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## Masculinities, sexuality and contraceptive behavior in Lithuania

Work in progress

### **(Extended abstract)**

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this study is to reveal the underlying mechanisms behind childbearing decisions and the choice of contraceptive methods to meet them by bringing in the men's perspective. Demographic studies on contraceptive behavior have almost exclusively concentrated on women, mostly because of the assumption that they possess the most accurate information on this subject. Despite the lack of research on men, their role in reproductive decisions and, consequently, on contraceptive behavior has been acknowledged in various studies (Greene, Biddlecom 2000; Santow 1993; Fisher 2000; Lowe 2005). The need to incorporate the men's perspective is especially important in social contexts with gendered power relations (Mason 2000).

The prevailing explanations of contraceptive behavior rely on the framework of rational behavior and assume progressive linear transition from the use of the so called "traditional" methods to "modern" ones. Lithuania in that respect serves as an interesting case study, since even though family transformation processes associated with the second demographic transition are clearly visible, the "modern mode" of contraceptive behavior has not yet been established. Recently, there has been an increase in research on cultural and social processes that have an impact on contraceptive behavior in different social settings (Johnson-Hanks 2002; Gribaldo et al. 2009). Following this path, the study draws extensively on anthropological theory and insights from gender studies and explores the interconnections between gender relations, discourses of masculinity and sexuality and contraceptive practices.

#### **Data and methods**

The study is part of the broader project "Procreational identities of young men: cultural norms, individual expectations and experiences", financed by the Lithuanian Science Foundation. Issues that were discussed during the interviews included interviewees' family of origin, interviewees' perceptions of masculinity, intimate/ romantic relationships, sexual/ reproductive behavior, plans for career, family and children, values and general attitude towards life. The interviewees were selected with the help of personal contacts, keeping in mind the goal of

maximizing variation in socio-demographic characteristics. 35 in-depth semi-structured interviews with 18-34 years old Lithuanian men of different social background, different educational, occupational statuses, place of residence (city/ rural area) were conducted (during the period of June- October in 2013).

### **Preliminary results**

The study is qualitative, thus, the results cannot be generalized to the whole population of Lithuania. Nonetheless, it does provide valuable insights into the complexities of contraceptive behavior in Lithuania, and helps to unravel social and cultural factors that shape it. Preliminary results of the study indicate the need to reconsider the dominant explanations of contraceptive behavior and their adaptability to specific social settings.