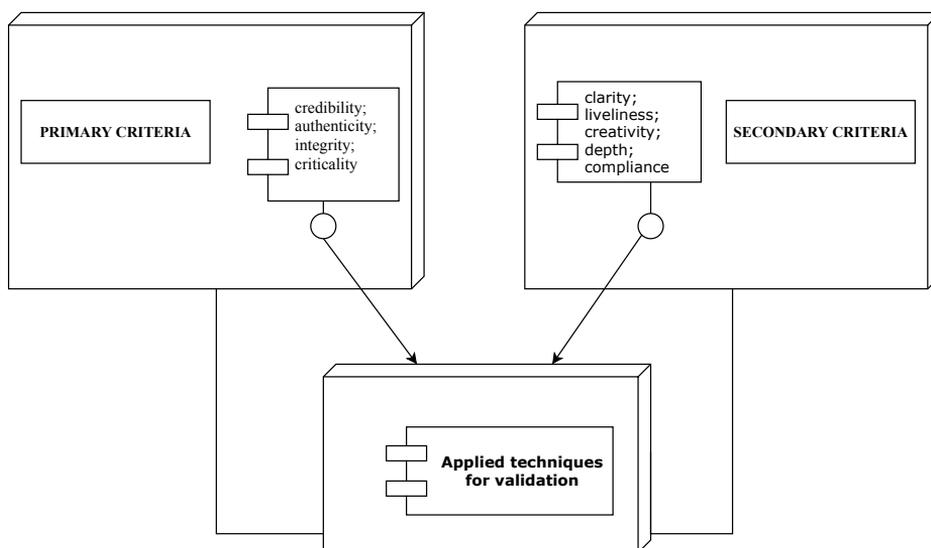


Figure 4. Criteria of validity

It may be assumed that primary criteria are more general and are applied basically in all qualitative researches. As Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) argue, they are inadequate by themselves, so the secondary criteria should be involved as they provide guidelines for quality and are more flexible for individual qualitative research study designs. The criterion of credibility is related to trustworthiness; thus, I linked the research findings with reality with the aim to demonstrate that the findings can be considered as truth. Authenticity as the criterion of validity reveals a unique research profile, design and methods applied. I attempted to maintain the truth of the phenomenon throughout all the study. In order to ensure the primary criteria of validity, i.e. integrity and criticality, I used reflection, open questioning and different types of analytical tools for the research data. These criteria were applied to interpretation when the interpreted data were checked and feedback was given by the external researchers for several times. The research process was implemented step by step, acting responsibly and critically.

The secondary criteria of validity are more closely connected with the implemented research study. The first secondary criteria applied in this study was clarity. I asked my supervisors to clarify the places in the interpreted text that were unclear and incomprehensible. These obscurities in the text may be explained by the fact that I am Lithuanian and my mother tongue is Lithuanian. The criteria of clarity may be associated with the auditability of the interpreted data. I tried to write in a lively manner by providing examples from the practice field of family social work or discourses constructed in different settings: media, institutions, etc. Data in this study were presented in different forms. A drawing platform was

used for data visualization. In order to follow the criterion of deepness, I tried to receive an informed consent on all questions provided in the research. I worked consistently; the implementation of the research and publishing of the research findings in scientific articles allowed me to satisfy this criteria. Finally, the criteria of compliance was applied. For me, this criteria was very important as it helped me to maintain harmony between theory and methodology. The leading question of the study linked the research to social constructionism and qualitative research design, where subjectivist epistemology was used. The techniques of validity were used in the following order: considerations of the design, generating data, data analysis and data presentation.

Reliability as a criterion for assessing qualitative research was also applied. I focused on the quality of the recordings and transcriptions. Flick (2018) argues that reliability in qualitative research can be increased by the interview training. This was not used in my research, but I left space for the research participant to be a part of the research and consider the quality of the questions provided by the researcher. Data analysis tools applied in this study increased reliability. The procedures clearly and well-described by the leading developers of these methods were followed in this study, which allowed to work in a structural way and provide reliable interpretations.

4. THE SUB-STUDIES AND THEIR MAIN RESULTS

The purpose of sub-studies was to produce the discursive constructions of FSWPs thus providing the incitements for its development in the context of Lithuania, focusing on social service discourses, professional acting and ethical considerations. The sub-studies consists of four articles published in peer-reviewed journals. In Table 4 below, the sequence of the articles is provided, presenting the date of publishing, the relevant research question and the main results. The articles are provided in the thematic order, and not in the order, they were published.

Table 4. Sub-studies and their main results

Article No.	Research data	Authors of the article ²	Research question	The main results
1	Interviews with FSWs and mothers	Motieciene, Roberta, Naujaniene, Rasa	How positioning of “risk family” woman through conversation with social worker and mother about social work process with family deploys different categories of motherhood and social worker’s positions?	FSWs see families who are receiving social services as homogeneous group members, which are typically defined as lacking something. The article revealed different narrations about the object <i>motherhood</i> . FSWs highlight mothers’ incapacities to be good mothers; likewise, a mother who is receiving social services sees herself as in a different position and also highlights her strengths and ability to provide suggestions for the changes in the social service system.
2	Interviews with FSWs	Motieciene, Roberta & Laitinen, Merja	How do professional social workers construct family social work when they are providing social services for families?	FSWs are standing mostly on <i>psychological</i> social service discourses. Thus, the main challenge is to see alternative service discourses which highlight the rights of the child and families and offers alternative ways of working in direct practice.
3	Interviews with FSWs	Motieciene, Roberta, Laitinen, Merja & Skaffari, Pia	What kind of roles do social workers take and are given in family social work?”	The results show that FSWs see themselves as less powerful than other professionals. Also, the article highlights that FSWs are not aware of executive roles and their functions, which generally could be assigned to FSWs.
4	Interviews with FSWs	Motieciene, Roberta, Laitinen, Merja & Skaffari, Pia	What kind of ethical questions must FSWs consider when providing social services in client’s homes?	It was revealed that FSWs construct their everyday ethics in the framework on an individual level, while mezzo and macro levels are missed. The biggest challenges are faced when the decisions during assessments or decision-making process have to be done. The crucial point regarding acting ethically appears while institutional or social pressure occurs on daily practices. FSWs are feeling a sense of fear and are not trusting themselves.

The first article, “Construction of *good* and *bad* Motherhood during the Critical Reflection on Experiences of Social Work with Families at Risk” presents the analysis of a case study. This article aimed to reveal the positioning of the *risk family* woman through conversations with social worker and mother about the social work process with the family which deploys different categories of motherhood and social

2 The first author’s major responsibility was to do an analysis and to write all the articles, while the second and the third one authors supported the main author by individual or online consultations and provided additional material to improve the quality of text.

workers' positions. This article is critical for the following articles, as their research questions were constructed after its publication. The data revealed that the FSW and mother construct different narrative discourses about their experiences while being a part of the social service system. Two different viewpoints disclose that FSWs see a client as passive and plan a support plan focusing on the disadvantages of the recipient of the services and express a distrust about the family help resources. FSWs' rhetoric constructs the position of a *bad* mother which was dominated by the negative attitude of the discourse towards the family experiencing social risk factors that prevail in society. Families are viewed as a homogeneous group with typical personal problems such as the incapacity to take care of their children, being associated with risky personal behaviour as well. In FSWs' rhetoric, such structural problems as unemployment and poverty were not mentioned at all. A researcher also was familiarised with another part of a picture interviewed the mothers' to gain their rhetoric, and such a paternalistic position was not recognised. She revealed that a *good* mother is active, understands the social service system, and can discuss the necessity of social services. Also, a research participant was able to discuss the causes of her situation, which was related to structural problems such as unemployment and poverty.

The second article, "Constructing Service Discourses in Lithuanian Family Social Work" discusses the construction of family social work through the analysis of services discourses. Healy's (2005) descriptions of services discourses were used as theoretical background. Two constructions of service discourses – consumer's rights movement discourses and psychological discourses on family social work were revealed. The article argues that FSWs' are individualising the personal characteristics and challenges they face. Further in the article, it is discussed how alternative service discourses (consumer's right movement discourses) are closely related to the dominant law discourses. However, revealed service discourses highlighted that moral issues are an essential part of family social work discursive practices and should be recognised in both social work education and the practice field. Research data shows that dominant service discourse in family social work practice is built on psychological service discourse, which was recognised in the organisational context. Psychological discourse features were revealed in such discursive themes as self-awareness of FSWs, reflective social work practice, thus meaning the ability to reflect and to be emphatic in listening and reacting to the needs of families. Also, such discursive themes as dysfunctional family behaviours, their categorisation and individualised family problems were constructed. In FSWs' rhetoric, the emphasis on self-awareness was highlighted in nearly all cases. Social workers argued that it is a critical component in effective social work practice given that before entering private family homes and encountering their personal life stories, the FSW should understand their emotions' origins and the way they come to family social work direct practice firstly.

Research data shows that FSWs experience barriers in their everyday work when they are trying to involve family members in, for example, the education system in order to ensure equal opportunities in education by locating accessible schools. Here, the stereotypes according to the families, who are dealing with social risk factors, appear. In the article, alternative service discourses were analysed when a barrier was met in attempting to involve Roma children in the nearest public schools. My research data revealed that social class divisions still exist. Here, public discourse of non-segregation is needed. Each child must have an equal opportunity to participate in society, and FSWs have a legal mandate to ensure equal rights for the child. As Southall, Lonbay and Brandon (2019) argue, social work practitioners feel helpless and deal with ethical issues when adequate resources do not exist within society. Institutions do not have the right to select comfortable pupils. In this context, by trying to protect the rights of children, family social workers take the role of advocates; however, practitioners face institutional resistance. For example, in their research carried out in Sweden, Münger and Markström (2019) openly discuss the fact that professionals who work in schools lack knowledge about the psychosocial mission of schools. School workers have insufficient knowledge about what it actually means for children to live in homes where domestic violence exist. In this context, Banks et al. (2008) discuss “institutional empathy”, i.e. the situation when different sectors of institutions are able to discuss and understand each other in a spirit of cooperation while working with families that are experiencing child maltreatment.

The third article, “Interpretative repertoires of FSWs’ in the context of Lithuania” discusses interpretative repertoires that appear among professional, public and organisational discourses. Throughout the professional discourse, FSWs hold a subject position as a professional social worker; the role repertoires are formed through the individual level and through direct partnerships with family members. Roles such as a defender, consultant, gatekeeper and teacher are recognised in the professional discourse. In the article, it is revealed that FSWs’ subject positions are also defined through the public discourses, the media and the Internet. Within this public discourse, role repertoires are constructed through cultural values, attitudes, myths and societal demands. The dominant constructed role of the *controller* was revealed. In public discourse, the professional aspect that FSWs are controlling the process of help and intervention plans, instead of individual family members’ lives, was not recognised. FSWs are working within different types of organisations where different inter-professional power relationships exist.

Research data revealed that FSWs suffer from a different type of emotion and anxiety because in some cases, they accept the decision to leave a child, for example, with a drunk mother. This is the result of the public discourse that the child has a right to live with their parents, but the state is not yet ready to offer enough resources to implement that statement. On the other hand, child rights specialists also apply

constant pressure on FSWs to solve the problems that exist in families as quickly as possible with an effective result being required as soon as possible. The question about the resources and the inadequate number of foster carers are not recognised in the FSW's narrations. Research participants in their narrated interviews disclose that moral imperatives according to their identity as FSWs appear. They saw themselves as moral agents, but the profession is devaluated in society. Often, they are feeling a sense of alienation.

The fourth article, "The constructions of everyday ethics in Lithuanian FSWPs" focused on the ethical questions that emerged during daily practices. FSWs' ethical considerations were analysed in the framework of *doing ethics*. In this article, the political and social contexts behind the processes that happen within families are explored. Research findings show that FSWs construct ethical questions through discursive themes, such as the client's dignity and social equalities. Special attention is paid to poverty issues, social support, and social control. Research data revealed that ethical dilemmas arise in the settings where FSWs have to make decisions or are doing evaluations according to the families with which they work. It was recognised that in daily situations, the actions done require professional knowledge in order to gain awareness of potential ethical questions. Thus, the article sheds light on everyday ethics where the individual and societal levels intertwine.

During the analysis of FSWs' narrations, it was recognised that they heavily express their emotions through language. Research data revealed that typical words according to feelings were either *good* or *bad* utilized as adverbs, which define their feelings. While the theoretical perspective is more concerned about the recognition of feelings and ability to take care of the self, in this research, this notion is interpreted a bit differently. In this research, the focus was on acting ethically while recognising the interpretative repertoires of professional roles. Research data revealed that FSWs usually perform their professional roles intuitively, which is built on previous life and professional experience. A key barrier for reflections and non-automatic acting was recognised. The expressed reason was a time limitation. Also, it might be a result of social work practice objectification (Harlow, 2003), meaning that FSWs in the organisational contexts are concentrating on family cases, which are measurable by evaluation of the timing and efficiency of their daily activities. Families' and social workers' emotional well-being goes to the second plan of marginalised organisation, which must follow bureaucratic rules that are defined by legal acts. FSWP remains the fulfilling of tables of care plans, as concentration on time is visible in order to reach the aims designed for FSWs. To establish a professional social work practice, it becomes essential to gain competence working in organisations, especially statutory ones, where the emphasis goes on the results. Here, the focus is on the ability to accept quick decisions, the effectiveness of the methods applied, and the ability to think critically in the everyday work practice field.

The legitimacy of social work as a profession consists of three points: how social workers work within the law; the law itself, encompassing people and seeking to support human rights; and, finally, professional actions that must be guided by expertise so that the first two points can be effectively implemented into everyday practice (Clark 2000). Ethical questions considering everyday ethics were constructed throughout the analysis of the research data. Components of moral spheres were revealed. First, the value and role of clients concerning the professionals' status and citizenship were analysed. Secondly, the confronting of the practical situation when facing social problems such as a lack of professional and structural resources to help clients was revealed. Finally, the evaluation and decision making in contradictory settings was discussed. Research data shows that these moral spheres are the most actual for FSWs. So, Public discourse about these contradictory experiences should rise to the public view.

5. DECONSTRUCTED EVERYDAY WORK PRACTICES OF FSWS

5.1. Family social work within a changing society

Family social work in Lithuania is constructed in the frame of increasing child protection services, with casework practice. The focus goes on risk measurement and treatment, rather than family well-being within society. The current situation in neoliberal society raises many questions considering the social work profession as a whole. High prices for housing, consumerism, inequality in the labour market, poverty, and unemployment affect families with fewer opportunities. Families who have a lower income, or have no stress coping strategies or at least their strengths are recognised at minimum level. All of this is a cycle in which discursive FSWSs circulate. Social work with families now focuses not only on the therapeutic function but also offers compassion and empathic reactions to the client's problems.

Family social work as a discourse within the Lithuanian society is recognised in the frame of working with vulnerable people on a more individual level as opposed to a profession which makes influence towards economic welfare of the state. Research data (Article 2, Article 4) shows that new expectations towards family social work are being constructed within the Lithuanian society. FSWSs see themselves in active interactions with clients, where the aim of helping becomes to raise individuals in families' awareness and ability to recognise themselves differently; but still, FSWSs do not realise that the problems are the result of the changing society in which families live, that it is an expression of the results of inequalities within neoliberal society. Thus, the questions then become, do moral, cooperative dialogue exist within the context of family social work, do the families become as a postmodern social conflict, or is it constructed as a sensitive group within such society with their own weaknesses?

Urponen (2017) states that social work nowadays should be considered as an economic factor itself as social work influences social capital and equalities within society. He pays attention to the fact that social work is exposed by new challenges caused by an ageing population, technological developments, long-term unemployment, political conflicts, production advances and finally by individualised societies. A new paradigm towards social work is thus developed. Urponen (2017) highlights that a paradigm such as *onto-praxeology* shapes traditional social work practice where ethical and moral aspects are weak in the social work practice field. The professor invites the reader to think not only about the number of problems rising within neoliberal society but also turns the reader to think about what type

of qualitative social changes concerning the nature and quality of the problems affect individuals and families. Thus, a new paradigm is needed in order to be able to understand the ontology and practical situations within the field of social work. In the fourth article, everyday ethics in FSWPs were discussed where discursive themes helped to reveal that FSWs construct ethical questions through the dignity of the client and societal inequalities that are traditional to the social work practice, while a new type of qualitative social changes which may affect clients were not revealed.

The qualitative research carried out in the context of Lithuania construct family social work discursive practices with an approach that it is necessary to analysing FSWPs not only on the economic grounds and calculations but also to view it from social investment (Urponen, 2017). When annual social reports were analysed, the economic way of reporting was recognised. Statistical data regarding the type of social services, structural changes in the social system, information about the salaries, the number of FSWs, number of families, and number growing children are provided. Also, information according to training and supervision are discussed, particularly in light of budgeting (amount of money spent).

Research data revealed that family social work as a discourse within a changing society is individualised and social problems are not seen on a political or economic level (Article 2). As Urponen (2017) argues, it is traditional to the social work practice to provide social services at the clients' homes because there is so little space in social arenas for social networking. FSWs see their clients within a viewpoint of disadvantages, lacking parenting skills, being closed-off, or addicted, and usually using alcohol in secret and after FSWs official working hours. This traditional social work practice approach leads to the bureaucratic management of social work organisation and social service planning and administration. Throughout this lens of approach, family social work discursive practices are concentrating on individual interventions and consultations. For example, while counselling parents who have addictions, a motivational interview is used as a method; or, if there is a lack of parenting skills, families are invited into parenting skills development groups. During the data analysis process the reconstructing of such an individualised social work practice in a broader societal dimension, where various structural problems exist and make a direct influence on FSWPs, was sought.

In discussing the political economic discipline in social work practice, it is necessary to think about what type of tool will be used. Parton (2003) argues that knowledge is the result of people's daily spoken interactions. Thus, following the ideas of social constructionism, the key tool to understand those interactions and the reality in which we live is *language*, meaning that FSWs are not technical workers, but professionals who can think critically and be able to discuss the praxis in a broader than organisational context. The traditional social work practice approach applied to direct practice is not supportive, because, in order to participate in the social arenas of society, a new way of thinking and new methods of working

are needed. FSWs in their daily working settings should analyse families' situations not only on psychological service discourse but also on sociological or alternative services discourses. Here, this research agrees with professor Urponen (2017) that the social work practice should be associated with sociological service discourse or alternative service discourse, where social arenas go firstly and the final goal of direct practice becomes people empowerment or psychosocial rehabilitation, including human rights to live dignified lives. Research data revealed that service discourses are divided as shown in the figure below. Three contexts, such as organisational (dominant), societal and political, appear. Each of them has specific discursive themes which were constructed through the data analysis (Article 2).

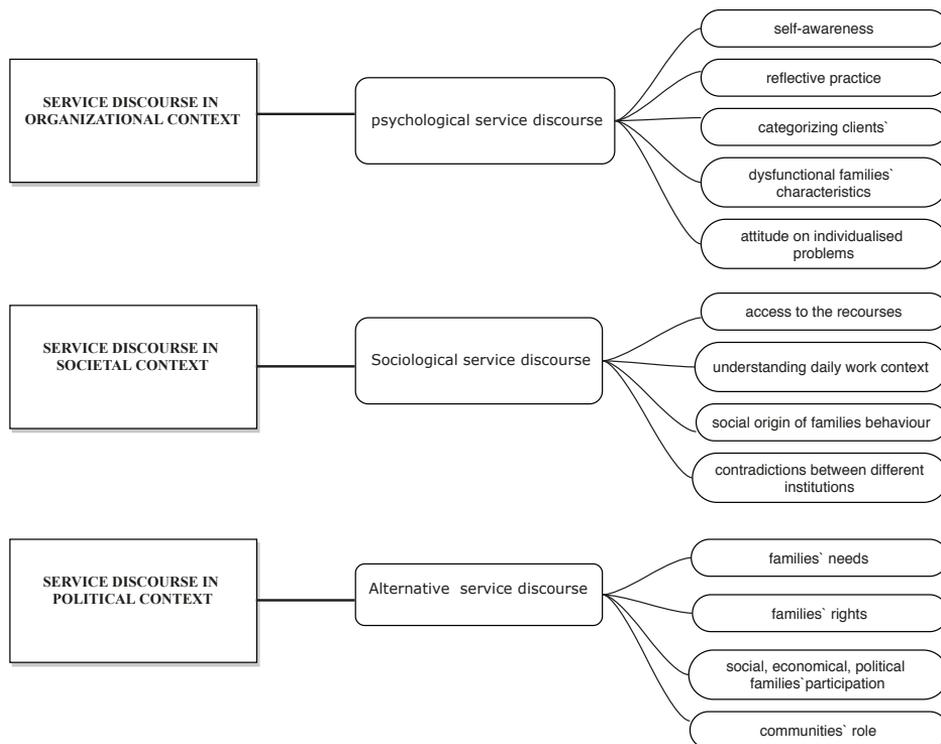


Figure 5. Service discourses in Lithuanian family social work

Research results highlight how psychological, sociological and alternative service discourses are intertwined in daily FSWPs (Article 2). The meaning of the word *discourse* according to Winter and Cree (2016; p.3) is *shared thinking about, understanding, talking, writing and practising around a particular issue located in everyday practices and decision-making process*. Healy (2005) describes the service discourses whose origins are derived from the disciplines of psychology and

sociology. Psychological service discourse focuses on micro level, especially when analysing the FSWPs everyday work cases, while sociological discourse highlights practice actions within broader context than family home, it is accessibility to community, institutional resources and etc. Thus, the third of the discourses in interaction is alternative service discourse, which concentrates on consumer rights movements, religion and spirituality.

In this research, psychological service discourses have been expanded and mixed with the ideas from other service discourses. New ideas are associated with the scientific knowledge of the management of people problems, highlighting psychological tools on categorising client groups through risk and transformation of dysfunctional behaviour. Nowadays, psychological discourse expanded the role of human services involving early intervention practices. However, psychological discourses have got many critics because they do not involve social, political or cultural factors. Service discourse on the organisational context is changing, as Healy (2005) states that emphasis on empathy and mutuality is misleading due to the statutory responsibilities, this is because the emphasis is on regulation, guidance and official procedures.

Service discourses on the societal level were analysed through the lens of sociological service discourse. Key discursive themes were constructed: access to resources, FSWs understanding of the context of their daily practice field, social origin of families' behaviours and the consequences of it, and, also, the contradictions between different types of institutions. FSWs are trying to name the phenomena they experience in everyday practice while also trying to guide the responses towards them. Sociological service discourses appeared into the social work practice when it was understood that psychological service discourse does not support the understanding of a person in an environment (Healy, 2005), the context through which family lives become an important factor in social work practice. In the interviews, participants were intensively asked to talk about their work environment in families' homes and to discuss these encounters. Those talks supported the understanding of how FSWs construct and see families who are receiving social services. Are they seeing family in home settings, or do they recognise them as active citizens of the society? FSWs use some features from sociological service discourse, and it was recognised that they talk about social services and practice principles based mainly on the individual level, and a bit on the community level as well.

Social discourses highlight that humans are social beings and that the problems which they succumb to should be analysed through social practices and social structures that maintain these challenges. Sociological discourses support FSWs in understanding clients' problems and analysing their social context. This research's (specifically Article 2, Article 3, and, Article 4) results highlight that if the social context is not involved in social work practice, clients' problems are going to be pathologised and personalised. By using this discourse in social work practice,

social workers are able to think critically and to understand the meaning of welfare institutions around them. The sociological approach empowers FSWs to critically examine social service practices and institutions which contradict with the families' values such as respect, self-determination and prescribed support goals. Paying attention to sociological service discourse which appears in the societal context and discursive FSW practices is recognised at a minimum given that the dominant service discourse was a psychological one.

This research (specifically Article 1 and Article 2) also discloses how FSWs are talking about familial needs, rights, and participation - particularly participation in community life. As Healy (2005) argues, consumer rights movements have challenged the dominant constructions of service users as passive recipients, promoting the recognition of families as active players in their needs determination. Consumer rights discourses highlight that families have their rights and capacities to participate in their needs determination in its entirety. Research data revealed that families are not active, but passive participants in their needs evaluation processes. The bureaucratic way and institutional traditions with provided forms of evaluation put families in the same framework, where there is little space for individual needs assessment left.

This alternative discourse aims to reconstruct the dominant constructions of *normal* and *abnormal*. Such words like equal and different are dominant. Consumer rights discourse is more oriented on the needs of the community than on for the cure. This discourse is a case for social inclusion implemented through the social service delivery process. FSWs use this alternative service discourse at a minimum. Research data revealed that to be upholding the families' rights in societal and political contexts is still complicated. Language is an essential condition for understanding the reality of everyday life, revealing the unique experience of people (Berger, Luckman, 1999). Dominelli (2004) says that there are currently some social constructs, or labels, that categorises the family as either *good* or *bad*. She claims that the family is socially constructed, but can take different forms. For example, the inability of a family to take care of their children may mean a different distribution of financial resources in society. Here, social work practice based on the political-economic discipline appears. FSWs need to understand and adhere to the principle that their clients become products of structural problems created by neoliberal policies and consumer capitalism (Denzin, 2002).

Social problems are not the same, yet FSWs typically name them the same; so, is it true that, for example, such structural problems as poverty are experienced in the same way? Some features may be the same, but people are different with not one identical identity, so to measure them with the same metrics would not be professional. FSWs need to empower their clients to find solutions for enhancing their children and parents' well-being. Here, through the role of empowering words, different types of intervention strategies are needed in their everyday social work

practices. Frequently, within the Lithuania society, there is a discussion about the lack of resources with which to live a dignified life. Here, the executive roles of FSWs are vital. If a person is empowered to participate in society, this leads to a direct benefit for both society and the person, because their progress is directly correlated. In the next part of the text, moral aspects of family social work discursive practices analysing contradictory views of performed professional roles are going to be revealed.

5.2. Moral aspects of family social work: contradictory views of performed professional roles

Professionals are working in very sensitive situations (see Article 1, Article 3 and Article 4) given that their home visits are associated with child protection concerns (Ferguson, 2016). Family lives form a moral area where people's identities and professional aims are constructed. A central moral imperative concerning the requirement for responsible adults and professionals is to prioritise the needs of children (McCarthy et al., 2000). In this part of the text, contradictory views due to moral aspects of FSWP will be analysed providing different expectations which were constructed by FSWs talk about their everyday practices with families while analysing practitioners' performed professional roles (see Figure 5 and Article 3).

Neo-classical economic discourse, according to the Healy (2004), emphasises open competition in the funding allocated for agencies. It would be preferable if the client or a third party would be able to pay for the services, but the key feature throughout this type of discourse is cost-effectiveness. Neo-classical economic discourses have had a significant influence on the FSWP and moral assumptions for its implementation within contemporary Lithuanian society. Research data revealed that FSWs construct their daily work success by the use of two pathways: first, problems were solved, and the family is able to live without the social workers' help; second, the changes were achieved in a short time due to the social services delivery process. These contradictions influence the way of working and shape the profession, creating the preconditions for the construction of moral worthiness of FSWP.

Moral aspects appear in the constructions of different contradictory views from a state, profession and clients. The dominant discourse is that a child has to grow up in the family, despite unsafe living conditions. Legal representatives of social policy argue that the priority is child needs and their safety. In the constructed public discourse, the responsibility for child rights specialists, case managers and FSWs is coupled with the expectation for them to be aware of everything that will be done in order to guarantee that the child is safe in his home setting. Research findings show that it is not rare to find a contradiction with moral aspects for FSWs according to the expectations from the state. There is a public discourse that the child should live

with their parents and should only be removed from the family when the second-level of risk is achieved within the home. Here comes a moral imperative for FSWs: the state has one expectation, and the family another, leaving the FSWs in the middle.

Statutory FSWs are working in order to protect child rights. Research data revealed that the priority of child safety is the most important moral imperative. However, FSWs revealed another side: in order to take the child from the family, it is necessary to have adequate social services to offer the child in return. There is a massive lack of care services, even the public discourse for this sentiment exists. Different types of social campaigns have been organised. For example, in Kaunas, there is a social campaign named after the city (Kaunas) offering a fantastic opportunity to become a guardian³. The results are not precisely cheerful; still, care centers are overcrowded and there is no guarantee of a safe, temporary environment for the child. So, there is a huge responsibility delegated onto FSWs to work in a way where parents will be able to take care of the child themselves, because the lack of adequate resources exists.

Changing the policy of family social work creates new contradictory views both state side and among FSWs and their clients. Southall, Lonbay and Brandon (2019) argue that changing policy highlights a tendency to focus on autonomy, self-determination and personal responsibility. These changes lead to social workers trying to fill the gap between the clients' profile in policy and practice. Research data revealed that new policy tendencies and strong marketisation shape FSWP (see Article 2 and Article 4). Long-standing statutory social work agencies who were providing social services were only one leader in the market; given the changing discourse, new actors have appeared on the scene. Now, statutory social workers are in negotiation with non-governmental organisations.

Social service organisations are just starting to work in a collaborative way, and discourse about competition in the market has since appeared. Research data revealed that the discourse of competition has two main features: the first being *efficiency* and the second being *assessment*. FSWs claim that they are more efficient because they are working in a statutory agency, which has been providing social services to families for a long time. Their agency has traditions and assessment tools, while others are just starting to provide social services. This discourse of collaboration was dominant in the capital of Lithuania because the research data was collected throughout the changing period, when social services were bought from Non-Governmental Organisations. All the research participants expressed their uncertainty about the future. They were informed that municipalities are going to buy social services from NGOs who are going to be leaders providing social services for families in the cities who are dealing with social risk factors.

3 <http://darbas.kaunas.lt/>

Furthermore, from the clients' perspective, self-determination and the ability to choose was highlighted. The narrations of FSWs revealed that social services will now be offered closer to clients' homes, which reveals the significance of responsibility in the family social work practice that is orientated on individual needs. FSWs' construct family as an active participant accepting help. Also, independent decision making is dedicated to families themselves, but still, the weaknesses and disbeliefs about positive changes in families' individual lives are dominant. Only a few FSWs narrate that their everyday practice is rights-based, which is one of the components of empowerment.

FSWs' contradictory views compared to the social policy statements can be discussed in a broader context. Here, as Owens et al. (2017) state, if practitioners' are concentrating on personalised social work practice a gap between practice and societal contexts emerge. Owens et al. (2017) argue that in those cases of practice, the principle of social justice and clients' autonomy may not be implemented because of failures to address structural inequalities. Research data shows that FSWs are mostly concentrating on the assessment and the organisation of support which can be provided by other professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, social pedagogues, and specialists who are working with addictions. FSWs' everyday practice is more concentrated on the personal families' problems, where the critical role of FSWs becomes to find a solution and to motivate a client to commit to changing. Their practice behaves more like coordinative work.

FSWs revealed that it is easier to work with families who have lower socioeconomic status in society (Article 3). Thus, when FSWs have to visit families whose socioeconomic status is higher, they experience distrust of themselves as professionals and such words as *what to do in such a family* was revealed. Such discourse revealed that FSWs have a dominant framework and style of working with lower socio-economic status families, especially those who have mental health problems. In preparation to visit families with higher socioeconomic status, FSWs are spending more time than usual studying other past cases. They are reading more professional literature and are thinking more about the words used in such practice settings, which happens because families are asking more questions about what type of social services they are going to receive, what social work methods will be applied, how child rights will be safeguarded.

Also, moral aspects appear in the framework of social inequalities when the topic of child rights is brought up. FSWs feel that they have to find solutions in order to meet child rights, especially in the framework of poverty. Research data revealed that not only in one practice case FSWs are meeting child needs and gaining their rights from their own family's financial and non-financial resources. When the complicated situation according to the families' finances arises, families do not have the skills to manage their family budget: this is a moral imperative, as FSWs must act professionally all the while explaining such concepts to parents who may be

suffering from mental health issues. FSWs are aware of families' personal choices but do not necessarily think that those choices are entirely right. Here, the function of control is dominant in order to meet child rights. FSWs are struggling with policy implementation in those practice cases where a task becomes essential to manage a level of risk. Lack of resources creates a limited space for FSWs to meet the needs of families where the policy leaves a gap between itself and the practice realities. Here, the question about the legitimate mandate to aspiring social justice for FSWs arises.

Schiettecat, Roets and Vandebroek (2015) discuss the role of social work while working with people who are living in poverty. They (2015) argue that child and family social work is a vital tool for the fight against poverty and it is an intergenerational transmission. This research's results are in line with their results (as seen in Article 1, Article 3, and Article 4). Education and engagement of the family are seen as the main strategies to overcome it. Children and families' poverty is not only a problem in Lithuanian society, but this political discussion about anti-poverty strategies are also explored throughout the European Union's 2010 to 2020 strategy. Research data revealed that FSWs usually start to outline the physical living environment while speaking about the issue of poverty. They narrate living space and its size, the number of beds and other furniture, explain how family members, especially large families, are managing their environment. The discourse of poverty and FSWs' roles is revealed under this topic. Practitioners analyse and emphasise poverty issue not as a structural problem, but as an individual family issue. Negative features such as not being willing to work and to participate in the labour market were discussed. However, an interesting point of the data analysis was that the topic of the child-oriented approach was recognised when FSWs do not succeed in empowering and motivating parents to be active in the labour market: only then do they start to concentrate on child well-being. Now, the second strategy argues that the child should be educated and have to be involved in the education system. Some parents do not wish for their children to take part in this education system, arguing against the health hazards (sickness) found in schools. As medicines are costly and families have minimal incomes, they argue that they will take care of their children themselves until the compulsory education level is reached (pre-school classes), in order to avoid contamination.

Pre-school became compulsory in the country in order to solve the situation regarding the education of children. So, that means that a child must to attend kindergarten or a pre-school group in the primary school. Parents do not have the choice to behave differently. The municipalities apply different criteria for discounts for those families' children who are attending kindergarten. Families who have financial difficulties can receive 50% off monthly payment for kindergarten in order to prioritise children involvement in it. Public discourse about the compulsory participation in the education system had various opinions within citizens, but FSWs highlighted that their task is to involve children into the education system

in order for parents to be able to participate in the labour market. The emphasis is on parents' engagement, and not on child well-being. Children became a bridge between FSWs and parents.

Another issue which is not conducive to the engagement of parents is when a divorced mother is taking care of children (single motherhood). In this case, FSWs are not aiming towards engaging mothers in the labour market, but rather to empower mothers to take care of their children. In the case when a woman and a man are living in a marriage, another tendency is recognised: they are quick to collect their credits. This temporary money is not necessarily used for basic needs, but rather for new mobile phones and other electronic purchases, resulting in the dominant discourse of consumerism within society. Families are willing to be fit in with others when outside of the home setting. FSWs highlighted that the culture of blame, especially among children, is visible (see Article 3).

As discussed above, the discourse of poverty is focused on the parents' support strategies. FSWs are concentrating on parenting skills development, such as, for example, their involvement in positive parenting programs and social skills development programs. Schiettecat, Roets and Vandenbroeck (2015) argue that such a concentration eclipses poor living conditions and inequalities. In the context of Lithuania still exists a discourse that families who are living in poverty need support from charity organisations, they are users of social benefits, and not active participants in the labour market, while a discourse of social services delivery as welfare rights are constructed at a minimal level and not recognised in the public sphere.

A changing society creates discourse in the field of family social work where FSWs are persons who construct and reconstruct the reality they face with the families in an unequal society. As Hyslop (2018) argues, such a discourse is associated with a *failing subject* which is socially located and context bounded, directly contrasting with neoliberalism features such as personal responsibility and the deficit of morality. Changing situations suppose that FSWs can be such social actors who do not belong to the hegemony of neoliberalism and act in the frame of the discourse of dissent (Hyslop, 2018). Research data revealed that such moral aspects appear when FSWs narrate their professional roles performed in their direct practice. One of the key performed roles here comes very important: the role of *advocate*, meaning that FSWs are focused on families' rights and their opportunities for choices within organisational structures.

Although FSWs are focused on families' rights, the neoliberalism feature such as personal responsibility is very strongly constructed throughout their discursive everyday FSWPs. FSWs highlight that it is the family's right to choose and to take all the responsibility according to the decisions they accept. Those decisions influence family members' lives. Here, a gap between connections of deeper structures and governing rules within society appears. FSWs do not understand how features of

unequal societies make an influence on the decisions accepted by families themselves: it is not entirely about making the right choice and social responsibility. Thus, a moral aspect of ethical acting also exists and light should be shed on the accepted decisions because FSWs are entering into the lives and moral worlds of families. Røysum (2017) states that professional ethics is a central aspect of social work discourse. Ethical principles such as social justice, a persons' dignity and their worth along with a focus on the client's best interest are central in social work practice.

Research findings show that most FSWs can be recognised as occupying gatekeeping and surveillance roles. In most cases, especially in complicated ones, a discourse of retreat is recognised. FSWs in those cases do not keep power in their hands but are turning towards external organisational resources for help. For example, it is very popular in those cases to look for psychologists. Here, the performed professional role of the gatekeeper was revealed. It might be a result of timeliness or stemming from a fear to meet the families' expectations. The role of surveillance was revealed through casual situations and visits to families' homes. Research data revealed that FSWs often are visiting families in their home without clear aims for the visits. This way of working is not a moral one, because FSWs are entering into private families' homes where different moral aspects can appear. Going to private spheres without precise visitation aims or to *just check* on the situation is not professional behaviour. According to the legislation, when a family is seen to be at the high-risk level, FSWs should meet the family more often. Again, in those situations, FSWs are recognised more in a surveillance role, offering different types of psychology services for families within the community. Research data shows that FSWs are usually transferring responsibility onto other professionals.

This type of mentality leads to a pragmatic working style during the day to day interactions. It might be a result of experienced difficulties in connecting their actions to the framework of social work's theoretical basis. This is very familiar to Røysum's (2017) statements that social workers are not necessarily focused on *what* they did as practitioners, but on *how* they did. Here, a danger for the social work profession and knowledge-based practices emerge. Research data analysis shows that even when dealing with difficulties, FSWs find it challenging to define their performed professional roles in their everyday practice. The difference compared to Røysum (2017) was that Lithuanian FSWs, while speaking on professional roles, listed them from memory, stating that those theoretical names of roles are known from the studies and professional literature. The issue for FSWs was to recognise those roles in the encounters of practical cases analysis.

As Røysum (2017) elaborates, to perform a mediator's role, traditionally, between the client and the society, it is more complicated social workers due to the increased workloads, changes in policies, higher efficiency and assistance standardisation. Research data revealed that FSWs are very concerned about results and reporting procedures. They highlighted that daily sheet writing and documentation requires

much time. Comparing all the cities where the research was carried out, this topic of reporting was very actual for all FSWs who took part in this study. Research data revealed that FSWs could talk at lengths about individual cases and the actions carried out. Those narrations answered the question of *how*, but not *what*. It was difficult to talk about the applied social work methods that are needed in the contemporary social work practice field. More easily, FSWs constructed the ways of working and the actions carried rather than applying methods or perspectives from literature.

The discursive psychology method for data analysis was used and interpretative repertoires of professional roles were constructed, answering the research question: *what type of roles do social workers take on and are given in family social work?* Also, role repertoires in the framework of contemporary social work practice discourse are provided.

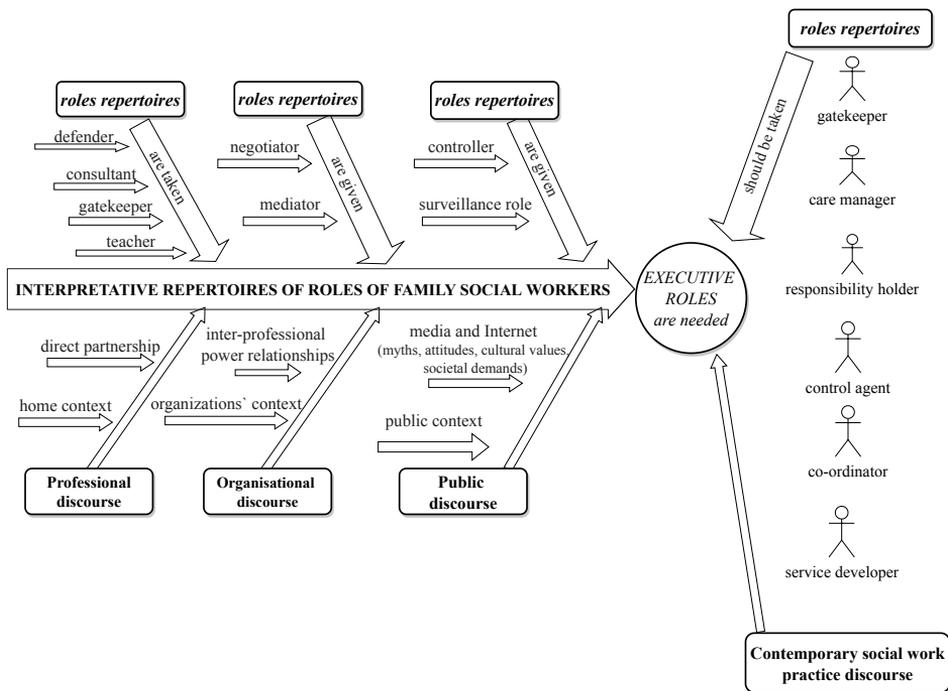


Figure 6. Interpretative repertoires of roles of FSWs

Research data (see Article 3) shows that the discursive object, *the roles* of FSWs, are constructed situationally and contextually in multiple ways. FSWs described their roles through three discourses: *professional*, *public*, and *organisational*. When an FSW holds a subject position as a professional social worker, the *roles repertoires* are formed through the individual level and direct partnership with the family

member. The roles, like a defender, a consultant, a gatekeeper and a teacher are recognised in the professional discourse. Also, study results show that FSWs' subject positions are defined through organisational discourse. The roles, like a negotiator and a mediator, are recognised in the organisational discourse. FSWs are working within different organisations, where different inter-professional power relationships exist.

Moreover, the results show that FSWs' subject positions are also defined through public discourses, the media, and the internet. These *roles repertoires* are constructed through cultural values, attitudes, myths and societal demands. Social workers seldom feel familiar with these roles, because the main characteristic within them is controlling these features. If the main constructed role is a controller, it holds an assumption that the FSW does not have any regular working hours and they should be able to solve all complexities that arise within families. Because public discourse is robust and it reaches citizens broadly, it hinders professional *roles repertoires*. Social workers are trying to take their subject positions in the conflicting role situations. Public discourse does not recognise the professional aspect that FSWs are controlling the process of help or intervention plans, not individual family members' lives.

Additionally, the results show that FSWs are not aware of executive roles and their real functions, which normally could be assigned to FSWs. Changing societies require changes in social work practices too. The traditional social work practice needs to be enriched by new perspectives, methods, and techniques. Besides, micro-social work practice needs to broaden, especially in the context of Lithuanian FSWP. So, this is possible through new professional role performances, yet the connection of policy and practice is needed.

5.3. Towards professional ethics work in family social work

Research data revealed that there exist external and internal threats that act as barriers to the development of ethical social work practice (Article 4), this could be related to Healy's (2004) description of said external and internal threats. Such external threats as political-economic policy, where organisational structures shape social work practice. Internal threats come from the educational process and the human service profession. The educational process should be concentrated more on students' capacities to analyse structural changes within society throughout the analysis of practical cases, meaning that the focus should be on critical analysis in implemented policy, organisational and practical contexts of FSWP. Besides, research data shows that it is necessary to pay attention to the language we use to represent social work as a profession in public discourse, indicating that FSWs should start to speak on the positive economic spillovers they create to the state. Again, this is the view-point of social investment.

Language use in social work practice is closely associated with communication skills, which are fundamental to social work (Forrester et al., 2019). Forrester et al. (2019) find that skills such as relationship building, competent authority (focus on the child, clarity on concerns, purposefulness) and evocation of intrinsic motivation have encouraging outcomes for families. Research findings show that the dimension of relationship-building was the most important for FSWs. Discursive constructions of FSWs' everyday practices revealed that the most complicated situations of their practice are more easily resolved when a relationship between social workers and families are closer and more intense. Research data revealed that it is easier to assert family rights in other organisational encounters (schools, hospitals, or courts) where the problem solutions should be find out. However, it becomes more emotionally heavy in cases where children should be taken out of their families to statutory or foster care. Forrester and et al. (2019) state that their research data revealed a significant relationship between the competent authority dimension and relationships. That means that families are more satisfied with social services when practitioners' focus on the child, are able to clarify the situation and work purposefully.

Research findings show that FSWs often do not find time for reflection and are often sharing their emotions with their own families. The listeners become their relatives and friends. According to the legislation and the competences which are required for social workers who are working with families', compulsory supervisions sessions (at least three academic hours per month) are organised and provided in order to take care of emotional well-being and for complicated case analysis, defining the actions and professional roles to perform into praxis. Meanwhile, Ferguson (2018) states that social work practitioners usually enjoy their daily work experiences above their interactions with clients, but the feature of lacking time for self-care is limited because they are overworked, not-satisfied and anxious. Such situations do not create a space for professional work.

Research findings show that FSWs' awareness of professional roles is occulted and not normally discussed until questions about roles were provided (see Article 3). Moral aspects of ethical acting in this sphere appears when FSWs do not recognise their professional role and are not able to recognise their social position. The competence of being able to reflect daily practice is necessary and needed critically. FSWs should be able to react to the families' emotions and reactions to different living situations. Research data revealed that FSWs construct their professional acting while on the stage directly, without thinking and feeling their emotions and selves beforehand. This is the main reason while FSWs are changing their job positions because they usually are not ready for direct practice and do not have the emotional intelligence required for self-awareness .

Research data shows that FSWs in the context of Lithuania are concentrated on micro-level practice and connect individual family cases only in close community encounters. Here, it becomes challenging to move from a psychological service

discourse to an alternative or sociological one, and the ability to view the daily practice as widely as possible was not recognised (see Article 3, and Article 4). McPhee and Bronstein, (2002) sum up that social work practice through the lens of social constructionism is focused on solutions that are found in a collaborative way, where the client is the expert of their lives. To work towards professional social work with families, practitioners need to understand the relationship between social welfare research, policy, and practice in order to deconstruct social problems in the framework of social and political constructions. Thus, competence stems from the ability to connect individual family cases with systems, and necessary social policy.

Social constructionism highlights that we, as humans, are changing reality. If we are changing our thoughts and ideas, it means that our meaning to question our social problem is also changing. FSWs concentrate on the problems which are usually constructed by others, but they are not focusing on the meaning which is constructed by families themselves, either individually or collectively. Mutuality and collaboration are somehow misleading to the everyday practice field and it influences multiple ways of understanding how the individual family cases may be constructed or understood.

Social work is a human service profession, meaning that FSWs are in interactions between families and societal structures. These two poles of FSWP lead to not only social services delivery processes but also creative thinking and design as applied to the positive ways of living for families who are dealing with social risk factors in their daily lives. This creates the preconditions of possible FSWs character features and professional ethics. It is expected that professionals will demonstrate a virtuous character. Research revealed that FSWs respect their clients' choices (see Article 4). This was recognised in typical practical cases, where minimum intervention in families situated realities are needed. For example, there might be a divorce process where parents are experiencing conflict, or it might be the children who are not attending schools or the general lack of social and parenting skills. The situation is a bit different when FSWs have to start the social work process with clients who are released from the prisons. When in FSWs narrations, stigmatised words and negative attitudes according to those family members were recognised. Labelling was dominant and the discourse of professional ethics seemingly disappeared (Article 2).

FSWs everyday practice cases raised questions regarding familial rights and needs. Dominant neoliberal discourse about personal success within society is tacit, while it should be understood that success does not dignify life within such contemporary society: success is your own business. As well, features from the culture of blame can be involved in analysing FSWs rhetorics regarding clients. At the practical level, FSWs concentrate on problem-solving practical models and coordinate parent actions. They do not construct such cases throughout the perspectives of dominant culture disbursements and societal inequalities.

The discourse of professional ethics supports the social work profession and professionals for legitimate actions within society. FSWs' priorities are with more complicated, practical cases where safeguarding children's rights and creating opportunities for living their parents is of utmost importance. As Lithuania is in the third decade of its independence, here, a focus on historical and cultural context influence direct social work practices. Interestingly, as Lithuania is now a member of the European Union (as of 2004), it follows Western traditions of living while maintaining some historical context which must be recognised in FSWP. FSWs are point out that, in particular, grandmothers and grandfathers and some parents are not able to catch onto the idea of a more modern, positive parenting style. So, a discourse of violence between family members was constructed. FSWs narrate that parents are often saying *I was raised this way*. In those cases, the parenting style is transferable from their childhood. Looking back at the twentieth-century, the normalisation of violence discourse between family members in Lithuanian society existed, meaning to FSWs are also within a transition period while influencing their country. Here, the values and professional ethics with high interest in moral issues should be incorporated into discursive FSWPs.

Orientation on human rights and legal mandate of social work becomes dominant where social workers perform the role of moral agents. This role empowers FSWs to look not at dysfunction's behavioural consequences but to the inner motives instead. Nowadays, family social work is just starting to be implemented into practice, given that the attitude to the consequences is still a dominating point of view in family social work. The aim of social workers as written above is that the family will be able to live independently and in a dignified manner. This tendency came from the dominant ethical discourse in social work, whose origins are associated with liberal individualist tradition (Clark, 2006).

There is a contradiction raised between universal rights and values within society. FSWs have to follow these and implement them into their practice, while on the other hand, families have their own values and understandings in regards to the choices taken. In this contradiction, FSWs constructed their narrations in the frame of ethical theory of consequentialism. Also, the FSWs narrated that they experienced difficulties when families were not willing to change their lifestyle and not agreeing to any changes. In those cases, FSWs conducted moral judgments regarding the parents while informing them about the consequences of such situations, producing the construction of bad morals. Also, research data revealed that FSWs sometimes are over-involved in families' lives, which was revealed later on, when FSWs started to discuss their practical cases and how they are working from their private homes after regular working hours to get these done. This leads strips away neutrality and sews mistrust of families' strengths.

Regarding the changing society, as written in previous chapters, FSWs take a new executive professional role as a responsibility holder, meaning that FSWs are

able to put this role into practice. This role means being able to be responsible for the family during any encounter; this is a large responsibility because FSWs are continually thinking about how to behave, and how to intervene in families' private lives. Ethics, here, is core to the FSWP field. The Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (2018) declares that social work professionals are challenging unjust policies and practices and that they are responsible for sharing those issues directly with the persons responsible. Shared responsibility becomes a significant factor in FSWP. It means that if there are no adequate resources, resources must be shared between the employers, community members, policymakers and politicians.

Family social work is primarily done through speech, interaction and behaviour to construct various personal and social identities. Ethical, social work practice consists of three main elements – interests, feelings and rights – with respect as a key principle of morality. Everyday ethics of FSWs are approached as *doing ethics* through the interdependent moral spheres in which FSWs' ethical considerations take place: the personal, professional and public or social spheres. Research data shows that FSWs construct clients' dignity through the lens of citizenship that is a component of ethical principles applied into social work family practice. This means that clients have their own rights as individuals but they are also influenced by community obligations. Focusing on individual family situations, it is apparent that FSWs' solutions, when working alone with their own resources, can only offer temporary solutions to families in need of help. Ethics work includes performance work, which makes social work and its clients' needs visible to others (Banks, 2016; Banks, 2004; Banks, Williams, 2005).

The criteria for ethical work were followed when necessary for this project. Results show (see Article 4) that FSWs are concentrated on moral judgements, but the broader contexts are lost. Deontological theories, as argued by Kant, state that in the actions carried upon others, consent should involve aspects of human dignity and worth (Israel, Hay, 2006). Here, the key question is whether or not the actions are the *right* ones. Research data shows that FSWs are acting on an institutional basis focusing on the families' wishes and decisions made, but the moral considerations raised are more complicated than the three actors participating in the decision making process. For example, it is like a triangle of three positions that flow from family to FSW, to organisational encounters. There is an obligation to follow the National Code of Ethics of Lithuania Social Workers (2017). Research data shows that in practice, FSWs are following their own values more, and are also recognising religious aspects. In one of the articles (Article 2), this is more described in detail, but the reality is that FSWs are listening to their inner voice in decision-making processes, thus focusing on family rights.

The topic of ethics is particularly ignited when data revealed the most difficult cases arise when the child requires necessary treatment, and this is left to parental discretion. Also, research data revealed that the most complicated practical situations

are when the mother is wondering how to receive an abortion. The categorical imperative from the organisation is more or less clear, while this is a highly volatile, sensitive, and emotional issue for the family, leaving FSWs stuck between them. Usually, families are strongly seen in FSWs positions according to this question. Research data revealed that in those cases, FSWs are not following the categorical imperative that flows from the organisational side; they are stating the opposite position because of religion claims. Here, the deontological position of ethics work is recognised, thinking of moral behaviour and its matter rather than the ends of such actions.

Finalising this chapter, a statement could be made that research data revealed two separate ways of ethical decision making and ethical work. On one side, FSWs are focusing on the consequences of their actions while on the other they must consider the principle of justice. In some practical cases, institutional behaviour and practice rules were recognised. Research data shows that the statement written into FSWs' official functions are not recognised in their rhetoric. FSWs construct their everyday ethics at the individual level and are more concentrating on moral judgements and the consequences of dysfunctional clients' behaviour. FSWPs reveals interdependent moral spheres where different type of ethical considerations appears. It becomes complicated to work according to the ethical guidelines, because personal and professional spheres are intertwined. Moral aspects of social work disclosure, even FSWs deal with complex situations in their everyday work, still the dignity of the client and human rights are key component of ethical principle applied into family social work practice field.

6. CONCLUSIONS

At the micro-level, families' realities can only be understood when FSWs stop themselves from interpreting their clients' lives through the lens of their own understanding of the world gained from personal experiences. Open and direct communication and listening without any prejudices create a sphere for constructive talk and real relationships. When an FSW has the privilege to be involved in another person's sphere, an essential task becomes an understanding of individual situations within broader contexts. Social constructionism highlights the importance of those situation interpretations through the frame of legislation, social policy or structural inequalities. This theoretical perspective allows for FSWs to not only be comfortable in their practice cases analysis but also creates a space for critical thinking at the macro- and mezzo-levels.

Social work is surrounded by institutional settings and specific rules, focused tasks, reporting sheets and so on. Social workers do not perform static roles because they are constructed in situations with different meanings. FSWs with clients create relational pairs and both parties become mutually dependent (Juhila, Abrams, 2011). Social workers and family members have a mutual goal, which has institutional features and is partly framed by other specialists like case managers, child rights specialists, teachers or others. In this context, the agreed intervention and support plan goal is mutual, but a different type of role is performed. Families have a right and a responsibility to safeguard their child's well-being. As professionals are trying to guarantee the best interest of the child; however, power emerges in those relations and parents' resistance can be a consequence.

Commonly, families are somehow compared and a common image is easily constructed for all of them. However, this is not for the followers of postmodernism, who state that there are no common identities, only fixed identities can be identified in minimal cases. They encourage FSWs to think about what makes a family and its individuals unique. What identities are they constructing for themselves and others that are not professionally defined? A lot of categorisation appears, and the weakness of families are highlighted through the construction of clienthood. Here, individualism is lost and the space for labelling is created. When such a practical situation in social work appears, this means that two different types of identities clash creating a tug of war for powers. In those cases, mutually supportive relationships through relation-based practice are recommended (Juhila, Abram, 2011). FSWs as graduates of schools of social work face difficulties while analysing applied methods of work and professional roles, leading to the contradictory views on practical cases

and their analysis. FSWs are constructing family social work discursive practices through the lens of how they are acting, but not what they are applying.

An essential FSW professional function is to advocate clients' rights; this discourse is latent in FSWs' narrations about professional roles. A discourse of moral spheres appears when FSWs are not able to recognise their professional roles but create ones that are not at all associated with social work. This gap appears because there is a robust public discourse regarding FSW practices. There is a sense that everybody in society knows how to work and what is best for children and parents. This context of the research raises the question regarding the issue of recognition of family social work as a professional practice. FSWs are affected by cultural stereotypes, such as presentations in social media and on the Internet, where the picture of the profession mostly is constructed in negative poles.

FSWs are not feeling safety when visiting families alone, especially when they are not willing to accept help. According to the law and statutory organisation's internal rules, it is not prohibited to do home visits in pairs, but research findings show that this way of working is accepted only when complex situations in families exist and a sense of insecurity on behalf of FSWs appear. Working together in pairs it might be useful in those cases. FSWs are feeling more self-confident, secure, can discuss immediately after the home visits, share the ideas of further work and counselling topics, and immediately reflect on the situation. The discussions are done immediately after the visit by walk or drive. This collaborative way of working was revealed as useful when providing social services to families who are not willing to work together or have a negative attitude towards FSW. Besides, this way of working also creates a broader opportunity to see the *invisible* child. Usually, during their home visits, FSWs are focused to intervene according to parents' requests, especially mothers, and the discourse of child intervention is minimally revealed.

Lastly, another insight for the discursive FSWP comes together with an intervention of social advocacy, which should be dominant in order to seek the critical value of social work and so that the principle of social justice will be put into practice. This type of intervention is especially needed while working with families who are dealing with structural problems such as poverty. FSWs, in some cases, use the discourse of hereditary poverty, arguing that the family stories are the same from generation to generation. Social work intervention and social advocacy means working with families who are marginalized by society and usually, they are named as receivers of welfare. Usually, this intervention is applied when families are experiencing economic hardship (Joseph, 2019). The goal of the government is that families will be economically independent; and so, it tries to offer different types of programs to reach these goals. Social workers are registering families to Food Bank programs, Employment services, arranged social benefits, creating family cards for large families, providing free nutrition in the schools and so on. Participation

in all of these programs is linked with short term goals and are fragmented while overcoming the issues of poverty.

If looking from the perspective of long term goals, the Lithuanian social policy implementation is misleading with regards to its address of poverty problems. Largely, the problem is that minimum consumption needs are estimated to only two-hundred-and-fifty-one euros as of January, 2019. This sum is extremely low for one month. Poverty here is visible especially if a family does not have their own private home. Here, the contradiction between the social work profession and its primary goal to strive to ensure social justice is faced. FSWs are providing all the necessary information for the resources, but this is not a solution while overcoming the issue of poverty. FSWs' work strategy becomes to empower family adults to participate in the labour market. The solution here could be found on a political level, where the discussions about the tax cuts for poor families could be started or an alternative could be suggested as an opportunity to start working as to not cancel the payments of social benefits for a set amount of time. As Joseph (2019) highlights, social workers who are working with marginalised client groups should clearly understand the social, political and economic situation of the state.

FSWs built their everyday practice mostly on psychological service discourse. So this, means that the necessity to change the attitude towards new approaches applied into social work practice is needed. It is not enough to analyse practical cases traditionally because social work is changing together with a changing society. The perspective of social investment should be included in study programs, aiming to broaden the understanding of structural problems rather than analysing the consequences of the client's dysfunctional behaviour. Also, this will support the change of public discourse in regards to the social work profession and its practice. The discourse from working with consequences should change to the discourse of how much social work can improve people's well-being while living in a neoliberal society, and how much the state can obtain in terms of spillovers from the social work practice.

Another insight for FSWP development would be that a qualification program before entering the FSWP field should be required. For example, every two years in the UK, social workers must apply for a license to work in the field. In Lithuania, there is no licensing system yet, FSWs can simply gain a professional qualification according to three categories: social worker, senior social worker and expert. The research data revealed that those FSWs who were working in the field for five years were able to analyse practical cases more broadly, they demonstrated professional knowledge and were able to deconstruct the most elaborate practical cases in their everyday work encounters. Perhaps, then, that when working with families, senior social worker's position should be the starting point of contact in the process. Those dealing with social risk factors in the best way gained their knowledge through a Master in Social Work.

As the research wraps up, new theories of social work have been explored, and qualitative data analysis has been an enriching application of concepts. During the process, I found improvements in their speech themselves given the sensitive research topics, while also learning how to contextualise this information professionally within articles. I was confident about the data analysis and its presentation, but previous professional knowledge in the field made me sometimes feel confused in interpreting the data. At those moments, discussions with other researchers were of great benefit to me. As a point of reflection, for future studies, the research design should involve a more diverse group of research participants, for example, the heads of statutory social service agencies and policymakers. For future research, the family social work field could be analysed through public debate and analysis of current media trends, or open groups in social networks, where professionals are changing their opinions and discussing due to the issues of implemented social policy. Also, it is interesting how society members, not belonging to the social service system, construct social work as a profession or a profile/identity of a social worker. The experiences of family social work clients for future research would be an interesting topic. For supervisors, I recommend supporting FSWs to keep the focus on the child and to be clear about their emotions, feelings, and thoughts in everyday job experiences. The role of supervisors is extremely important in helping to FSWs openly speak on not only processes, but also about how they succeeded to apply the methods learnt in universities, while the administrators of statutory social services agencies have to create opportunities for learning and collaborative way of working.

Everyday ethics and moral spheres need knowledge from philosophical theories and a clear standpoint, these should be involved in study programs. FSWs experience anxiety, and self-doubt in complicated practical situations. This is a sphere for supervisors to combine all the practice encounters and to help for FSWs to analyse practical cases more broadly than on only institutional settings. It was revealed that it is necessary to be clear with one's self-identity before beginning to work with families. FSWs should be highly competent in the aspects of reflexivity and empathy. This is a bit far from the sociological discourse, but the following statement must be made: discursive practices of family social work are very complicated and need a mixed perspective in order to be able to help families to overcome their faced difficulties. So, families' right to live dignified lives in contemporary society should not be questionable and the discourse regarding the efficiency of social services or universal services development for families in the context of Lithuania should be highlighted.

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