PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences
ISSN 2454-5899

Greta Skubiejute, 2019

Volume 5 Issue 2, pp.643-661

Date of Publication: 26th September 2019

DOI- https://dx.doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2019.52.643661

This paper can be cited as: Skubiejute, G. (2019). Children in Single Mother Families: Outcomes of Social Construction and Policy Design of Single Mother Families. PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences, 5(2).643-661.

CHILDREN IN SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES: OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND POLICY DESIGN OF SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES

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Abstract

The main issue analysed in the paper is policy design and its outcome on social construction of single mother families as well as on the wellbeing of single mother's children. Literature review and qualitative legislation documents analysis has been conducted to demonstrate how single mothers are perceived in different welfare state regimes and the case of Lithuania is presented. The main findings of the paper show that in the welfare regimes (such as social democratic) where single mother families are seen as equal families to traditional family, policy strikes to provide the children with equal opportunities despite family circumstances, while other regimes (such as post-soviet) concentrate on controlling demography and therefore promote traditional families and children from single mother families are rather neglected. Moreover, all the welfare regimes and their policies fail to recognise the diversity within single mother families and therefore, at the end, children are not set equally.

Keywords

Single Mother Families, Children, Social Policy, Family Policy, Policy Design, Social Construction, Welfare States, Welfare State Regimes

1. Introduction

Single mother families have a long history of academic and political discussion, yet these discussions seem to be never ending in ever changing societies and ever increasing

numbers of single mother families while the issues and their core rather stay the same and only manifest in different forms – poverty, discrimination of women, lack of opportunities for children etc. These discussions are very important as they have an effect within the policy, therefore it is important to find and highlight the most common aspects within discussions and their influence on single mother's children.

Single mother families have always been an object of political debates in which different values meet. The values that shape policy, the wellbeing of single mothers and their children as well as the perception within society are mostly based on a rather traditional understanding of the family, which is based on biology (there are two different sex grown-ups that make a child and they have to raise it), economical counting and presumed outcomes of children's development. According to these opinions, single mother families are either seen as a defensible/tenable model or as a burden, and policy is framed accordingly. In other words, single mother families and their children are either perceived as equally valuable compared to nuclear families and policy strikes to provide them with equal opportunities or single mother families are perceived as (symptoms of) the "demise of the family" as failures who are not of a particular interest of policy (Neyer, 2013). The second view causes moral panic of politicians and within societies on the side of the concerned which on top of economic disadvantages adds stigmatisation as well as hinders changes (Ajzenstadt, 2009). This moral panic mostly arises from the presumed negative impact of single motherhood on a child's welfare, the idea of the collapse of the traditional family and the economic dependency on benefits (Cohen, 1972; Booth & McLanahan, 1989; Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015). Indeed, single mothers and their children are at a high risk of poverty and quite often at the bottom of social hierarchies, but as it will be demonstrated in this article, these issues are mostly created not by single motherhood per se, but rather due to a certain framing and dis-course in policy (Andersen, 2018, p. 18).

It is important to analyse the way policy discourse and framing affects children of single mothers as the number of these children is rising and as the latter form a big part of society's future. At the moment, political debates across Europe and other Western Societies seem to be divided between positions favouring neo-liberal, private insurance based policies versus those who advocate equality and human rights assurance for everyone (ibid.). Certain decisions dramatically affect children's well-being, future possibilities and outcomes in adultery as well as civil participation (ibid.).

In this article, I want to analyse dominant discourses and framings in different Welfare States (liberal, conservative, social democratic and post-soviet) and also adduce the case of

Lithuania. It will be shown how policy goals, tools and rules are affecting single mothers' children - how the target group is perceived within the society, what message is sent to these children and what effect it has on their well-being. According to some authors, framing of a target group in policy has a great influence on a child's wellbeing and highly effects the way a child turns into a grown up member of society (Slothuus, 2007; Ingram & Schneider, 1990). In regards to the analysis of only single mother families and exclusion of single fathers, it needs to be outlined that it is based on the ground that due to gender there are different issues experienced, or at least experienced to a different extent, and women have a different perception of welfare states in general according to some feminists (Orloff as cited in Neyer, 2013). Feminists argue that there has always been the phenomenon of a "feminization of poverty", and while women were used to be dependent on men for a long time, they are now made dependent on the state (Goldberg & Kremen, 1990). Moreover, single mother families constitute a dramatically bigger proportion of all single parent families' then single father families, and there is no prognosis of change.

2. Child's Wellbeing in Single Mother Families

There are tens or even hundreds of articles considering disadvantageous effects of single motherhood on children's wellbeing. Some authors argue that children from single mother families are prone to substance abuse and delinquent behaviour, that they usually have lower academic achievements, begin their sexual life earlier, show symptoms of depression, low self-esteem and anxiety and are at risk to have anger issues, inability to build stable relationship and low career achievements or experience substance abuse and poverty in adulthood (Daryanani et al., 2017; Breivik et al., 2009; Ficco, 1997; Colyard, 1986; Howell, 2015; Dijanic, 2016; Kimani, 2007; Golombok et al., 2016). Most of the researches focus on the comparison of single mother's children and two parent families' children and highlight the differences as if they were an out-come depending on the family type itself. There is a danger to assume that single motherhood is bad for children in itself as there is no man to support the child in all the stages of his or hers development both economically and emotionally. As a result there is a previously mentioned moral panic raised between the politicians who then focus on "rebuilding" the "normal" family and form the laws accordingly, leaving single mother families stigmatised and disregarded (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). What is missing here is the role of policy itself in the formation of a child's wellbeing and future opportunities. The inequalities in children's life chances are on a greater part dependent exactly on discourses and framing used in policy which determines the amount of attention given to these children, the goals that

are set in policy and what rules and tools are applied to access an available support (Andersen, 2018; Ingram & Schneider, 1990; Gardy, 2014). According to E. G. Andersen, "In unequal societies, social origins exert a far stronger influence on children's future education, income or social position /…/ national context and, in particular, welfare state support, makes a huge difference" (2018, p. 69 – 74). When looking to the issues of single mothers and their children through the lens of policy framing theory, it is clear that many problems could be significantly reduced with certain changes within policy. One of the successful examples is a law in Northern European countries that states that parents must share parental leave time equally. According to recent researches, a father that spends much time with a child in his or her first year makes a strong bond with the child and therefore feels more responsible and included in the child's upbringing (Centre for Equality Advancement, 2005). Swedish statistics show that there is an increase of number of fathers that seek custody of a child after divorce, as well as there is an increase in joint custodies (Bergman & Rejmer, 2017). Another good example of the power of policy framing is a study conducted in the UK, which compares the academic achievements of single parent's children vs. two parent children in different states, has shown that the achievement gap between children from single parent households and two parent households in the UK is far greater than in other countries (such as Norway, Latvia or Slovenia) (Hampden-Thomson & Suet-Ling, 2005). Time spent with parents and income is some of the most important factors in a child's school performance (ibid.). Nevertheless, according to G. Esping-Andersen (2002) low parent's income does not necessarily foster the growth of a child's human capital. The consequences of a divorce and single motherhood depend not only on economic factors but also on social resources, the co-parent relationship and the relationship with the non-resident father (Zartler, 2014).

In conclusion, research show that single motherhood itself has a far less negative effect on a child's development than issues that arise due to certain policies that create social stigma and lead to poverty.

3. The Main Issues Surrounding Framing of Single Mother Families in Policy

As already mentioned, there are many issues that children from single mother families are prone to – lower achievements in education, lower self-esteem and other psychological issues, economical disadvantages and more. While reading many articles, I came into conclusion that there are few boxes of issues that are highly affected by certain framing and perception of single mother families in policy and the life of children could be improved if there were certain considerations taken into account.

Comparison to nuclear family. The unwillingness to recognise single mother families as an equal family compared to the nuclear family (rather than a deficient family form) negatively impacts a child's identity, life expectancy and possibilities in later life. The comparison with nu-clear families (families consisting of a married man and woman with their offspring) makes single mother families appear as "alternative", "not full" or even "deviant". The main issues that arrive from that type of definition are stigmatising messages sent towards family members and the urge to "rebuild" and eliminate such families within the policy discourse. These social constructs are exerting pressure on women and children to conform to the standard of the nuclear family (Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010; Zatler, 2014). The nuclear family thus remains the yardstick by which families measure themselves (Nelson as cited in Zartler, 2014). The social stigma associated with children living with one parent only leads to great stress, lack of social confidence, lower self-esteem and confusion regarding one's self-identity (Mikkonen et al., 2016). Living in a single parent family in a society where marriage is the norm and other families types are not recognised as equal is as well associated with children having lower achievements in education, a lower occupational status, poorer health, a lower income in adulthood and a higher likelihood to stay un-married (ibid.). Moreover, ideology of traditional family comes from capitalist ideology and shows single mother families as exploiters of welfare (Nicholson as cited in Maslauskaitė, 2004).

Neglect of diversity. There is a lack of recognition of diversity when talking about single mother families. All the single mothers and their children are put into one pot, regardless of their ethnical background, education, social class, (dis)abilities or religion (Jorgensen, 2002). For ex-ample, researches on the case of Lithuania show that single mothers who live in rural areas are relying on social support more than the women who live in cities (Stankūnienė et al., 2017). The same goes with single mothers who have lower education and have conceived a child in younger age (ibid.). Meanwhile in Denmark, there is a struggle to recognise and equally treat immigrant families that neither know their rights nor where to seek assistance due to various barriers such as language (Jorgensen, 2002). These differences highly affect child's wellbeing, as they determine financial and social wellbeing of the family and therefore available resources to the child such as choice of friends, proper education, travelling, proper housing etc. (Maslauskaitė, 2014).

Lack of time with parents. Although employment of single mothers is seen as one of the best ways to reduce single mother families' poverty, the policy makers have to be cautious about long working hours of single mothers and their experience of exhaustion and stress that reduces the amount and quality of time spent with children (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008). Children

of single mothers become children "with a key on the neck", which means that they spent many hours on their own, unsupervised and have to take care of their needs themselves (Belle, 1999). Although one of the most common buffers used in policy to protect children is various options of after school activities with adult's supervision, nevertheless quality time with a parent is very important in child's development and there is a lack of recognition of this issue in the policy (Belle, 1999; Grogger, 2001).

Disinvolvement of father. Although there is a growing number of lone mothers who choose to conceive a child on their own, the majority still become single parent due to the end of the relationship with the children's father and father is a known figure in child's life. Researches show that although single mothers can shelter their children well enough to ensure latter's wellbeing, the father is still relevant in the children's life (Bzostek, 2008; Torres et al. 2014; Lee & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2017; Berton et al., 2017; Eriksson et al., 2013). The father is a figure that helps children to develop certain qualities such as confidence and feeling of security and even to detach them from their mother and explore the world which is not mother centred (Berton et al., 2017). Policies that have a power to promote certain values and send messages to the target population play an important role here (Ingram & Schneider, 1990). As previously mentioned, in Northern Welfare states where family policy is regulating the length of time of paternity and maternity leave, researches show that the fathers' interest in child custody after divorce is significantly bigger than in other countries where such a policy does not exist or is rather symbolic (Bergman & Rejmer, 2017; Center for Equality Advencement, 2005). Greater involvement of father in child's life is also influenced by the mandatory child support payment (ibid.).

Poverty. One of the main issues experienced by single mother families and therefore their children is poverty. Poverty leads to deprivation in consumption which causes single mothers and their children social exclusion, lower self-esteem and very limited life opportunities in general (Maslauskatė, 2014). There are a few problems that have an influence on the poverty of single mother families – gender related gap of payment in employment, small or no custody payment from the father (in cases when he "exists"), lesser working hours and lack of education of single mothers. Meanwhile, "longer parental leave, a smaller proportion of unpaid leave, and higher amounts of family allowances were associated with lower poverty among all households with children" which highlights an importance of policy in reducing one of the biggest issues [poverty] associated with single motherhood (Andersen, 2018, Maldonado & Nieuwenhuis, 2015).

4. Framing of Single Mother Families in Different Welfare Regimes

In this chapter it will be analysed how single mother families are framed in different welfare state regimes and what issues are most commonly faced by these families in the context of a certain regime. Although there are differences between countries and within regimes themselves, which, in addition, are never pure in the sense of "ideal types", society is mostly driven by certain values and goals set by the tone of the welfare state regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Welfare states will be classified according to G. Esping-Andersen's typology and the concept of the "post-soviet welfare regime", which is most relevant in the case of Lithuania, will be introduced (1990; Vanhuysse & Cerami, 2009; Aidukaite, 2010). Esping-Andersen distinguishes three regimes – social democratic, conservative and liberal. These regimes are different in their driving ideologies and political priorities, and they differ in their political organisation, social benefits and services (Aidukaite, 2010). Nevertheless, all welfare states are associated with economic wellbeing, democracy and the commitment of the states to provide their members with a dignified living (ibid.). Diversity and abundance of social guarantees reflects society's attitude towards social justice and merit of certain groups for these guarantees (Gandy, 2014). Single mother families are one of those groups whose wellbeing dramatically depends on the given country's notion of social justice and on the framing of single mother families – whether they are perceived as a "deserving" or "undeserving" group (Slothuus, 2007).

4.1 Liberal Welfare States

The most common examples of Liberal Welfare States are Anglo-Saxon countries, such as the UK, USA and Canada. Nevertheless, liberal or neo-liberal ideas lately have been spreading across many countries that are not regarded as liberal welfare states. We can find such examples among Scandinavian countries, such as Denmark or Sweden, post-soviet countries, such as Lithuania, and conservative ones such as Germany and France (Jorgensen, 2012, Ryner, 2004, Aidukaite, 2014, Ondrich et al., 2003). This "liberalisation" results from certain dissatisfaction with social justice in regards to certain social groups, such as refugees, pensioners or single mothers which are seen as too dependent on the state (Jorgensen, 2012). "Justice" is then attempted to be achieved via private insurance (Dlothuus, 2007). As a result, a social gap starts to emerge and while the top layer of the society becomes more and more liberated, the bottom layer gets more oppressed, paternalised and persecuted (Jorgensen, 2002).

The main characteristic of the Liberal Welfare State is the encouragement of market solutions to social problems (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Social assistance is usually targeted at low in-come groups and is means-tested; therefore strict rules in social support are applied

which are related to an increased stigmatisation of support receivers and "punishment of the poor" (Wacquant, 2009). Moreover, support receivers are supported very modestly and therefore suffer from great poverty (ibid.). In the USA, for example, lone-mother households are one of the poorest compared to other western countries such as Germany or Denmark and this poverty highly affects the children's health and education, which restarts the cycle of poverty and dependency on the state recommence for various generations (Christopher, 2002). Due to market oriented solutions, single mothers' children are receiving the stigmatising message that they are of the less value as they are not equally set to survive a competitive setting, as there is barely any national health care, no maternity leave payment, child care allowance, nationally subsidised child care system, insufficient subsidised housing and an higher education system which is mostly privately funded. For example, the states provide social housing, but social housing is usually located in the most dangerous and abandoned parts of the cities, which effects a child's development, has effects on his or her education and involvement to criminal activity (Scharte & Bolte, 2012). Moreover, there is a tendency in the law to check and persecute single mothers as they have to apply to certain regulations (such as there should be no cohabiting partner) in order to receive benefits (Jorgensen, 2002). Strict rules come together with demonstration of power of the ruling classes and persecution of social support receivers as well as increased stigmatisation which dam-ages child's self-esteem and decreases interest in achievement as well as civil participation in adultery life (Lengle & Shafer, 1976; Maldonado & Nieuwenhuis, 2015; Jorgensen, 2002; Schneider & Ingram, 2005).

4.2 Conservative Corporatist Welfare States

Conservative Corporatist or Bismarckian Welfare States are mostly found in Continental Europe and one of the purest examples is considered to be Germany. These welfare states are mostly oriented towards employment and provide workers with security as well protected status. Therefore "the universality of benefits is dependent on the society to ensure full employment" (Palier, 2006). Conservative Welfare Regimes promote traditional families and their values as this type of family serves best to the need of stable employment and therefore insurance. Traditional family formed of mother, father and their dependent children is a perfect form where man has a breadwinner role and woman on the biggest share takes a role of carer (ibid.). As a result, the diversity of family types is not recognised and even obstructed (Hampden-Thomson & Suet-Ling, 2005). Despite the dominant norms and policy goals, in the case of Single Mother Families, all single parents are entitled to income related transfer payments as well as to social assistance, housing allowance and child-care allowance (Konietzka & Kreyenfeld, 2005). Moreover, single parents are considered to be only partially

available to the labour market as long the child turns 16 and until then are supported by the state (ibid.). More than that, although rules and tools to sup-port families are means-tested and contributory benefits are provided by social insurance on the basis of social contributions, there are no such strict regulations that regard cohabitation as a source of income, as it is usual in the Liberal Welfare Regime (Palier, 2006; Konietzka & Kreyenfeld, 2005). Therefore, single mothers are available to perceive relationship and possibly better life for themselves and their Children. All in all, the focus of the policy is rather directed to the wellbeing and inurement of the rights of the children. Nevertheless, such instruments as common taxation provide married couples with dramatically larger benefits due to progressive tax rates, especially when partners receive very unequal payments or one of them is not employed (ibid.). Therefore, the role of male breadwinner is still very important and is an issue regarding social changes such as women equality and increasing number of single mother families, which also affects children's perception of their family and their worth.

4.3 Social Democratic Welfare States

Social democratic welfare states promote s discourse of universalism and strike to pro-mote equality and meet the needs of various family forms as policy seeks to unite rather than di-vide and therefore welfare is seen as a collective responsibility (Esping-Andersen & Korpi, 1987). Most recognised examples of such countries are Northern European, Scandinavian countries. Although there are universal child benefits and national day care for children provided which gives mothers a possibility to be fully employed, nevertheless there is still a struggle with most vulnerable mothers and their children. The biggest issue arises from inability to recognise diversity within single mother families that are usually put into one box, although their life options significantly differ due to race, ethnicity, education or social class (Jorgensen, 2002). This is especially relevant to some of the Nordic countries such as Denmark that have lately showed signs of neo-liberalism, which manifests that policy might create even bigger risk of failure of diversity's recognition (ibid.). Poverty, lack of education and different ethnicity can, and often do, become bases for social exclusion of such mother and their children as they close in their social circles and cannot break out of them in adultery life.

4.4 Post- Soviet Welfare States

Post-Soviet Welfare States are the countries that formerly belonged to the block of Soviet Union. Examples of such countries are Lithuania, Serbia, Slovenia, Poland etc. Although various countries have gotten their independence in different time and were affected by different neighbouring countries and other later influences, they all have common experience of Soviet times and are impacted by communist past (Aidukaitė, 2009; Kingsbury,

2015). In the communist time family policy was modelling population replenishment based on demographic and economic counting, thus providing such supports as generously payed parental and maternity leave, child-care, family benefits and allowances and even mothers that had many children received special awards but their employment opportunities had never suffered from that (Kingsbury, 2015). After the collapse of Soviet bloc, governments returned to pre-communist traditional family (Kligman, 1994). Family policy became dominated by the church and nationalism (Iglot et al., 2011; LaFont as cited in Kingsbury, 2015). The value in the policy of these countries is put not on the family living itself but on purity of family's notion. There are many discussions on what family is and what it should be like, as if this could be controlled. From example in Hungary, Poland and Lithuania only traditional family is properly protected and enforced in the policy. Return to traditional family worsened gender inequality and contributed to the feminisation of poverty (Kligman, 1994). Due to influence of the Church, funding for Childcare was decreased and the length of parental leave increased (Iglot et al., 2011; LaFont as cited in Kingsbury, 2015). Moreover, later dissatisfaction with globalization and economic and political integration led to far-right political agenda which attempts to limit social benefits based on recipients' "worthiness" which is rooted in belonging to certain ethnic or economic groups (Kingsbury, 2015). For example, in Po-land only women who were employed one year prior to pregnancy can receive maternity benefits (ibid.). Cuts in childcare and maternity leave restrictions as well as traditional family being seen as of a higher value, strongly affects single mothers and their children. Falling labour opportunities for women and dominance of a male breadwinner system, declines women chances to choose single motherhood, increases risk of poverty and worsens children's life opportunities in various ways – from making them feel of less worthy compared to children from traditional families to experience of extreme poverty.

All in all, it is important to note that the way single mother families are perceived and framed in the policy highly affects children's wellbeing as certain rules and tools are set and certain messages are sent to them accordingly. This in return can either provide with more opportunities and equality or increase inequality and take part in the circle of poverty and exclusion.

5. Methodology

While the article is mainly theoretical and is focused on elaboration of how different framing in policy and in different welfare regimes may effect single mother families due to certain policy framework, qualitative analysis of political documents has been performed in order to carefully analyse every policy in Lithuania that affects single mothers and their children,

as well as to deepen understanding and possible outcomes of such policies in the light of policy framing theory.

The specific method chosen to analysis the documents is thematic analysis as it helps to look for the clusters that are at interest (Braun & Clarke, 2013). While conducting thematic analysis researchers look for recognisable reoccurring topics, ideas, and themes occurring within the data that provide insights and may be used to uncover issues and problems (Allen, 2017). In this research, as previously mentioned, there were selectively chosen all the documents that affect single mother's families and the documents that were irrelevant were dismissed from the analysis.

All the documents analysed are actual at current day, although they have been implemented at different time:

1. European Convention on Human Rights. Section 1 - Rights and Freedom. Articles 8 and 14. Rome, 4. XI. 1950;
2. Law of the Enforcement of the Family – 2017, No. XIII-700;
3. Law of the Republic of Lithuania Amending the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Needy Families and Single Persons – 2001, No. XI-1772;
4. Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Cash Social Assistance to the Poor – 2003, No. IX-1675;
5. Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Child Benefits - Official Gazette 1994, No. 89-1706; Regulation 2004, No. 88-3208, 21st Article, 1st Part;
6. Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Child Support Benefits – 2006, No. X-987;
7. Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Social Assistance to Students – 2018, No. XIII-1609;
8. Lithuanian Civil Code. 3rd Book. Family Law – Official Gazette 2000, No. 74-2262;
9. Regulation on the Making of Women's Surnames. 2003, No 2(87);
10. Regulation on the Rules for Registration of Civil Status Acts and the Form of Records of Civil Status Acts and Other Documents, 2016, No. 1R-334.

6. The Case of Lithuania

Lithuania is an interesting case as it has large numbers of single mothers (20% of all families) and long history of single motherhood and there is no decrease recorded in the last thirty years, which makes Lithuania have one of the highest single motherhood rates in Europe (Maslauskaitė, 2014). Moreover, due to post-soviet context, neoliberal policies, large social and economic inequalities and low social protection Lithuania has one of the highest poverty

rates in European Union among single mother families (ibid). Now there are around 56 000 single mother families in Lithuania that are experiencing poverty. This is also often the reason for children to experience life in foster care or live with other family members, usually grandparents due to migration of the mothers. The well-being of single mothers and their children is secured mostly through women's employment or intergenerational support. Moreover, perception in the society is rather unfavourable as public supports only widows while other single mother families receive negative opinions and are seen as "different" (Kanopienė, 2015). More to that, fathers usually do not participate in children's life especially in the case of single motherhood, as researches confirm that in Lithuanian families, mothers are responsible for children's upbringing and a father has a bread winner role and this role is only conducted within the marriage (ibid.). Other researches also show that social inclusion and consumption of single mothers and their children highly de-pends on their employment and social class, which causes great diversity and inequality (Maslauskaitė, 2014). Single mothers give priority to children's needs and have to cut down on traveling, housing improvement, beauty, sports and leisure (ibid.).

The goals set in the Lithuanian family policies that are achieved by certain tools are dis-criminative towards children from single mother's families as single mother families are not recognised as equal family compared to traditional family. One of the newest laws that were implemented in 2017 is the Law of the Enforcement of the Family. This law states that nuclear family formed of married man, woman and their offspring is a real, "normal' family while the other family forms are stated as "different" (2017). The goal of this law is to enforce the institute of traditional family and increase their number and therefore decrease the number of "other families". The tools used to achieve this goal are such as marriage counselling and education of society about the importance of traditional family values (2017). The Law of the Enforcement of the Family violates Lithuanian Constitution, and European Convention of Human Rights that state that family is the institute that lives "family life" that includes certain type of relationship which can be based on biological or social bonds of commitment and care (1992; 1950). Lithuanian Civil Code does not recognise single mother families as equal to as it states that family consists of a woman, man and their children while mother's and child's relationship are called kinship in-stead of family (2000). As previously explained in the chapter about the damage of keeping nu-clear family as a yardstick, this kind of policy framing causes great stigmatisation and discrimination towards children from single mother families. For example Lithuanian Civil Code states that children have equal rights whether there are born in married or unmarried opposite sex couples. This is a very strict and stigmatising message as it

imposes that all children are born to two opposite sex persons and other variations are not considered and excluded from the Code and these children are "unseen", left out. There is also a universal child benefit that provides every family with 50,16 Euros per month per child payment. But one of the documents that need to be presented in order to receive the payment is child's birth certificate where both of the parents are named. This requirement is again discriminative towards children from single mother families as father may not be known or do not play any role in child's life and therefore may be not named on the document. In case when father is unknown due to mother's decision to conceive a child on her own, child becomes "fatherless" and is therefore treated unequally before the law and his or hers rights are violated. This goes even further as Lithuanian Civil Code states that child's rights and responsibilities come together with the statement of his or hers origin (2000). In this case naming a father on the Birth Certificate is obligatory and there are clear rules set and there is always an absolute priority for a biological father to be stated in the Certificate (Civil Registry, 2019). The child who is 10 years and younger does not have a right for any of these decisions and after turning 10 he or she has a right to express an opinion but it has to be approved by the mother (Civil Code, 2000). The same law states that fatherhood without mothers approve can only be recognised when mother is dead or incapable. In this case mother has a power over child and the law discriminates child and a father although parents' rights and responsibilities towards children are stated as equal. As previously discussed in this chapter, mothers in Lithuania have absolute priority in caregivers role while father are seen as breadwinners and therefore fathers involvement in child's upbringing is rather minor especially in the cases where father lives separately from his children. Talking about father's involvement after divorce or other separation when the father is stated on the child's Birth Certificate, the court decides together with parents' agreement about the payment for the child's support (Civil Code, 2000). This payment should be equally divided between parents but there are many cases when fathers do not pay these money and mothers have to go through complicated processes of courts and bailiffs in order to get the money in other way. There is also a Governments Child Support Fund that cover the payments that the father does not pay to the child and draw money from the father themselves (The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2008). Nevertheless, the alimony payed by the father is recognised as a stable income by the law and in the case when single mother applies for social bene-fit payment, it is counted as her asset. Although, the alimony is directed towards children and their needs and these money do not decrease poverty of single mother families in general. In or-der to get social support, an income has to be as low as 102 Euros per month per person and the policy does not count the type of housing family

has (weather they own or rent a place) (The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2011). Therefore, needless to say, it does not save family from poverty. These kind of policies "promote" previously discussed feminization of poverty. Keeping in mind that most of the single parents are mothers who raise children by themselves with or without fathers support struggle to reconcile family and work, in many cases in Lithuania mothers have disabilities or serious health issues, - there is no adequate support from the government to these mothers and their children (Skučienė, D. et al., 2018). Government only intervenes when families experience extreme poverty, but as discussed, does not save families from it. Compared to two parent families, single mother families' income is one third times smaller (ibid.). Researches also show that with growing economy the poverty of single mother families is rather increasing than decreasing (ibid.). This is the result of neo-liberal policies and lack of education and decent and stable employment of single mothers.

All in all, the main issue in the policy framing in Lithuania is an attempt to clarify and define the concept of family in a rigid sense and the main focus is on an effort to strengthen and "rebuild" traditional family. It is hoped that policy directed towards exceptional recognition and rights of traditional family could change the reality and solve demographic and poverty issues. Nevertheless, this is not only discriminative towards single mothers and their children but also does not solve actual issues in any level and increase poverty and exclusion of children from single mother families and increase the risk by not investing enough to these children to set conditions for better future of other generations.

7. Conclusion

The wellbeing of children in single mother families is highly affected by the policy framing. Framing of the policy includes certain goals of the policy and tools and rules set to achieve these goals. The main issues faced by single mothers' children in all welfare regimes that can be modified by certain policies are unrecognition of diversity, comparison to nuclear family, lack of children's time with parents and poverty. There are different that countries see the cause of the problems and the best ways to solve them – in liberal countries there is an attempt to solve social issues through private insurance and therefore the culture of "punishing the poor" is formed; conservative corporatists welfare states focus more on children but still rely on traditional father's breadwinning and mother's caring roles; social democratic welfare states seek for equality but fail to recognise diversity and due to dissatisfaction with the policy makers understanding of justice within the society, policy tends to shift towards neo-liberalism; and post-soviet welfare states are focusing on traditional values and try to "rebuild" traditional families in order to solve poverty and demographic issues, but unsuccessfully and rather have

an opposite effect as well as produce discrimination. Lithuania is a typical example of post-soviet welfare regime where the policy is focused to enforce traditional families and children of single mother families are left as private "issue" rather than national value and responsibility that builds country's future.

Research Limitations. This research is only synoptically and more in-depth analysis has to be made. Given that only the case of Lithuania has been presented, in order to have a better understanding of the influence of policy on the welfare of single mother's children, other countries should be analysed. Although post-soviet countries have their similarities, nevertheless Lithuania has its own specific policy. A research is limited to the case of Lithuania only, the findings cannot be applied to the context of other countries due to specific historical and cultural back-grounds as well as different socio-economic situation.

Scope for Future research. In order to get a deeper understanding of policy on the welfare of single mother's children, the analysis of other countries policy will be made. There will be the examples of Ireland (liberal welfare state) and Sweden (social democratic welfare state) analysed. Moreover, qualitative interviews with children raised in single mother families will be con-ducted in the three countries in order to deepen the understanding of the relation between countries' policies and wellbeing of the children and the bases for their grown-up lives.

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