

# **Childcare in Lithuania and Belarus: How Gendered is Parenting in Eastern European Countries?**

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## **Abstract**

Research shows that even though women's and men's time spent on housework slowly converged over the last decades, the time that mothers and fathers invest in childcare did not change as much. This paper aims to contribute to the literature on childcare focusing on the two neglected Central Eastern European (CEE) countries Lithuania and Belarus, which took very different paths after seceding from the Soviet Union after 1990. We use recent datasets, namely the Families and Inequalities Survey from 2019 for Lithuania and the Generations and Gender Survey 2020 Belarus Wave 1 from 2017. The analytic sample consists of 2,114 mothers and fathers born between 1970 and 1984 with children under the age of 14. Results reveal that in both countries, Lithuania and Belarus, mothers perform more childcare tasks than fathers do and that, in line with the theoretical expectations, gendered parenting is more prominent in Lithuania than in Belarus.

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## **Introduction**

Trends in the division of domestic labor among women and men offer an important insight into changes in gender inequality. Recent empirical studies, using different data from numerous Western European and North American countries, revealed a gender convergence in the performance of housework in younger cohorts (e.g., Altintas and Sullivan, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2012; Leopold et al., 2018; Sullivan et al., 2018). However, there are significant differences between countries regarding men's involvement in house and care work, showing that the societal context plays an important role. Additionally, research shows that even though women's and men's time spent on housework is slowly converging, the time that mothers and fathers invest in child rearing did not change as much (Sayer and Gornick, 2011; Garcia-Roman and Cortina, 2016). On the contrary, one of the most common findings is that the transition to parenthood reinforces a traditional division of domestic labor even among couples who have been egalitarian as they were childless (Ajenjo and García-Román, 2014; Grunow et al., 2012; Neilson and Stanfors, 2014).

In the last decades, the division of domestic labor has become one of the most frequently examined issues in family sociology (see for an overview that does not even cover the publications of the last decade Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010). Questions on housework are included in almost every single study on couples and families around the world because the division of domestic labor is – as mentioned above – an important measure of gender (in-)equality in the public and in the private sphere (Treas, 2010). As long as women continue to perform the vast majority of daily routine housework and childcare, they have less time to invest in paid work and in their recreation than men do with the consequence of a lasting gender inequality. Above that, parents (un)equally sharing childcare

responsibilities have also an impact on children, e.g. their cognitive development (Keizer et al., 2019).

Against this backdrop, there is surprisingly little research on childcare in the families. Only some time-use studies offer insights in the detailed pattern of the gendered division of childcare (e.g., Sayer and Gornick, 2011; Craig and Mullan, 2011; Garcia-Roman and Cortina, 2016; Sullivan, 2013). Another limitation of existing studies on housework and childcare is that they have been conducted predominately in Western European or North American countries, while research on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is very scarce (but see Aassve et al., 2014). However, the consideration of CEE countries is very important because they present a significant part of Europe and earlier studies proved larger gender inequalities in both attitudes and the division of labor in CEE countries compared to Western countries (Aassve et al., 2014) and also stronger orientation towards familialistic childcare policies (Haškova and Saxonberg, 2016). Additionally, CEE countries are very heterogeneous because they took very different path after their seceding from the Soviet Union after 1990.

Thus, our paper fills several research lacunas in focusing on gendered parenting in the two neighboring CEE countries Lithuania and Belarus. First, the study focuses on childcare and includes not only the overall time spend with the child but also certain activities the parents are engage. Second, Lithuania and Belarus were not part of any previous study on the division on domestic labor and childcare so far. Third, the two CEE countries are particular eligible for this study because they took opposite political and economic paths after they left the Soviet Union in 1990 and consequently represent very different societal contexts now. In short, the paper aims to examine gendered parenting practices in Lithuania and Belarus by including a set of factors (individual, couple, and household) determining childcare divisions in families. To fulfil this aim, we are using very recent datasets, namely the Families and Inequalities Survey 2019 for Lithuania and the Generations and Gender Survey 2020 Belarus Wave 1 that was conducted 2017.

## **Background**

### *Context*

The empirical evidence on the increasing involvement of men in housework and childcare has been theorized as the possible shift towards a new gender regime. Some scholars argue that societies will or are already moving towards a new “gender equilibrium” (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Esping-Andersen and Billari, 2015) or are experiencing the “second half of the gender revolution” (Goldscheider et al., 2015). This new gender regime is characterised by an increasing egalitarianism in the private sphere with more active involvement of men in housework as well as childcare activities. Accordingly, the question arises, how far are different countries from the “new gender regime” with women considerably participating in the labor force and men equally involved with housework and childcare?

Although there are many recent studies on the division of domestic labor covering Western Europe and North America (e.g., Nitsche and Grunow, 2019; Skopek and Leopold, 2018; Kil et al., 2016; Altintas and Sullivan, 2016), we only know very little about CEE countries. This is a big research lacuna that need to be filled because CEE countries present a significant part of Europe that should not be neglected. Additionally, Eastern European countries are of special sociological interest because of their huge societal developments since 1990. Along with this, previous research suggest, that after the fall of the Iron Curtain gender relations were re-traditionalized and some of the countries reverted to the traditional male breadwinner model (Aassve et al., 2014). Thus, the question arises, if this pattern sustain and if there are differences between CEE countries that took altered developmental paths such as Lithuania and Belarus.

Lithuania and Belarus are two neighboring countries, which have been part of the USSR before 1990. They had common measures of family policy, the same employment plans with high female employment rates, and they shared the same pattern of advantageous

position of women in higher education (Peshkova, 1972; Gruzevskis and Kanopiene, 2017). Furthermore, they had similar divorce rates, fertility, and marriage patterns (Bondarskaja and Iljina, 1979; Darsky and Scherbov, 1995.). However, after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1990 and the seceding from the Soviet Union, the two now independent countries took rather opposite directions.

*Lithuania* stepped on the path of liberal democracy and market economy. The country introduced very radical economic reforms and is classified as representing the type of radical neoliberal capitalism (Bohle and Greskovits, 2007). Spectacular economic growth experienced before the 2009-2010 crisis was accompanied by increasing inequalities and high social costs (Zaidi, 2009), which were reinforced by austerity policies vigorously implemented in the Baltic countries after the crisis (Sommers et al., 2014). Female employment rates remained high with 76.7 per cent in 2018 (Eurostat, 2019a). Nevertheless, there is a sharp educational gradient in employment rates for women aged 25-49 with small children: 48 per cent of low educated women with children under the age of 6 are employed, while the rate among those with tertiary education is 92 per cent (Eurostat, 2019b). The gender pay gap is close to EU-average and reaches 15.2 per cent, however it is much higher in age groups 35-44 (Statistics Lithuania, 2018), which corresponds to the life course phase of active childrearing. It is also higher in the service and sales sector (30.4 per cent) and for skilled workers (23.7 per cent) (Gruzevskis and Kanopiene, 2016). The development of family policies was very inconsistent during the transition period with a strong focus on parental leave policies. Parental leave is distinct through very high income replacement level, long duration and flexible use.<sup>1</sup> However, other family policy measures are underdeveloped

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<sup>1</sup> In 2008, Lithuania introduced two years of paid parental leave. In 2008-2010, the income replacement level was 100 per cent for the first year and 80 per cent for the second year. In 2011, some policy change was introduced and families can choose now between one or two years of paid leave. In case of one year leave, the incomes are replaced 100 per cent. If families opt for two years leave, then the first year is paid 70 per cent and

and the families are highly depending on their position in the market. Even if social security system is extensive, the level of benefits is very low (Aidukaite, 2011) and social expenditure on families as the share of GDP is amongst the lowest in EU (OECD, 2015).

*Belarus*, in comparison, failed to develop democratic institutions and moved towards the political authoritarianism after 1990 (Silitski, 2002). Slow economic reforms resulted in peculiar type of economic system, which some scholars label “state capitalisms”, if at all the capitalism (Korosteleva, 2007). Limited progress in democratization of political institutions resulted in the continuity of family policies and persistence of the central role of the state in developing and implementing welfare policies (Pastore and Verashchagina, 2008; Stankuniene et al., 2018). Belarus also sustained very high female employment rate (around 80 per cent) and even though the gender wage gap was increasing for some time it was lower than in the neighboring countries (Pastore and Verashchagina, 2008). Literature suggest that the gender pay gap rose from 18.9 per cent in 2006 (Pastore and Verashchagina, 2011) to 22.6 in 2017 (Akulava and Mazol, 2018). The gender pay gap is highest among professionals, managers, service, and sales workers (Akulava and Mazol, 2018). However, gender pay data comes not from the official labor statistics, but from survey data. Some authors explain the increase of the gender pay gap by a massive process of segregation, when women moved to the low payed service sector jobs after the state rolled back the institutional childcare services (Pastore and Verashchagina, 2011). As mentioned, the state plays a central role in securing welfare in Belarus and pronatalistic aims are set as a top priority of the population policy (Stankuniene et al., 2018). Paternity leave policies ensure long paid leave (up to three years), but the income replacement level is low, not linked to the previous earnings (Stankuniene et al., 2018). Belarus’ family policy foresees various financial assistance and housing support

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the second 40 per cent, but the parent on leave can work and have incomes (Stankūnienė, Maslauskaitė, and Baublytė, 2013).

schemes to the families and in this regard differs from the family policy in Lithuania (Stankuniene et al., 2018).

### *Theory*

The theoretical arguments explaining the division of domestic labor and childcare between women and men in couples can be divided in two big strands (e.g., Sullivan, 2013; Geist and Ruppner, 2018). On the one hand, there are *rational choice or bargaining theories*, arguing that the division of household labor and childcare depends on the resources that both partners bring into exchange with each other (Blossfeld and Drobnič, 2009). Such resources can be almost everything like physical attractiveness or the level of education, but income is seen as one of the most important resource in this context. This is because the higher the income of one partner in relation to the other partner, the higher is his or her bargaining power to convey unpleasant work in the household and to make decisions (Davis and Greenstein, 2013). Although the theory is gender-neutral as such, it takes into account that domestic gender power is structurally unequal due to the fact that men can for various reasons usually acquire more resources than women in a relationship.

On the other hand, *gender role or doing gender theories* arguing that women and men experiencing gendered socialisation practices as children and adolescents and, thus, develop their gender identity that make them acting as female and male when they are grown up (Blossfeld and Drobnič, 2009). Because domestic labor and childcare are traditionally defined as feminine, women would invest more in those tasks in a heterosexual couple, independently of their bargaining power based on resources like income. Accordingly, the division of domestic labor and childcare is mostly determined by the attitudes toward gender (in-)equality and family roles that a person holds (Greenstein, 1996). Through the performing (or not performing) of housework and childcare, women and men accomplish and stabilize their (social) gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

In addition to these individual-level theories referring to resources and gender roles to explain the gendered division of domestic labor and childcare with women doing the majority of unpaid work in the private sphere, an institutional-level approach considering cross-national variations has been introduced (Treas and Lui, 2013; Noonan, 2013). It was argued that it is necessary to take social context into account because the predictors as well as the outcomes of the division of domestic labor and childcare differ as its function (Craig and Mullan, 2011). In other word, the decision about who is doing the house and care work on the individual or couple level is not independent of the social or country context with certain policies and gender (in-)equalities based on the respective economical, cultural, and historical situation of the country or region.

#### *Previous research*

In comparison to the substantial body of research on housework, research on childcare is still quite scarce. The scant studies on the subject are mostly based on time-use diary data from Australia, North American, and Western Europe (Craig, 2006; Garcia-Roman and Cortina, 2016; Guryan et al., 2008; Kotila et al., 2013; Neilson and Stanfors, 2014; Raley et al., 2012; Sayer and Gornick, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2014; Yeung et al., 2001). Research based on these data indicate that despite the sharp rise in mothers' labor force participation, the time that mothers spend with their children did not decrease as much as the time they invest in domestic chores (Bianchi, 2000). On the contrary, especially highly educated mothers (college education or higher) would spend even more time now than some decades ago (Guryan et al., 2008). The same holds true for fathers who also spend more time in parenting than in the past (Bianchi, 2000; Sayer et al., 2004). However, mothers (as with to household chores) are still much more involved in childrearing than fathers are, meaning that the division of childcare tasks among parents is far from equal (Garcia-Roman and Cortina, 2016).



Moreover, it is necessary and important to differentiate between childcare tasks because the care context or in other words, the kind of activities parents are involved with, differs substantially for mothers and fathers (McDonnell et al., 2019). Similar to the distinction between routine domestic tasks like cleaning, cooking, or washing clothes that are still predominantly performed by women and non-routine tasks like gardening or repair work that are predominantly performed by men, childrearing tasks can be differentiated in the same manner. Mothers are doing mostly the routine childcare on a daily basis like changing diapers, dressing, and feeding while fathers are more involved on weekends and usually do tasks like playing with or driving their children (Yeung et al., 2001). This leads, on the one hand, to an unequal amount of time that parents spend with their children with mothers spending more time (Noonan, 2013; Treas and Lui, 2013) and, on the other hand, it also leads to unequal distributed feelings of pressure and affection with mothers feeling much more pressured and less satisfied (McDonnell et al., 2019). Another study reveals that mothers feelings of negative emotions, stress, psychological distress, and work-family conflict are also a result of more hours a week multitasking activities at home, i.e. doing housework and childcare simultaneously (Offer and Schneider, 2011).

As mentioned above, education plays an important role in explaining differences in gendered parenting in couples. Highly educated mothers as well as highly educated fathers are spending more time in child rearing than less educated parents do (Guryan et al., 2008). It seems that the time that educated parents invest in their children has even increased over the last decades. Furthermore, there is some strong evidence that fathers' childcare activities are associated with mothers' economic contribution to the household (Raley et al., 2012). When their wives spend more time in the labor market, fathers are more engaged in sole and routine childcare (Garcia-Roman and Cortina, 2016). Next to the relevance of those economic resources, also gender role attitudes are at play. Fathers with more egalitarian gender role attitudes spend more time with their children and mothers spend less (Evertsson, 2014). In

contrast, when egalitarian gender ideology is lacking, parents reproduce a traditional share of childcare. Thus, gender egalitarian values are important for the realization of an egalitarian family.

Additionally to this individual-level factors that influence the division of childcare, institutional-level differences exist (Sullivan, 2013: 74). The country context does not only matter for the division of household labor (Noonan, 2013; Treas and Lui, 2013) but also for childcare (Craig and Mullan, 2011; Sayer and Gornick, 2011). From the 1960s on, women's contributions to housework declined fastest in the social-democratic and the corporatist welfare state regimes, but patterns of childcare activities are not so clear cut (Sullivan 2013). Some comparative time-use studies proved that traditional patterns of childcare are sustained in countries with less comprehensive family policies and less support for gender equality (Neilson and Stanfors, 2014). Based on a comparative analysis of English-speaking countries and Slovenia, Sayer and Gornick (2011) revealed that culturally distinct parenting ideologies mediate the relationship between the employment and childcare in addition to the gendered work hour cultures.

## **Method**

### *Sample*

Analyses are based on the Families and Inequalities Survey 2019 for Lithuania ([www.kartosirseimos.lt](http://www.kartosirseimos.lt)) and the Generations and Gender Survey 2020 Belarus Wave 1 that was conducted in 2017 (<https://www.ggp-i.org/data>). The Families and Inequalities Survey (Lithuania) is a representative dataset covering birth cohorts from 1970 to 1984 (N=3,000). The Generations and Gender Survey 2020 (Belarus) is a representative dataset covering ages between 18 and 79 (N= 2,859). After pooling the data, we ended up with 5,859 cases. Following the aim of our paper to examine mothers' and fathers' engagement in childcare tasks and to compare Lithuania and Belarus, the sample was restricted to the birth cohorts

1970 to 1984, respondents who live with children under the age of 14, and parents who share a household. Thus, our final analytical sample consisted of 2,114 cases, 1,075 for Lithuania and 1,039 for Belarus.

### *Dependent Variable*

Division of childcare tasks were measured by a set of five indicators: (1) “Dressing the children or seeing that the children are properly dressed”, (2) “putting the children to bed and/or seeing that they go to bed”, (3) “staying at home with the children when they are ill”, (4) “playing with the children and/or taking part in leisure activities with them”, and (5) “helping the children with homework”. The response categories for all items were 1 = “always me”, 2 = “usually me”, 3 = “me and my partner about equally”, 4 = “usually my partner”, 5 = “always my partner”, 6 = “always or usually someone else”, and 7 = “children do it themselves”. We recoded the items considering the gender of the respondents leading to a value of -1 if the mother does the childcare task, a value of 0 if mother and father are sharing the childcare task equally, and a value of 1 if the childcare task is done by the father. A value of 0 was also attributed if the task is done by others or by the children themselves. Descriptive information for each item by country is provided in Table 1.

-----Table 1 about here-----

For the further analysis, an index *childcare* ranging from -5 to +5 was conducted from the five items. A value of -5 indicates that the mother accomplishes all childcare tasks, -4 shows that she is doing 80 per cent of childcare tasks so forth. A value of 0 signifies that the parents are on equal terms regarding division of childcare. They could do it themselves, with outside help, or children do it independently, thus the task is not a solo responsibility of one parent. Values 1 to 5 indicate that fathers outperform mothers.

### *Independent Variables*

The independent variables that we included in the analysis are associated with the rational choice or bargaining model on the one hand, and with the gender role or doing gender perspective on the other hand. For covering the *rational choice or bargaining model*, we used a variable on *couples' income gap*. It was created following the methodology developed by Baxter (2002) as the percentage gap in monthly incomes during the past 12 month between male and female partner. In the first step, we calculated the total incomes in euros of both partners. For both variables (respondent's income and partners income), the number of missing values was high (for respondent's income it was 29 per cent (LT), and 41 (BY), for partners (40 per cent)). Thus, we imputed education specific income means to missing items. In the second step, contribution to the household income in percentage by respondent and his/her partner was calculated. In the third step, we deducted from men's share the women's share and divided it by 100. For example, if a man's income accounted for 80 per cent and a woman's for 60 per cent of the total household income, the gap was 20 per cent. For the clarity of interpretation, the income gap values were divided by 100, thus the variable ranges from -1 (meaning the woman contributes all to the household income) and +1 (when a man contributes all to the household income). The variable on *decision power* includes items on who makes decisions when buying routine purchases, occasional more expensive purchases, the time the respondent spends in paid work, the time partner spends in paid work, and the way the children are raised. The response categories ranged from 1 = "always me", 2 = "usually me", 3 = "me and my partner about equally", 4 = "usually my partner", 5 = "always partner", and 6="other persons". We assigned values -1 if the decision is taken by the mother only, 0 = together or by other persons in the household, and +1 by men only. All items were summed into one index variable ranging from -5 to +5.

The *gender role or doing gender perspective* included the two composite variables gender values and division of household labor. *Gender values* were measured by three items: (1) “whose task is to look after home and children, men or women”, (2) “whose task is to earn money for family, men or women”, and (3) “who are better at caring for small children, men or women”. The response categories are 1 = “always men”, 2 = “possibly men”, 3 = “does not depend on the sex”, 4 = “possibly women”, 5 = “always women”. Items 1 and 3 were recoded inversely, all items subsumed and divided by 3, resulting in the value range 1 to 5. *Division of household labor* was examined using several variables on the division of tasks in the household: (1) preparation of daily meals, (2) cleaning the house, (3) doing the laundry, and (4) paying bills. The response categories ranged from 1 = “always me”, 2 = “usually me”, 3 = “me and my partner about equally”, 4 = “usually my partner”, 5 = “always partner”, and 6 = “other persons”. We applied the same procedure as calculating the dependent variable on the division of childcare tasks. The division of household labor variable ranges from -4 to +4, with negative values indicating mothers contributing more to the household labor.

### *Control Variables*

We controlled for a set of variables which previous research suggested is associated with gendered parenting. *Respondents’ characteristics* considered *gender* (0 = “male” vs. 1 = “female”), *age* (in years), and *level of education* as indicated by a variable using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) which ranges from 0 = “less than primary education” to 8 = “doctoral degree or equivalent”. A dummy variable was created with two categories: 0 = “low/medium” (ISCED 0-5) and 1 = “high” (ISCED 6-8). The same procedure was applied to the variable on partners’ education. Additionally, we included *age of the youngest child in the household* (in years) and *number of children in the household* (one child = 1, two children and more = 0). *Household structure* was also considered with the variable recoding the complex family household (=1) or nuclear family (=0). Type of the

partnership was also included (cohabitation=1, marriage=0) based on previous findings that cohabitations tend to be more gender equal (Domingues-Folgueras, 2012). The last control variable is *subjective satisfaction with childcare division* measured with the scale from 0 to 10. Detailed descriptive sample statistics are found in Table 2.

-----Table 2 about here-----

## **Results**

### *Descriptive results*

Table 1 (see above) presents the descriptive results for each item on the childcare task scale for Lithuania and Belarus. As expected, in both countries mothers are more often solo responsible for the childcare tasks than fathers are. In both countries, dressing and staying at home when the child is ill are predominately women's responsibilities (in LT: 59.2 per cent and 69.4 percent, in BY: 51.6 per cent and 61.1 per cent). Most frequently shared between the parents is playing with the child or taking part in leisure activities with them (LT: 59.1 per cent, BY: 79.9 per cent). Generally, parents in Belarus share childcare tasks more often than parents in Lithuania. Three out of five childcare tasks (putting children to bed, playing/leisure time activities, and helping with homework), are more frequently shared with fathers than accomplished solo by mothers in Belarus. In Lithuania, in contrast, only one (playing/leisure time activities) is shared more frequently with fathers than it is done solo.

### *Multivariate results*

Model 1 of Table 3 presents the results of an OLS regression for the pooled data of both countries. First, we see that country differences are significant as it was expected. In Lithuania, women's burden on childcare is higher, compared to Belarus. In addition, we see that economic dependency is also relevant in predicting the childcare division. If men's

relative earnings are higher than that of women's, more childcare is performed by mothers. Furthermore, the association between decision power and childcare is positive, meaning that female power in the couple decrease the sharing of childcare with the men. The first model also shows a positive association between gender values and childcare division, meaning the more egalitarian gender role attitudes, the more egalitarian divided is childcare in the couple. Also, the division of household labor is positively associated with childcare, thus, the more egalitarian the couple divides household chores, the more partners share childcare duties and less is done by mothers solo.

-----Table 3 about here-----

Model 2 and Model 3 of Table 3 present the OLS regression results for both countries separately. Overall, we see that the gender effect is much more pronounced in Lithuania than in Belarus. In Belarus, the differences between men and women even disappear after controlling for the other independent variables. Couples income gap is also more relevant in explaining childcare division for the Lithuanian subsample, while for Belarus the effect size is smaller. Decision power, gender values, and the division of household labor remain relevant in both countries. In addition, we observe that the association between age of the youngest child in the household and childcare is persistent, meaning that the older the child, the less childcare is performed by mothers solo. Subjective satisfaction with childcare is positively linked to the childcare division in the couple and this is evident for both subsamples. In talking about other control variables, individual structural characteristics – age, education of respondent, and education of the partner, household structure, as well as the number of children – do not contribute to the explanation of childcare division. Interestingly, in cohabiting couples childcare is more traditional but this association stands only for the Lithuanian subsample.

## Discussion

The aim of this paper was to examine childcare division in couples and its determinants in two neighboring CEE countries – Lithuania and Belarus. They represent contrasting institutional settings of family life, which emerged after the 1990 because of different transitional paths of the countries. Overall, evidence on gender division in childcare in CEE countries is very sparse, even though the region experienced dramatic and dynamic changes in political economies and cultural settings over the past three decades. This is mainly caused by the limited availability of relevant comparable datasets in the area. Our study is based on very recent datasets in both countries and thus gives us the chance to examine the most current trends of gendered parenting and also the effects of individual, couple, and household level factors associated with the childcare division. We contextualize our findings and indirectly assess the potential effect of country-level institutional settings.

First, Lithuanian mothers solo perform more childcare tasks than Belarussian and less childcare activities are shared between the partners in Lithuania. Albeit the country differences, fathers solo contribution to childcare is only very marginal in both countries and they are most actively involved in recreational activities. Although we did not examined the direct effect of contextual factors, based on previous research (Aassve et al., 2014; Neilson and Stanfors, 2014) we conclude that radical political and economic reforms, long and very high income replacement level parental leave in Lithuania reinforced traditional gender childcare divisions. Overall, our results show that childcare is more egalitarian in Belarus, which is closer to the “second half of the gender revolution” (Goldscheider et al., 2015) compared to Lithuania. Paradoxically, market economy and liberal democracy in the latter did not catalyze the gender egalitarianism at least in the private sphere and the childcare.

Second, the larger the income gap between mothers and fathers, the more childcare activities were performed by mothers. Additionally, our findings prove that income gap



between men and women in the family is stronger associated with the childcare division in Lithuanian couples than in Belarussian couples. We believe that our findings could be interpreted based on the structural gender inequalities in the labor market and the differences in the family policy setting. Even if overall the gender pay gap in Lithuania is moderate on the EU-level, it is substantially higher for the age range we included, which overlap with the active period of childrearing in the individual life course (Statistics Lithuania, 2018). On the other hand, very limited in scope and benefit levels family policy in Lithuania (except the paternity leave) increase the dependency of families on the market. In combination with the structural gender inequalities in the labor market, long breaks of women employment due to paternity leaves most likely increase the relevance of men's career and incomes for the families' welfare.

Third, decision power obtained by women is positively associated with traditional childcare division. One explanation could be that women with decision power display their gender, as the doing gender theory would suggest, by doing more housework and childcare (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Another explanation for this result refers to legacy of the matrifocal families, strongly supported by state policies and public discourse in Soviet period (Utrata, 2008). Women holding "four corners of the home" epitomizes the cultural ideal and social reality of the Soviet society and these discursive notions of gender might still play a part in shaping current life of the families in Lithuania and Belarus.

Fourth, traditional gender values are positively associated with a traditional childcare division in Lithuania and in Belarus. Thus, normative expectations about the femininity, masculinity, and parenthood are playing a crucial role in the social organization of childcare within the families and bring childcare into the gender identity building domain.

Fifth, our analysis proved that doing more housework is linked to doing more childcare. Thus, gender divisions in household and childcare seems to be mutually intertwined

and we do not find support for the argument that gender divisions in housework might not correspond to the ones in the childcare (Craig and Mullan, 2011).

As in every study, there are limitations. First, the cross-sectional study design enables to uncover only the associations between childcare and contributing factors, but does not give the opportunity to establish the causal relationships. Second, we explored only two CEE countries, but this in the first place is conditioned by the very limited availability of the appropriate datasets in the region. Third, the childcare tasks are not child-specific but general and thus do not allow to link childcare with child characteristics. Nonetheless, we are confident that our study has several advantages. We were able to use very recent datasets and consequently our analysis captures current trends of the childcare division in Lithuania and Belarus. In addition, the study provides evidence from two countries of CEE, which generally are to a very limited extent covered in literature (particularly Belarus). Moreover, our study uses the detailed measurement of the childcare in distinguishing between various childcare activities, thus it provides a nuanced picture of gender divisions in parenting. Generally, this study indicates that the transition paths of the CEE-countries results in diverse outcomes for gendered childcare. Market capitalism and liberal democracy does not naturally lead to the closing of the gender gap in parenting. They might even reinforce the gendered parenting practices in the families if not accompanied by gender equality and corresponding family policies.

Table 1. *Distribution of childcare tasks of parents in Lithuania and Belarus (percentages)*

	<b>Lithuania</b>			<b>Belarus</b>		
	mother	both	father	mother	both	father
Dressing	59.2	37.6	3.2	51.6	46.4	2.0
Putting to bed	51.9	45.0	3.1	32.6	65.0	2.4
Staying home when ill	69.4	26.7	3.9	61.1	36.3	2.6
Playing/leisure time	33.8	59.1	7.1	16.7	79.9	3.5
Helping with homework	45.6	49.0	5.4	34.7	58.8	6.4
N	1,075			1,039		

Note: Families and Inequalities Survey 2019 (Lithuania) and Generations and Gender Survey 2020 (Belarus)

Table 2. *Descriptive sample statistics – percentages or means (standard deviation)*

	<b>All</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>Belarus</b>
Gendered childcare (-5 to 5)	-2.09 (1.93)	-2.37 (2.07)	-1.79 (1.72)
<b>Rational choice or bargaining</b>			
Income gap in couple (-1 to 1)	0.11 (0.22)	0.14 (0.23)	0.09 (0.21)
Decision power (-5 to 5)	-0.34 (1.17)	-0.43 (1.20)	-0.24 (1.13)
<b>Gender role or doing gender</b>			
Gender values (1 to 5)	2.34 (0.60)	2.42 (0.53)	2.26 (0.66)
Division of housework (-4 to 4)	-2.24 (1.50)	-2.31 (1.48)	-2.16 (1.50)
<b>Controls</b>			
Respondent's gender: female	54.4	60.3	48.5
Respondents' age	39.14 (3.85)	38.59 (3.82)	39.71 (3.81)
Respondent's education: high	47.2	53.6	40.8
Partners' education: high	50.9	60.2	41.1
Age of youngest child in hh	7.57 (3.85)	7.56 (3.82)	7.57 (3.88)
Number of children in hh: one	34.7	41.8	27.4
Complex family	9.3	12.1	6.4
Cohabiting couple	8.4	12.3	4.2
Satisfaction with childcare (0-10)	8.28 (1.57)	7.84 (1.60)	8.74 (1.39)
N	2,114	1,075	1,039

Note: Families and Inequalities Survey 2019 (Lithuania) and Generations and Gender

Survey 2020 (Belarus)

Table 3. *Multivariate regression results for gendered childcare division (traditional – egalitarian), unstandardized B (Standard errors)*

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	All		Lithuania		Belarus	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Country: Lithuania	-0.26***	(0.08)				
Income gap in couple	-0.81***	(0.17)	-.94***	(0.25)	-0.53**	(0.23)
Decision power	0.15***	(0.03)	0.07	(0.04)	0.24***	(0.04)
Gender values	0.37***	(0.06)	0.54***	(0.1)	0.25***	(0.07)
Division of housework	0.41***	(0.02)	0.46***	(0.03)	0.34***	(0.03)
Respondent's gender: female	-0.23***	(0.07)	-0.63***	(0.12)	0.14	(0.10)
Respondent's age	-0.00	(0.01)	-0.00	(0.01)	-0.00	(0.01)
Respondent's education: high	-0.15*	(0.08)	-0.14	(0.12)	-0.11	(0.10)
Partner's education: high	-0.04	(0.08)	-0.12	(0.13)	0.02	(0.10)
Age of youngest child in hh	0.04***	(0.01)	0.03**	(0.01)	0.07***	(0.01)
Number of children in hh: one	0.12	(0.08)	0.12	(0.11)	-0.03	(0.14)
Complex family	-0.22*	(0.12)	-0.13	(0.17)	-0.12	(0.26)
Cohabiting couple	-0.30**	(0.13)	-0.44***	(0.17)	-0.03	(0.23)
Satisfaction with childcare	0.19***	(0.02)	0.18***	(0.03)	0.21***	(0.03)
$R^2$	0.24		0.25		0.24	
$N$	2,114		1,075		1,039	

Note: Families and Inequalities Survey 2019 (Lithuania) and Generations and Gender Survey 2020 (Belarus). Missing value indicator variables are included, but not displayed. \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$

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