Lithuanian women in the Parliament: Access and participation in post-socialist politics

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LITHUANIAN WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENT: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN
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Introduction

After Dalia Grybauskaite came to power in 2009, European journalists quickly dubbed her Lithuania's Iron Lady, owing to her steely way with words and her black belt in karate. The daughter of a sales woman and an electrician, she worked part time in a factory while earning a Ph.D. in economics. She went on to become Deputy Minister of Finance in 1999, before holding a series of positions within the European Commission. In 2009, with Lithuania mired deep in recession, Grybauskaite focused her presidential campaign on protecting those with the lowest incomes and tackling unemployment, which had climbed to nearly 16%. Running as an independent, she won with a 68% majority — the largest margin of victory ever recorded in Lithuania's presidential-election history (Adams 2011).

Dalia Grybauskaite's success is not a common story in Lithuania. Women face many obstacles and barriers in getting promoted to higher positions. There is a reason why Lithuanian president, Dalia Grybauskaite, is called the "Iron Lady" representing a strong, tactical, and courageous personality that was able to overcome all the barriers in the campaign process. Adams' quotation about the first woman president in Lithuania might be misleading because her case is an exception. There are few cases like Grybauskaite's when women gain political power in Lithuania. Women in Lithuania are not supported nor encouraged to participate in the politics to become a parliamentarian or president. Even though the "Iron Lady" is an exception, there are still things that can be learned from her experience. Patricia Heyton, a U.S. feminist, visited Lithuania in 2011 to participate in the Women Leaders Conference. In her speech she emphasized that the increased number of women that occupy higher positions in politics encourage other women to follow her steps. The first woman president might encourage other women to seek their goals and participate in the elctions. She added that Lithuanians can be proud of electing a woman president but at the same time politicians as well as citizens need to work in other areas to improve women's lives and help women to gain civil rights because having a woman president does not indicate women's equality in Lithuania (IQ 2011). The

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society's views, and expectations, as well as women's everyday lives, need to be examined more closely in order to understand women's increased representation in the politics.

This thesis examines women's access and representation in Lithuania's parliament. It sets out to discuss women's abilities to influence and initiate policies and laws that protect and empower women in Lithuania. I focus on the candidates and their political parties before and after elections. I examine elected parliamentarians' motivations, as well as campaigns, projects, and the public issues they work on. The purpose of this research is to explore women politicians' achievements and struggles while seeking political career. The goal is to learn more about women's work in the parliament and their abilities to influence policies.

I examine how society influences parliament's work and how parliament's policies influence society. Specifically, I look at women's responsibilities, civil rights, and participation in the parliament. My goal is to see how women can influence and change policies by participating in the parliament and how policies can improve women's lives and encourage them to participate in the elections.

Since the 1990s, when Lithuania gained independence after the fall of the Soviet Union, many changes have been introduced in the political, economical, and social spheres. The efforts by the national and international agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, are in place to empower women. Their efforts have focused on women's employment, education, and policy reforms. Despite these efforts, gender inequalities remain in Lithuania. The transition from state socialism to an open market economy failed to create and promote equality for Lithuanian women (Gal and Kligman 2000). During the first half of the 1990s, Lithuania's economy shrunk, unemployment rates increased, and tax revenues declined (The Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2010). Women, more than men, experienced increased unemployment,

poverty, and violence. The situation escalated and poverty among women increased due to unequal pay, sexist advertising, as well as inadequate pensions (Rakauskiene and Chlivickas 2007). Most of these issues existed during the socialist system but were politically invisible. The inequality and poverty in society increased and was unsanctioned with the nation's independence. Women also became vulnerable in the more recent economic downturn.

Currently, the topic of women's political voices is very popular and widely discussed in Lithuania. While watching Lithuanian news and television shows, I noticed an increased attention in discussing family problems and women's unemployment, family situations, and politics (Talk Shows "Valanda su Ruta" 2010-2011). I began wondering whether women's situation in Lithuania will improve during the economic downturn and whether parliament can alter women's lives. For many years, Lithuanians were controlled by the government officials and policies created by the Soviet political party. After independence in 1990s, people continued to associate their lives with old policies. Lithuanians blamed and placed all the responsibilities on the parliament (Klumbyte 2006). For example, Lithuanians are blaming parliament for increased unemployment, low pensions, increased inflation, and increased inequality in the country (The Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2010). Some elderly believe that it was better to live during the Soviet regime because at least they had secured jobs and income (Klumbyte 2006). People also blame the parliament for financial insecurity. They think that the parliament should fix the economy and improve Lithuanians' lives.

What makes Lithuania and women's rights an interesting subject to study is their unique history and relationship to the international community. The change that occurred in Lithuania within the last 20 years included the shift to an open market economy, joining the European Union (EU), and being part of the global community influences culturally situated gender

ideologies, relations, and women's civil rights. After joining the international community, there were an increased financial assistance, flow of ideas, and changes in economy that influenced culture and social norms in Lithuania. This study can be used to better understand how a political economy might influence gender relations in economies in transition to capitalism as well as those labeled as advanced capitalist societies.

Even though the highest government positions are currently occupied by women: president, Dalia Grybauskaite, speaker of the house, Janina Degutiene, and minister of national defense, Rasa Jukneviciene, and many Lithuanians would say that women are not discriminated against in their country. According to the statistics, women are underrepresented in many higher positions in Lithuania (QI 2011). Women living in poverty have become a common phenomenon since Lithuania gained independence; there is increased discrimination in the workplace, increased unemployment, and violence against women (The Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2011). Economic downturn negatively affected women because more women than men face unemployment. There are more single-parent families headed by women. The loss of social safety net increased women's dependence on men and state.

Empowerment of women is necessary to address gender inequality in Lithuania and decrease poverty in the families. Since women constitute the majority of the poor, and are the most economically and socially disadvantaged, it is necessary to examine how to best lobby for women's empowerment and equal rights. Women are most numerous social group whose comparative proportion in the overall population is gradually growing: in 1990, women comprised 52.7 percent of the population, in 2000 the number approached 53.2 percent and in 2009 women comprised 53.5 percent (Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2010). Despite this growing population, women are in a disadvantaged position and less involved in the decision-

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making processes. There is a lack of women's participation and representation in politics. In 2000, the percent of women in the VIII parliament decreased from 18.33 percent to 10.6 percent. There were only three women ministers in the XII coalitions of social democrats and social liberals (Jureniene 2007).

My research about women's role in exercising power in the post-socialist state focuses on the number of different obstacles and barriers women face, including: How many candidates and political parties emphasize gender equality? How does society support these women? How and why do women decide to run for political office? What factors help or hinder them in their quest to be reelected? What roles do women occupy in the parliament? What parliamentarian groups do they serve on, and what activities do they see as most important? How many parliamentarians advocate and are interested in women's issues in Lithuania? To what extent have parliamentarians been able to achieve their goals? What obstacles do they face in the process? And finally, what are the most important problems in Lithuania?

Women's participation in mainstream political activity has important implications for the broader sphere of national governance. Lithuania's transition process from socialism to an open market economy shows the willingness to build a system on reason, law, and freedom of choice that is represented by different social groups. This process has been understood and marketed as democratic. Since women in Lithuania constitute half the population in a political system which supports equality where both women and men are legally eligible for political office, women's participation should be equal to that of men. Women's representation in parliament is important for a change in social norms and attitudes about women's contributions to the state. It is important to address legal changes particularly constitutional ammendments addressing gender

inequality in the country. There is a widely held belief that "women would achieve equality only when they were fully integrated in politics, society, and the economy" (Ford 2005).

Research Methodology

This study examines women's political representation in post-socialist Lithuania and their capacity to participate in the parliament's elections. It thereby aims to advocate for gender equality in Lithuania. I answer guiding research questions through a qualitative and quantitative data analysis. I use statistical data, data of elections, campaigns and candidates, as well as interviews. Briefly, I explore each of these methods in the sections below.

Statistical Data

I collected statistical data to learn about women's participation in politics. In addition, I looked at official parliament's website and collected the number of women in the parliament during different terms (www.seimas.lt). Demographic information, such as the number of women and men in Lithuania, their labor force activities, unemployment rates, and average monthly gross earnings were gathered for this thesis in order to learn more about women's financial power. Specifically, this data provided information about women's employment availability and poverty rates. These statistics helped to compare the lived realities of men and women. I gathered all the statistical data by using official The Lithuanian Department of Statistics website (www.stat.gov.lt).

Election Data

The first step in this study was to collect data about the parliament's elections. Collecting data about voters' preferences, participation, candidates, and the election process helped me to learn more about the political system, and participation in civic duties. Accessed data from The Lithuanian Department of Statistics (www.stat.lt) and The Central Electoral Commission of the

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Republic of Lithuania (www.vrk.lt) helped to determine how many candidates are working towards gender equality. I used demographic information from elections participation between the years 1990 – 2008. In the light of this data, I assessed the ability of women in Lithuania to advocate for women's rights and political representation. The Central Commission of The Republic of Lithuania website had detailed information of all elections, candidates, and elected parliamentarians. I used data from different years of the parliament elections to examine the number of women who ran for an office and how many of them were elected. With this data, I examined women's willingness to become party members or candidates for the parliament elections. The goal was to determine the number of women committed to participate in the parliament election.

In addition, I collected available data about voters in The Central Commission of the Republic of Lithuania (VRK). Studying voters' statistics and participation helped to situate preferences for a particular party and particular issues. This information helped me to understand citizens' engagement and interest in politics. It also illustrates what issues and projects are most important for women and men.

Campaign Process and Candidates

Data about the candidates' and political parties' campaigns was collected in detail. By collecting information about each political party, their programs, members, and supporters helped me to learn more about the campaign process and problems in Lithuania. Specifically, I had a set of questions that I planned to answer by collecting information about the campaign process from 1990- 2008, the time since Lithuania gained independence. I wanted to know: What are the platforms or goals political parties and candidates advocate? How many candidates and

political parties advocate women's civil rights, family planning, and gender equality? How many

women are in each political party and how many women are elected to parliament from each

political party? This information was available online, on The Central Commission of the

Republic of Lithuania website (www.vrk.lt) and in each political party's website. I looked at the

issues political parties and candidates are interested in working and advocating for in the

parliament.

In-Depth Interviews

In addition to available data collection, I wanted to hear from women first hand. I

conducted eleven in-depth interviews with current and former women parliamentarians. During

the interviews, I was an active listener and asked open ended questions. I compiled a list of

potential interviewees by consulting the official parliament's website (www.seimas.lt) and by

using the search tool (www.google.lt). Potential interviewees included current and former

parliamentarians from different terms and years that range 1990-2008. I contacted each potential

interviewee personally via phone and email.

I received Human Service's approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in

2010 before I arranged for the interviews. Interviews were conducted in compliance with IRB

requirements. Each interviewee received detailed information about the project and interview

questions. Interviewees emailed their consent before the interview. I informed them about

confidentiality and their right to end the interview at any time without suffering any

consequences. In this research project, participants' names and identities are not revealed. In this

thesis, parliamentarians' names are false names in order to protect their identities.

The interviews were in Lithuanian language and later translated into English. The interviews were collected over a four month period from May, 2011 to August, 2011. I scheduled the interview time based on parliamentarians' availability. All interviews were by phone, and lasted 30 minutes on average, although smaller number exceeded 50 minutes. I recorded the conversations and deleted them after transcription. All electronic files remain password protected to ensure anonymity. Two parliamentarians preferred to answer questions in a written format and emailed me their answers.

The women interviewed are from different political parties, including: The Centre Union of Lithuania, The Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party, three interviewees from The Social Democratic Party of Lithuania, The Liberal Union of Lithuania, The Labor Party of Lithuania, The National Resurrection Party, The Homeland Union, The Liberal Union of Lithuania, and one interviewee was a signatory that signed The Act of the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania. They had different experiences because they work on different issues, with different social groups, and during different terms. These women have different views and opinions about women's civil rights and political voices in Lithuania. The different experiences and views helped me to understand women's situation in Lithuania, specifically in comparing women's economic difficulties and political representation during the years of independence (1990) and after joining the EU (2004).

During interviews, parliamentarians shared their opinions about women's underrepresentation in the parliament. The interviews focused on parliamentarians' work, their experiences, motivations, and observations of social life. I constructed three main analytical questions to guide the interview: what motivations do these women present for the participation in the politics? What are the obstacles to gaining access to parliament? What strategies do

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women propose for enhancing their participation and representation in the parliament? Each

interview was based on a set of standard questions, but in order to remain flexible for the

different parliamentarians' experiences, the interviewee was allowed to divert onto a new topic

or issues they deemed relevant.

Set of Interview Questions:

1. How long have you been active in the politics?
2. What are the reasons that motivated you to become parliamentarian?
3. Did you experience any barriers or obstacles during campaign process, prior elections? If yes, what kind?
4. What issues are you mostly interested in working with?
5. How successful you have been in advocating these issues? Were there any obstacles? What kind? Why?
6. What do you think about the current women's role in the society and politics?
7. Women are underrepresented in the parliament. Why do you think that is so?
8. What obstacles do women face in gaining access to the parliament?
9. Can you think of strategies for enhancing women's political representation?
10. Do you mind telling me what political party do you belong?

Historic Background

For many years, Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union. Even though Lithuania gained independence, some of the influences of the Soviet times remain visible until today. Many authors have examined the Soviet system and pointed out that centralized planning made people dependent on the state (Lieven 93; Misiunas 93; Petersen 2001; Krickus 1997; Verdery 1996). The socialist system was called "centralized planning" which meant that everything under control of the state including resource distribution (Verdery 1996, 20). The Soviet state controlled not only economic activities and resources, but also public services and information. For example, media was state owned and censored by the state (Gladys 1996). State officials organized all the elections (Petersen 2001; Lieven 1993; Creed and Wedel 1997). People had to participate in the elections but their choices were limited and they already knew who would win the elections. The elections were fraudulent and just a symbolic gesture to show other countries that people support the socialist system and Communist Party (Verdery 1996). This system was a form of governance that controlled people's daily lives and activities. Under socialism, there was a connection between state and society. People were dependent on the state for goods and services. The state controlled not only choices and life conditions but also relations among people.

The Soviet Constitution stipulated that men and women should have equal rights. However, the reality was different (Einhorn 1993; Verdery 1996). A major political goal of the Soviet Union was complete economic, political, and sexual equality for women. The major goal of this system was to show a long list of achievements such as the full political and legal equality of women, their extensive participation in the labor force, equal access to educational opportunities, liberal family legislation regulating marriage, divorce, and extensive maternal

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protective legislation, and public child-care facilities (Verdery 1996). Soviet efforts to emancipate women had problems because they lacked the centrality, deliberateness, and coherence to solve gender equality and resulted in gender roles distribution. Despite the official ideology, Soviet women did not enjoy the same position as men in society and within the family. Women were conspicuously underrepresented in the Communist Party (Einhorn 1993). Working women continued to bear the double burden of a job and family raising responsibilities in which men participated little. Scholars have argued that women were shouldering the burden of domestic and public labor (LaFont 1998; Korovushina 1994; Helsi and Miller 1993; Purvaneckiene 1998). In terms of liberating women, the socialist state created a system that doubly exploited women in their roles as producers and reproducers.

Family was considered necessary for survival and being accepted in civil society (Juozeliuniene 1999). In this way, the family was viewed not as an individualistic system, but as part of a collective through which the reproduction and socialization were encouraged (Juozeliuniene 1999, 69). Moreover, the Soviet system encouraged family formation by providing different financial support for married couples and especially for families with children (Drakulic 1993). The promotion of different policies encouraged people to get married. Those who did not form families were penalized by the society and state. A heterosexual union defined family and marriage. In the public and by relatives these people were called names and viewed with suspicion. Moreover, they did not received social benefits such as free housing, extra food packages, and other discounts from the state (Einhorn 1993). People started to plan their families and it became important among people due to the economic necessity. The socialist state needed numbers of people to perform labor and this is a reason why this system favored and supported families. This financial support and pressure encouraged women to have children,

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provided maternity leave, child payments, and state sponsored day care facilities (Brainerd 2000).

The political economy of the previous system encouraged people to participate in the labor market. It was obligation rather than choice. In the centrally planned economy, industrialization and production was based on labor intense work. This system required many hours of manual work because machinery and industry was very inefficient and old. It required intense and massive labor power requiring all participants, men and women, to work long hours daily (Verdery 1996). Socialists emphasized equality among the sexes based on equal access to the labor market and involvement in the production sector. The government provided child-care and public eating facilities because the industry needed human bodies to participate in the factories. These services were very accessible and pushed workers to participate in the labor force. These services helped women to be part of the workforce and did not contradict childbearing responsibilities and full time job responsibilities for women. Women were mothers and full time workers.

In the early 1980s, with the ending of the perestroika period, a transition marked from centrally planned to an open market economy occurred (Simai 2006; Watson 2000; Creed and Wedel 1997; Gille 2010; Verdery and Burawoy 1999). The perestroika period was an era that admitted that the socialist system made mistakes and had limitations (Verdery 1996). Birth rates steadily started to decrease due to economic instability and women's double burden labor. Labor shortage threatened the economic system and stability of the regime. In 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev said:

Over the years . . . we failed to pay attention to women's specific rights and needs arising from their role as mother and home-maker, and their indispensable educational function as regards children. Engaged in scientific research, working on construction sites, in production and in the services, and involved in creative activities, women no longer have enough time to perform their everyday duties at home-housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere. We have discovered that many of our problems-in children's and young people's behavior, in our morals, culture and in production-are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitude to family responsibilities. This is a paradoxical result of our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal with men in everything. Now, in the course of perestroika, we have begun to overcome this shortcoming. That is why we are now holding heated debates in the press, in public organizations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission (Racioppi and O'Sullivan 1995, 824).

This speech reflects that the socialist system exploited women by making them responsible for their households and the national economy. During the difficult economic times and failing regime, women were blamed for all the failures and the weakening family. Women's role as workers, where they spend majority of their time, threatened the stability, affected regime's security, and caused system's failure. In the socialist state women were assigned roles of mothers, political figures, and workers. People believed that the political and social system had to be changed in order to make it more economically efficient.

Transition Process

The transition period is defined as a time within political, economic, and social changes were implemented with the aim to be moving towards a free market economy. The transition period started with an economic downturn that caused instability in the Soviet regime and encouraged people to act. Lithuanians always wanted to gain independence and the chaos in the country encouraged the intelligentsia to organize a resistance movement (Cepaitis 2007; Petersen 2001; Anusauskas 2008). As a result, the economic downturn encouraged changes in the political sphere and countries in the Soviet bloc envisioned opportunities to fight for the long waited

independence. During resistance when Gorbachev came to power, the Lithuanian intelligentsia became active in advocating national Lithuanian consciousness, e.g. singing the national Lithuania's anthem, raising Lithuania's national flag during state holidays and distributing newspapers. The Lithuanian Liberation Movement was called *Sajudis*. In 1991, the *Sajudis* gained power in Lithuania's parliament (Petersen 2001). Its supporters believed that the newly elected parliament and politicians could solve economic problems and transform their country.

The success of this movement was marked by the first election organized in 1991 when people expressed their opinions by participating in referendum for the independence of the Republic of Lithuania and voting for *Sajudis* members. "At the referendum 90.24 percent of all participants voted for independence (6.4 percent voted 'against,' the voter turnout was 84.4 percent), which was 76.46 percent of all voters" (Klumbyte 2006, 117). These statistics show that people felt obligated and responsible for voting and expressing their choices. Moreover, Lithuanians believed in "democracy, freedom, civilization, morality and spirituality, legitimacy, Christianity, humaneness, and truth" (Klumbyte 2006, 181). They trusted their elected politicians.

Political and economical reforms occurred after the fall of the Soviet regime in 1990s. A newly system was introduced where people could participate in their own governance and express their choices. These changes included changing and introducing the election process that would be fair and would guaranteed human rights, have an independent media, and with the help of the West create public organizations. The political changes focused on transforming the old system and had a goal to foster open market and encourage people to become active in civic duties and participate in politics and elections.

Moving away from socialism is still in process in Eastern Europe. There is still economic, social, and political changes that needs to be addressed and improved. Butawoy and Verdery say that on "one extreme we find the partisans of modernity who claim that the disintegration of communism" and on the other a market economy and liberal democracy (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 1). The collapse of the Soviet Union caused the reorganization of the social order and changed daily lives of citizens (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 7). Changes in politics, culture and economics were introduced. Ken Jowitt believes that the transformation is a very complicated process and it might achieve different outcomes:

> Our future of mass extinctions… is that they typically affect more than one species. In this respect, the collapse of European Leninism may be seen more as a political volcano than as an asteroid. A volcano's corruption initially affect on liberal and "Third World" biota around the global (Verdery 1996, 37).

This quotation shows that the transformation process is complicated and has influence on countries in the former Soviet bloc as well as countries outside of the area. This quotation symbolizes a new emergence of society with different government institutions, laws, and obligations to the country. The outcome varies from country to country (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 14-15).

Even though, the transformation period can be viewed as a complicated issue and might bring different outcomes based on different situations in each country, the ultimate goal is to introduce an open market system. It favors an open economy and people's choices. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Lithuania was in a transition period towards achieving open market economy; it wanted to become an independent country as other countries in the West.

Literature Review

The literature review section provides background information about Lithuanians' history, society, and politics. It provides information about transformation period and changes in the economy and politics. I examine how these changes affected women's roles in society and women's participation in politics. Specifically, I analyze the obstacles women face trying to influence policies and the gender equality in the election process. Furthermore, this section focuses on the factors that influence women's leadership positions and women's representation in Lithuania's parliament.

Scholars have presented arguments that explain women's underrepresentation in the parliament including stereotypes associated with gender roles, e.g. the man as breadwinner and the woman as homemaker. Many authors have examined women's civil rights, their situation in the family, and gender equality in Lithuania before and after the fall of the Soviet Union (LaFont 2001; Waylen 1994; Daukantiene 2006; Juozeliuniene 1999; Gal and Kligman 2000; The Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2010). They explore the historical, social, economical, and political dynamics during the transition process from the state socialism to open market economy. They look at how this transition affected women's political participation, their social status, and employment opportunities (Einhorn 1993; Watson 1993; Kanopiene 1998; LaFont 1998). Scholars have pointed out that the transformation process resulted in reproductive rights changes, dilemmas of the public and private space, family concerns, and political underrepresentation (Gal and Kligman 2000; Kanopiene 1998; Watson 1993; Purvaneckiene 2009). Indeed, the number of women living in poverty in Lithuania is on the rise (LaFont 2001; Juceviciene 1998; Daukantiene 1998). The transition process expanded the already profound barriers for women and placed them in more disadvantaged positions than men. What becomes

clear is that the changes of political economy affected the economy and women's lives

negatively. It has been argued that rather than diminishing gender discriminations, the transition

from socialism to open market economy widened the gender gap including women's

unemployment, weak solidarity among women, weak civil society, and stereotyping (Waylen

1994; Daukantiene 2006; Juozeliuniene 1999).

Economic Changes

Scholars argued that the transition period started to reform the country's economy that in

turn caused changes and increased unemployment that negatively affected women (Einhorn

1993; Verdery 1996; Kanopiene; 1998; LaFont 2001; Guobuzaite 1998; Daukantiene 2006;

Simai 2006; Gal and Kligman 2000). Indeed, the numbers of women living in poverty are on the

rise (LaFont 2001). After the fall of the Soviet Union, the development of privatization created

competition and pushed women back to home. Gal and Kligaman write that:

> Women's education in languages and accounting, for instance, have become more
> valuable in a postindustrial capitalism environment with multinational corporations and
> increasing tourism than the training in heavy industry and engineering that were the more
> masculine form of higher education in the socialist era. But there is a certain irony here.
> As jobs in economics, finance, and accounting become lucrative, men are being retrained
> for such careers, and women's skills, gained in the communist system, might suffer
> another negative revaluation (Gal and Kligman 2000, 114).

What becomes clear is that with open market economy, women's lives were negatively affected.

Women's skills and careers needed to be revaluated after independence.

Gal and Kligman (2000) examined the effects of the division of labor in household, in

relationships and friendships between men and women, and in the workplace. The situation has

changed since Lithuania gained independence. Privatization transformed state institutions such

as schools, childcare facilities, and households (Juozeliuniene 1999; Einhorn 1993; Verdery

1996). With the privatization, women experienced unemployment. "The 1994 Lithuanian employment survey found that 25 percent unemployed women were able to secure jobs in one to three months, whereas, 50 percent unemployed men found jobs within the same time period" (LaFont 2001, 210). To give another example: employers often ask women to sign a contract by which they waive their legal rights to employment benefits, while men are never asked. There is an increased competition for better wages and positions in the labor force, and women lost most of the state support and social welfare (Gal and Kligman, 2000).

The privatization process, modernizing daycares, and reducing welfare payments encouraged individual responsibilities to raise their children. These reforms negatively affected women's lives because women became responsible for raising their kids (Gal and Kligman 2000; Verdery 1996; Kanopiene 1998; Creed and Wedel 1997). The transition process and neoliberalist policies encouraged individual responsibilities, efficiency, and choice. Neoliberalism is an economic doctrine that promotes a free circulation of ideas, goods, and labor. It should bring efficiency and common good for everyone in the region and across border. It seeks to maximize the importance and role of the private sector that should bring efficiency and profits (Harvey 2010). During the time of the Soviet Union, people received financial support and services from the state. They felt comfortable even though the services and financial support made them dependent on the state. After the fall of the Soviet system, citizens were encouraged to be responsible and help themselves instead of looking for support from the government. This change made women's lives more difficult because they needed to find ways to survive and provide food for their families.

Studies have shown that the new market provides more jobs for men than women in Lithuania (Kanopiene 1998; LaFont 2001; Daukantiene 2006). The transition period was marked

with many economic changes such as privatization process, establishment of new companies, and introduction of new technologies. The privatization process transformed the public and private spheres and increased unemployment. Investors always emphasize and look for global demands in order to gain profits (Mitchell 2003). Investments transform local economy and society by creating new employment opportunities and building new industrial sectors. The centrally planned system was very inefficient. During the transition period, there were many changes made in order to make industries more efficient. Efficiency is defined with an economic growth and providing profits. After time, the socialist system was proved inefficient because their production and goods were unable to compete in the international market (Verdery 1996). Technology and machinery was very old and in the first years of the transition, foreign investors did not want to invest in these societies because it needed a lot of resources and money (Einhorn 1993). Former Soviet bloc countries received different financial aid from various international organizations and with years these countries started to introduce new technologies and provide new skills and knowledge for their workers (Einhorn 1993). The demand for expertise in economic and social development increased because these new states needed new projects to construct in order to reform economy and increase employment (Stern and Hall 2010). It involves the process of making and remaking the scale by proposals, practices, and institutions (Tsing 2000). At the same time, in the market economy due to increased efficiency there is never zero unemployment because this system is based on the surplus employment. When old companies and factories started to close in Lithuania there was an increased rate of unemployment and increased competition among workers who were looking for jobs. Increased unemployment and patriarchic views made women more dependent on men.

<u>Social Changes</u>

Scholars have pointed out that the number of women represented in politics depends on public interest and participation in the political process as well as interest in politics in general (Rose 2001; Rose-Achermann, 2001; Greenberg 2010; Guogis, Gudelis and Stasiukynas 2007). Public participation and citizens' interest in following government's activities and policies are very important in influencing women's equality. Under a government-controlled economy, the Communist Party made all the decisions. Twenty years after the Soviet Union collapsed individual voluntary participation still remains weak in Lithuania and citizens are not willing to trust or believe their leaders (Rose 2001). Citizens are also not involved in politics. Indeed, citizens' voices have remained poorly represented in the political decision-making process. Lithuanians became pessimistic about the future due to financial instability, economic downturn, and increased corruption cases in the politics. People started not to trust their politicians and do not believe that their elected leaders work for people rather they think that parliamentarians seek political career for self interest. They rarely know about the activities of civic groups. There is a particularly low membership level in organizations of a political and religious nature. It was suggested that membership rates have been dropping consistently since the collapse of socialism (Rose 2001; Rose-Achermann 2001). Volunteering as a civic duty and contribution to the public appeared to be relatively unimportant in the region but also the formal civil society sector employs only about two percent of the Eastern European populations (Petrova and Tarraw 2007, 76). Society became more individualistic and they contribute less to the volunteering activities and helping other people.

Many authors argue that it is important to have active citizens in order to build a democracy in the country (Petrova and Tarraw 2007; Einhorn 1993; Rose 2001; Coles 2007;

Kostadinova 2003). Lithuania needs a population that actively uses their civic duties in order to help women and increase their participation in politics. Post-socialist countries have a broad spectrum of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), interest groups, voluntary associations, and politically relevant interpersonal networks; however, Lithuanians have developed poor civil skills (Petrova and Tarraw 2007, 78). Based on the EuroBarometer surveys, citizens of the region have little trust in their leaders. An average of 72 percent of Eastern Europeans believes that their new regimes are more corrupt than their predecessors (Rose 2001). Since the free market economy was established, people still do not participate in voluntary organizations or trust their leaders.

Additionally, Virginija Jureniene (2007) discusses women's movement in the Lithuanian Republic. She argues that women's movement is active in Lithuania but it is difficult to reinforce policies because the public's attitudes and widely held beliefs about patriarchal ideas. The dominant view considers the man as being the breadwinner of the family and woman the homemaker and a person who brings up children (Jureniene 2007). Such gender ideologies standardize the images and functions of men and women in the public and private areas, e.g. men being active citizens and decision makers while women are passive in the public life and caretakers of the family. Yet at the same time, there are policies and laws passed in the parliament that protect women. In 1998, a law was passed on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men (VIII-947). The significance of this law is that it defines gender discrimination and regulates relations in the workplace and educational system. Soon thereafter, the Board of Women and Men Equal Opportunities Control was established. The board focuses on gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and other issues affecting women. Kazimiera Prunskiene, a two-time candidate for president, advocated for equal rights and opportunities for women and

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men (Jureniene 2007). In 2000, in the parliament there were only 10.6 percent of women. The director of the Baltic Research Institute, Rasa Alisauskiene, said that there are three main reasons that women are failing to succeed in society and occupy the governmental positions. The reasons for this are: historically situated patriarchal norms that dictate men are the breadwinners of the family and women are the homemakers; limited job opportunities; and the division of gender in private and public spheres (Jureniene 2007, 188).

There is a view that women are not elected to the parliament because of stereotyping and many Lithuanians believe that politics is not for women because they lack men's strength (The Center for Equality Advancement 2003; LaFont 2001; Galligan and Clavero 2008; Purvaneckiene and Alisauskiene 2009; Waylen 1994; Jureniene 2007). A survey conducted in 2003 by The Centre of Equality Advancement showed Lithuanians' views of women in the politics. Two thousand people were asked their opinions of gender roles, beliefs about the characteristics, traits, and activities appropriate for men and women in the society and politics. About 52 percent of people think that men have better professional qualities in the political area compared to women. Only 26 percent of people who took the survey stated being interested in politics and following events and discussions of the parliament. Based on the survey, men are more interested in politics than women. About 79 percent said that they are passive in engaging in politics such as following the parliament's work, watching television, or reading newspapers. Only three percent of respondents stated being part of political parties, member of organization, and other NGO related activities. Eighty-nine percent responded that they do not wish to participate in any party activities or be involved in politics (The Centre for Equality Advancement 2003). Based on these statistics, citizens believe that women are less likely to be interested in politics than men and men are better in politics.

It has been argued that women's movement has not been strong enough in Lithuania to pressure parties into nominating more women to winnable seats (Saxonberg 2000; Taljunaite 2005; Einhorn and Sever 2003). There an agency that was created that implements and promotes gender equality policy and it is called Equality Commission in the Lithuanian Government. Women still face barriers (Taljunaite 2005, 1048-1049). The lack of stability to gender equality results in slowing the gender mainstreaming process or strategies for promoting gender equality including legislation, policies, and programs (Sexonberg 2000; Taljunaite 2005). Einhorn and Sever (2003) argue that the transition process eagerly awaited the open market economy, but did not achieve its full potential in organizing the feminist movement. The transition and post-socialist is characterized as regressive traditional roles, a primary concern with reproduction, and fragmented into small organizations and no single-issue organizations (Einhorn and Sever 2003). The process of privatization encouraged private businesses that created competition and pushed women back to the domestic space. The women's movement remains weak because it lacks a clear and concrete meaning of gender mainstreaming. It tends to operate and refer to a variety of projects and activities. This results in spreading the responsibility for gender equality to different departments and it moves away from the centralization and responsibility for gender equality. It creates a sphere where everybody works with women's equality policies but at the same time no one is responsible.

There is an argument that women's NGOs operating in Lithuania are not able to influence policies and help women to get access to politics (Roth 2007; Sloat 2005; Ghodsee 2004). Since Lithuania gained independence and in 2004 joined the European Union, there were an increased numbers of NGOs established and discussions started about women's issues and civil society. However, institutions of civil society are weak in respect to their impact on changing policies

and their influence on political decisions. The funding difficulties, tensions between the work of NGOs, the negative perception of feminism, and public attitudes towards feminism decrease the importance of NGOs in society. Amanda Sloat and Silke Roth (2005) address the limitations of women-centered organizations because they tend to focus on the same problems and mainly the provision of services (Sloat 2005, 439). Funding is one of the concerns that NGOs face in the country. Because NGOs are dependent on donors due to lack of funding, they tend to target projects at available money. In other words, NGOs redefine their mission and agenda in a way the donors want them to reorganize. In addition, the lack of funding and grants makes organizations fight with each other for scarce resources (Sloat 2005, 441). It weakens cooperation among organizations and organizations lose support from society. After Lithuania joined the European Union, many women's organizations lost financial support from previous donors (Roth 2007). "The idea that women should support women to achieve common objectives is not widely held, and further hindered by the failure of many women in government and the civil service to recognize gender as a political issue" (Sloat 2005, 448). Because NGOs are not strong financially and are very much dependent on donors, it results in less trust and membership in different organizations and less support of the people.

The citizens' participation in elections and politics are affected by the performance of politicians (Klumbyte 2006; Jureniene 2007; Greenberg 2010). Before the elections, candidates would visit cities and villages and talk about their projects, the work they do, and deliver many promises to people. Very often, elected officials do not deliver their promises during their office and it makes people angry. Lithuanians started do not trust these promises and think that these speeches and promises are only for the purpose to be elected.

According to Greenberg (2010), non-participation and apathy are associated with "this language of alienation, disaffection, and retreat implies that apathy is a withdrawal from not only failed state institutions and compromised political processed but a cultural-psychological state produced by political-social context" (Greenberg 2010, 61). She states that people want to distant themselves from what they perceive as unfair, failed, or to be corrupt politics. One of the examples Greenberg uses was about bombing and one of the students in English class said that bombing was "the result of political decisions over which individual citizens had no control" (Grenberg 2010, 42). People blame officials and government for all the failures and actions and not associate themselves with the results.

For example, Klumbyte (2006) gives an example of an event that discourages society to participate in the politics and election process. In 2003, Rolandas Paksas was elected to president's office. In his campaign, he emphasized the importance of bringing order and people favored this idea. His campaign stressed the importance of the relationship between the state and people. The state needed to provide basic needs for citizens. "The state was expected to be positively present in people's lives by giving proper pensions, assuring medical care, law and order, and entitling people to various benefits" (Klumbyte 2006, 263). His promises of a future with bringing state power made people more attracted to his campaign. In 2003, he took the oath and after a few months of being a president Paksas was impeached for violation of the Constitution of Lithuania. He violated the Constitution by granting Jurijus Borisovas, who was Paksas' financial supporter for Paksas' electoral campaign, citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania (Klumbyte 2006, 271). Paksas had no rights to grant citizenship to Borisovas. Moreover, after this scandal the other corruption cases came to public about privatization. The news about the president's impeachment and corruption reached the national and international

media. Lithuanians felt very embarrassed of the situation. Mistrust in politicians resulted in

voters participating in the elections. Many think that all politicians are corrupted and do not work

for the nation. They believe that politicians seek governmental positions for personal benefits.

Virginija Jureniene (2007) emphasizes the reasons of weak women's movement in

Lithuania. She argues that widely held gender roles diminish women's solidarity and possibilities

of resistance. Very often women themselves do not want to join these organizations because they

do not have time and do not want to be associated with feminism. She adds that women's

movement can be active in Lithuania but it is difficult to reinforce these policies because of the

public's attitudes, widely held beliefs about historically formed patriarchal stereotypes such as

man being an active character in the society, a breadwinner of the family and woman being a

homemaker and a person who brings up children (Jureniene 2007).

Meilute Taljunaite (2005) argues that the feminist movement is weak in Lithuania and

Lithuanians have a negative perception about the feminist movement:

> …Above all because feminism is associated more with a hatred of men than with the
> social transformation of society in connection with women's interests. That is why
> feminism still has a strictly negative undertone and very seldom does even an
> independent woman dare to officially identify herself as a feminist (Taljunaite 2005,
> 1046).

This analysis shows that women do not prefer defining themselves as feminists because of the

negative society's views about this word. Those who work on women's political representation

and aim to influence policies do not identify themselves as feminists. For example, one of the

Lithuanian researchers stated:

> First, feminism is policy, and second, it is a scientific substantiation of this policy. My
> work is related to women's issues, but what is declared by radical feminism is
> unacceptable to me. My profession is primary. I am not active, that is why I could not
> consider myself a feminist, surely not a radical feminist. At the same time, I can consider
> myself a feminist because I am worried about equality between men and women, which
> does not exist in society (Taljunaite 2005, 1046).

This researcher works against women's discrimination and wants equality for women and men but does not identify herself as a feminist. The negative views about the women's movement are due to the fact that gender roles are ascribed as traditional (Taljunaite 2005). They believe that by nature men and women are different and they have different obligations and responsibilities in the society.

Gender inequality that exist in Lithuanian society and increased number of NGOs that work trying to solve it can affirm that problems are growing and the situation is not getting better. However, there have been some successful influences in policy and there were laws passed protecting human rights and promoting equality. It is important to have solidarity among women to form a strong feminist movement in order to achieve some successful results and influence policies. It is difficult to organize women and it is even more difficult to spread awareness among people about women's civil rights, if there are no hard agreements.

Political Changes

Globalization influenced Lithuania's economic, social, and political areas and gender roles in the country (Peterson 2002; Gille 2010; Walby 2004). There were the processes of liberalization, reforms of electoral system, building new state institutions, reforming media, forming civil society, privatization and many more reforms that needed to be established in Lithuania. All these reforms and changes focused on the global model and were influenced by the national and international organizations.

Moreover, the process of joining international organizations influences state policies and gender policies in Lithuania (Girnius 2002). After Lithuania gained independence, Lithuania joined international organizations such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), United

Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), European Union (EU)

and many other organizations in order to become part of the global community (Girnius 2002).

The project of remaking localities in order to integrate into the global economies needs help of

expertise that plays a very important role in influencing and remaking local spaces (Stern and

Hall 2010). Family structure and relation among family members are influenced as well. The

integration into the world system reshapes localities and disrupts everyday practices, values, and

institutions (Friedmann 2000). There were many different actors involved in building an open

market economy in Lithuania.

After joining the EU, gender-mainstreaming policy was promoted in Lithuania that

advocates equality and emphasizes inequalities between women and men as violation of basic

human rights (Einhorn 2006; Taljunaite 2005; Ghodsee 2004). This policy imposes a heavy toll

on the economy and represents an underutilization of talent. Furthermore, it focuses on the

benefits that gender equality could bring to the country. The priorities of gender mainstreaming

are based on equal pay and independence for women and ending gender violence, and addressing

inequality.

Gender mainstreaming brings many advantages. Staudt (2003) argues that by entering

new millennium and development, women's' rights' need to be addressed. She argues that

gender inequality must be addressed in the budget and institutional core of mainstreaming

policies and agencies. These institutions are created to implement gender-mainstreaming policies

and help to spread awareness around the globe. At the same time, policy focuses on helping

women to become more independent financially in order to become more successful. The policy

has a clear mission in helping women to become independent. By providing women financial

stability, women will be able to have more time to participate in volunteering organizations and

participate in politics. Women will become active citizens in the country (Centre for Equality Advancement 2011).

The EU was created to unite Western and Eastern European countries. Stronger states with economic stability have more power than new member states have (Harvey 2010; Taljunaite 2005; Elman 1996; Walby 2004). New member states have to meet all the conditions created by the EU. Moreover, the EU policies to improve countries' social policies have limitations. Gender equality policy has three main limitations: it exclusively emphasize employment, policy treat women as a single category, it does not address domestic differences and different institutions.

Amy Elman (1996) in the book *Sexual Political and the European Union: The New Feminist Challenge* argues that the EU gender equality policies are exclusively based on employment. The policy excludes not only domestic issues but also issues such as violence and sexual politics (Elman 1996, 14). Also, employment policies concentrate mostly on conditions and equal pay while not focusing on welfare policies or working hours. In addition, there are many employment issues that should be considered but not addressed by this policy such as discrimination by employers, abortion services, and violence (Walby 2004, 7).

The EU gender equality policy exclusively treats women as a single category and it does not address other categories. This policy lacks a detailed definition and consideration about migrant women that face different issues in different countries (Elman 1996). Also, race difference is not addressed in the policies. There are women of different race in the country that share unequal economic benefits. Moreover, there are class differences in the country; that very underprivileged women are more unequally treated than women with financial stability (Elman 1996, 14). The author shows that policy does not address differences among women in the country. The EU makes this policy as a requirement to address this issue for member states but it

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is able to use only soft power to make sure this policy is introduced (Walby 2004, 6-7). Even though, countries pass this law, the EU does not have power to check the effectiveness or to make this law into practice.

Statistics

Since 1989, the reintroduction of the open market economy in Lithuania transformed the social, political, and economic spheres. It was believed that these changes would increase women's independence and encourage their representation in the parliament. According to the statistics, in 1992 there were about 7.1 percent of women in the parliament. In 1996, there were

about 18 percent of women in the parliament. In 2000, the numbers decreased and there were about 10.6 percent and these numbers placed Lithuania below Eastern European average. In 2004, the numbers increased and there were 20.6 percent of women in the parliament and in 2008, the representation little decreased and there were about 18.4 percent (Fig. 1). These statistics and numbers of women in the parliament are influenced by the economical and social situation in the country.

Members of the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania

	Number		Sex distribution, %	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Seimas (1992–1996 m.)	10	131	7.1	92.9
Seimas (1996–2000 m.)	25	114	18.0	82.0
Seimas (2000–2004 m.)	15	126	10.6	89.4
Seimas (2004–2008 m.)	29	112	20.6	79.4
Seimas (2008–2012 m.)	26	115	18.4	81.6

Fig. 1 *Source:* Lithuanian Department of Statistics and Central Electoral Committee (http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/pages/view/?id=1400)

Since Lithuania gained independence, the population is decreasing every year due to economic downturn and increased emigration. According to the statistics, women contribute about 53 percent of Lithuania's population while men contribute about 46 percent (Fig. 2). Every year the number of women is increasing slowly while men's population is decreasing. Men are more likely to leave Lithuania and look for employment opportunities in other countries. Moreover, since 1990s, fertility rate dropped, mortality rose, and migration to other countries increased especially after joining the EU. After independence, marriage and childbearing has been postponed to a later age, a consensual union became more popular and the family size decreased (The Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2011). The family as institution lost its benefits after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. People began to place more emphasis on

self-expression and self-fulfillment through professional activity. An increased competition in the labor market and limited help from the state, made society more individualistic in which people emphasize their success and their own happiness. People know that they are responsible for their own future and success. The population started to decrease primarily due to emigration, which grew significantly after Lithuania joined the EU and new policy that does not require visas for traveling. Those leaving the country are mostly young men, educated, and proactive citizens that face difficulties in finding good paying jobs in Lithuania and looks for better opportunities. Women stay home because they need to take care of their older relatives and kids. Even though there are more women than men in Lithuania, women are still underrepresented in the parliament.

Population
As of 1 January

Year	Population, thous.		Sex distribution, %		Number of women per 1000 men
	Women	Men	Women	Men	
1990	1946.2	1747.5	52.7	47.3	1114
1995	1925.8	1717.2	52.9	47.1	1121
2000	1867.8	1644.3	53.2	46.8	1136
2005	1827.2	1598.1	53.3	46.7	1143
2010	1781.3	1547.7	53.5	46.5	1151
2011	1737.3	1507.3	53.5	46.5	1153

Fig. 2 *Source:* Lithuanian Department of Statistics
(http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/pages/view/?id=1393)

Election Data

Besides collecting data about the Lithuanian population and women in the parliament, I also collected information about elections and citizens participation. Post-socialist Eastern Europe is marked by a decline in voters' participation. During the first and second elections, voters were more enthusiastic and participated, but in the third and fourth elections the turnout was low (Kostadinova 2003, 751). When Lithuania gained independence in 1992, the turnout

was 75.22 percent and years later in 1996, the numbers decreased to 52.92 percent. In 2000, the turnout increased and there were 58.18 percent. Since 2004, the numbers are decreasing. In 2004, there were 40.21 percent and in 2008 there were 32.37 percent (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2011). Since independence, citizens' turnout in the elections was decreasing slowly. Lithuanians' optimism about future and prosperities slowly disappeared after years. An economic downturn and corruption cases made people suspicious about politicians' work. Lithuanians started to believe that elections and new government would not change anything and that resulted in low turnout rates.

Moreover, in Lithuania people rarely participate in volunteering organizations. The authors Petrova and Tarraw (2007) analyzed participatory activism in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union and found that individual participation in different volunteering organizations is very weak in the region. Volunteering is relatively unimportant in the region because civil society employs only 2 percent of the East European population (Petrova and Tarraw 2007, 76). Citizens rarely know about different local organizations and their activities. Membership in different organizations started dropping consistently since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Petrova and Tarraw 2007, 76).

In 2003, The Centre for Equality Advancement conducted a survey with purpose to find Lithuanian's views about gender and politics. 2215 people were asked to take the survey. According to it about 26 percent those who took survey stated being interested in politics and following the events and discussions of parliament. 79 percent were not interested in following the politicians' work in the parliament, the news, or reading daily newspapers. Only 3 percent reported having membership to a political party, or volunteer organization. The majority of the people that participated in this survey, about 89 percent, responded that they do not wish to

participate in any party activities or being involved in politics (Centre for Equality Advancement Website 2003). During the Soviet Union, people did not needed to do a volunteer work because state provided many services and people did not need to do an extra activities, become active in politics, or advocate other social problems in the public. In the past, volunteering and activism activities were forbidden. The situation did not change after independence. Lithuanians expect state to solve social issues and people rarely take an active role in the public in advocating different social problems and participating in volunteering activities.

Campaign Data

After gaining independence, Lithuania started the process of reviving a multiparty system. In 1992, there were about 40 political parties created (The Central Commission of the Republic of Lithuania 2011). The most popular Lithuanian parties are divided along the left-right political axis. These parties have different social and political programs. During the first years of independence, the most popular parties were nationalists' parties that advocated patriotic ideas and conservative views (The Central Commission of the Republic of Lithuania 2011). During the first elections in 1992, the majority of Lithuanians voted for nationalists' right wing parties. According to the statistics collected about political parties, people favored patriotic ideas and wanted to regain independence. The most common issues that each party addressed were human rights, education, healthcare, social security, economy, and business (Political Parties' Programs).

This trend did not change in 1996, 2000, 2004, or 2008 elections. Most continue to focus on inflation, employment, and social services. Existing programs address government's responsibilities to help people access education, health care, and better living standards. These

are the most sensitive and very important spheres in Lithuania since independence. Parties focus on these issues because individuals cannot afford these services without state's support. Lithuanians' believe that state should provide education and health care without additional cost. Political parties listen to citizens' concerns and in order to win elections these parties emphasize issues and solution that is most important to society. All political parties in their programs address importance of human rights, choice, and country's independence.

I examined whether political parties include family issues, equality, and women's civil rights in their programs. I looked at a period of 20 years and analyzed 40 political parties. I found that not many parties focus on women or gender equality. The majority of them tend to address family issues and support families as the base for the country. They believe that unemployment and economic downturn can be solved by focusing more on families and increasing women's role in the families. These parties favor women's role being mothers and taking care of the families by helping state to increase the number of citizens and decreasing cost to the state. Most political parties in their programs favor a nuclear type of family. They address the importance of family for country's future. The focus tends to be on providing financial support to the families such as providing education, health care, and financial assistance. The programs are mostly focused on nuclear families and encourage marriage. Some provide support to mothers that take care of their children at home by providing them with maternity leave and child payments.

I found that a few parties advocate for equality among the sexes. Most of the parties that included equality in their programs were established and active in 1996 and 2000. The Social Democratic Party of Lithuania, Lithuanian Women's Party, The Liberal Union of Lithuania, Democratic Labor Party of Lithuania, A. Brazauskas' Social Democratic Party New Union, and Lithuanian Centre Party in their programs address main issues about equality among the sexes in

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Lithuania. Some of these parties focus on equality among the sexes and other address women's encouragement. They want to help women to become more active in social, political, and economical spheres.

During these years, 1996-2000, women became more active in the political life and started to organize. The Women's Political Party was established to help women advocate for their rights. Not many parties clearly address women's rights and advocate women's participation in the economy and politics. Only three such parties established since 1992 that clearly address women's discrimination, advocate for women's equality, and against gender discrimination. The parties that address equality among sexes were the most popular in 1996 and 2000.

Women's Financial Situation

According to data presented by the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, the productivity rate of women went down from the years 2000 to 2008 in part due to world's economic crisis. In 2009, the productivity rate rose. Statistics about men's productivity show that the productivity rate went down in 2000 until 2008, and increased in 2009. At the same time, employment rate went up from 2000 to 2008, and then went down (Fig. 3). Since Lithuania gained independence, unemployment rate was increasing every year (Fig. 3.1). It shows that the labor force is larger for men and that there are more possibilities, job openings, and a higher productivity for men rather than for women. There are multiple factors contributing to the unemployment rate differences between men and women. One of the reasons might be because there was a higher labor force activity for men and smaller for women during the economic crisis when unemployment increased. It increased more for men because women were less affected due to lower labor force

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activity rate. The second explanation is an increased men's participation in called "shadow economy" or informal where men receive money for work but is not recorded or taxed. These jobs include seasonal jobs, field jobs, and construction work (LaFont 1998).

Labor Force Activity Rate, Employment Rate, and Unemployment Rate Aged 15-64

Fig. 3. Labor Force
*it is calculated for population aged 15 years and older
Source: Lithuanian Department of Statistics. See References.

	2000		2008		2009	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Labour force activity rate	67.1	74.2	65.5	71.4	67.8	72.0
Employment rate	57.5	60.1	61.8	67.1	60.7	59.5
Unemployment rate [*]	13.9	18.8	5.6	6.0	10.4	17.0

Unemployed by Gender, Lithuania 1992-2001

Fig. 3.1 Unemployment Rate
Numbers of unemployed (average annual numbers, in thousands)
Source: Vida Kanopiene *Women's employment in Lithuania*. See References.

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total	24.1	81.1	65.7	109.0	124.5	104.5	113.7	148.7	204.9	223.5
Females	15.2	35.8	34.5	59.6	67.5	55.6	58.1	71.9	93.3.	103.0
Males	8.9	45.3	31.2	49.4	57.0	48.9	55.6	76.8	111.6	120.5
Share of Females (%)	63.1	47.8	52.5	54.7	54.2	53.2	51.1	48.3	45.3	46.1

Another important change during the transition from state controlled to an open market economy was a shift in which labor market from the public sector to the private sector. In 2005, the structure of Lithuania's economy is dominated by services sector (56.9 percent), industry (29.1 percent), and agriculture (14 percent) (Fig. 4.1). During the years 1990-1997 there was about 60 percent decreased in employment in the public sector and government institutions (Daukantiene 2006). At the same time, private sector employment doubled. A very large part of the public and government positions remain occupied by women including school teachers, nurses, accountants, administrative positions, and other feminized occupations (Kanopiene 1998). According to data, there are 67.7 percent of women employed in the public sector and 45.5 percent in the private. There are 32.3 percent of men are employed in the public sector and 54.5 percent in the private sector. As a result, women are represented more in the public sector while men are more represented in the private (Fig. 4).

Employed Population by Sector, 2009

	Women		Men		Sex distribution, %	
	Thous.	%	Thous.	%	Women	Men
Public sector	278.6	37.9	132.9	19.5	67.7	32.3
Private sector	457.2	62.1	547.1	80.5	45.5	54.5

Fig. 4 *Source*: Lithuanian Department of Statistics
(http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/pages/view/?id=1397)

Employment by Kind of Economic Activity 2005

Economic Activity	Employment %
Agriculture	14
Industry	29.1
Services	56.9

Fig. 4.1 *Source*: Central Intelligence Agency
(https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2048.html)

According to the statistics, women in Lithuania are paid less then men for the same job. The estimated differences in wages are about 20 percent (Fig. 5).The wage differences might be due to many factors, including the hours of work. Women work fewer hours in paid work than men which means they spend the rest of the hours at housework (Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2011). The second factor is gender segregation in the labor market (Gal and Kligman 2000). Feminized labor in Lithuania is educational sector, e.g. daycares, middle schools, and high schools (Kanopiene 1999). Men occupy the college and university level jobs. Women dominate in the health care, service sectors, and administrating positions. Men dominate constructional jobs, communication, and managerial positions (Kanopiene 1999).

Average Monthly Gross Earnings by Economic Sector [1]
LTL

	Whole economy		Public sector		Private sector	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2000	956	1170	980	1272	918	1087
2005	1230	1493	1290	1654	1168	1421
2006	1432	1743	1510	1913	1356	1677
2007	1677	2115	1740	2193	1621	2087
2008	2020	2505	2139	2685	1916	2440
2009	1990	2349	2133	2556	1847	2259

Fig. 5. Average Monthly Earnings
[1] Individual enterprises are excluded
Source: Lithuanian Department of Statistics. See References.

In 1998, Kanopiene did research where she analyzed how employers choose employees. She found that gender is one of the main factors choosing employees in Lithuania. She found that 46 percent of job advertisements for the manager's position indicated that they wanted men for this position. Moreover, 65 percent of advertisements indicated that one of the requirements for positions is age preference younger than 35 years old (Kanopiene 1999). The study shows that employers are looking to hire employees based on their sex. Most jobs that require leadership skills are specifically advertised for men. Moreover, men's jobs are higher paid. As a result, besides the fact that there are more women in Lithuania then men, there are fewer opportunities for women and fewer choices available in the labor market.

Parliamentarians' Experiences and Views

Parliamentarians who agreed to give an interview are interested in and working on different issues such as employment, family, health system, drugs, prisons, and women's rights. These parliamentarians came from different fields of expertise including journalism, economics, television, law, and many others. They belong to different political parties. The parliamentarians were from The Centre Union of Lithuania, Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party, three interviewees were from The Social Democratic Party of Lithuania, The Liberal Union of Lithuania, The Labor Party of Lithuania, The National Resurrection Party, The Homeland Union, The Liberal Union of Lithuania, and one interviewee was a signatory that signed The Act of the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania. In addition, the parliamentarians addressed women's discrimination in the public and they have different proposals of how to increase women's participation in the parliament. The proposals include quota system for equal representation in the parliament, changing people's views, increasing the number of women's organizations, and helping women to become more financially independent. Some of the parliamentarians are well-known television show celebrities or have been in the parliament for a multiple terms. Other parliamentarians are not as known and were perhaps less of a national image.

I asked multiple questions about the time in Lithuania when they decided to participate in the parliament and why they decided to participate. The following questions were focused on their experiences in the parliament, obstacles, and their observations. During interviews, some parliamentarians said that they feel discrimination in the parliament. They added that they needed to do more work than men did in order to be accepted and that their ideas were not readily accepted and presented publicly. Most of the parliamentarians that I interviewed said they do not feel discriminated against or face obstacles. They said that they are equal to men and they are treated the same as men in the parliament. Furthermore, after having conversations with

parliamentarian women and their stories, experiences, and observations reveal that sometimes they felt unequal and discriminated. They revealed the main obstacles and barriers for women's representation in the parliament are the Soviet's mentality, stereotyping, women not supporting women, and media.

Women's Motivation to Participate in the Politics

Women politicians expressed their motivation for getting involved in politics as an outgrowth of their identities as women and mothers of the extraordinary conditions of the time. They showed the resistance to widely held stereotyping and inscribed homemaker's image because they new that they will be asked who is taking care of their kids and judged for not spending enough time with their families. These women showed passion for their work and seeking independence. They admitted that they dedicate more attention and time to work than family. Parliamentarians shared their motivations and goals that encouraged them to participate in the politics. Parliamentarians that I interviewed were from many different areas of expertise and experiences. All of them focus on different projects and try to change the current situation in Lithuania.

One of the main motivations that pushed women parliamentarians to participate in the politics was Lithuania's independence and desire to rebuild Lithuania and make it a better place for people to live and be proud. They said that they wanted to build a better future for their children and grandchildren. Many parliamentarians said that they work for the next generation and make a better future, better living standards, and freedom for their kids. The goal was to build independent Lithuania with freedom and prosperity. They knew that they needed to work

hard and their activities might be dangerous but they only cared and thought about their kids'

future. Adele shared her story:

> I was among other people who signed Act of Reestablishment of the Lithuania. I always believed that some day Lithuanians would gain freedom. I was fighting for Lithuania's independence during the perestroika period and I was active in organizing underground activities. I was not scared when I participated in January 13, 1991 events and I was proud seeing courage in Lithuanians. This motivated me to become parliamentarian and try to rebuild a better Lithuania. Because I was one of the organizers of Sajudis (Lithuania's Independence Movement) I felt an obligation to continue my work. I felt that people trusted me. Lithuanians' participation in January 13, 1991 events pushed me to continue my work in the politics and work for people and Lithuania's future.

This parliamentarian worked hard in building a new Lithuania. Adele took a risk by participating

in the January 13, 1991 events because she believed that Lithuania would gain independence.

Adele felt responsibility for her underground activities and wanted to continue her work. Her

motivation was to build a better future for herself, her family, and others.

Another parliamentarian had very similar ideas. Virginija shared having idealistic ideas

about desires to change the world. This parliamentarian was elected in 1996 right after Lithuania

regained independence. It was time when all Lithuanians were optimistic about the future,

trusted parliamentarians, and active in governance and political life. This environment

encouraged parliamentarians to work for the country and build a better country for Lithuanians.

Virginija shared:

> I decided to participate in the elections because I had an experience and people's support encouraged me to become a candidate and later parliamentarian. At that time, there were no negative views about politics and parliamentarians. People welcomed new politicians; they believed in us and admired what we were doing in the parliament. People trusted my colleagues and me. This trust made be more passionate of what I was doing and I always tried to do the best job and do not disappoint people.

Another parliamentarian said that she was against socialists' ideas and wanted to show

society that not all currently elected parliamentarians are from former Socialist Party.

I came to parliament by following my patriotic ideas. I was member of *Sajudis* (Lithuania's Independence Movement) and I was very active in organizing underground activities. I always had anticommunist ideas and I refused to join The Communist Party. I remember during one of the visits, person in the village said that people who participate in politics must be from The Communist Party because they have an experience and they know how to operate in the system. This comment made me very angry because I believed that not all people in the parliament are from The Communist Party. This comment was the main stimulus for me to participate in the elections and show people that there are patriotic people that never have been in The Communist Party and willing to make changes. I started to participate in the campaign and election process. It was difficult process but I really wanted to follow my ideas and work for Lithuanians. As a result, all my hard work was rewarded and people elected me. I needed to work hard because people believed in me and I wanted to show that without an experience I can do as much as others that have an experience."

These women had very idealistic ideas and they wanted to change and improve Lithuanians' lives. Patriotism and solidarity after gaining independence encouraged them to participate. Optimism made parliamentarians try harder in delivering better policies. There was more optimism about the future of the country, its politicians, and society in general. There was solidarity among citizens and a sense of having a common goal. The parliamentarians believe that at that time politicians were participating in the parliament elections for the right reasons: to build a new nation and new constitution. During the independence movement, organizers were promising Lithuanians that they can rebuild country and deliver freedom and prosperity. Hard work was required in order to deliver those promises and meet citizens' expectations.

Interviewees said that they are working for the people and have a goal to improve Lithuanians' lives. This idea seems to be the main stimulus that pushes women to engage in politics professions; people's trust made them work hard in delivering their promises. After talking about the motivation and decision to participate in the parliament, parliamentarians shared their stories and experiences. Further parts of this chapter are conversations gender equality, women's civil rights, and women's underrepresentation in the parliament.

Many interviewees remembered how Soviet times affected the older generations. Soviet influences survived. The transition is still in the hearts and minds of people. It is not easy for the older generation to accept all the changes that they have lived with for many years. During interviews, a few parliamentarians said that the Soviet system negatively affected society's views about politicians. The older generation still believes that government is responsible for all the economic downturn, increased unemployment, and law social benefits. The most disadvantaged group of the transition is mid age working class and pensioners. They lost many social services and it was most difficult for them to reorient to a new economic system. They blame politicians for all this change and believe that it was better to live during the Soviet Union. This group states that politicians are responsible for all this economic downturn and they need to fix these problems.

One woman said that Gorbachev's wish for Lithuanians to choke on their own freedom and independence is becoming a reality. People feel insecure. During the Soviet Union, there was limited access to everything. Everybody faced the same obstacles and tried to survive. With independence and the open market economy, there is an increase of choices. The privatization process pushed people to become responsible for their own future. In the past people were more dependent on the state. There is an increased focus on individuality. Lithuanians focus more on their own success and better job opportunities. They need to take an initiative themselves to improve their lives. There is less collective work and help provided from the state. As this parliamentarian said people feel insecure because they do not know what is going to happen in the future and if they will have a job after their long studies. The transition process was not easy. Implementing changes and improving the economy needs time. People thought that their lives

would improve right after independence but that did not happen. They started to blame the politicians and be pessimistic about the future. This transition made people question their future and how political and economic changes will be implemented.

At the same time, the insecurity and individual responsibility increased hatred among people. She said that during the Soviet Union, citizens were policing one another for everything. The situation did not change after gaining independence. After independence, the standards of living lowered and yet the availability of products increased. There were more choices available and greater access to goods and services. Due to increased availability of products and privatization process, inequality increased. Even though there is more freedom, more consumer items, and more choices became available but the practices of policing each other remain unchanged in the society. She said:

> We need to change the Soviet's mentality, people need to read programs, watch daily news, and be interested in politics. They need to start to participate in their own governance. If this will not happen, the situation will not get better and people will live complaining and blaming others about their daily lives. Lithuanians need to vote and elect the government for themselves not for their neighbors (she meant that if Lithuanians elect government for their neighbors in a way that they will try to elect the worse and bad government).

At the same time, Daiva said that modernity and the new values are still not accepted in Lithuania. For example, she gave an example of pets like dogs or cats that very often are kept on the leash or abused. She said that there are no strong penalties or laws created in order to protect and enforce pets' rights. This is one of very specific examples. She said that Lithuanians are uncivilized and do not accept new policies as many Western countries have. She said that due to the Soviet Union system Lithuania needs more time to adopt changes and become more "civilized". People still live with the Soviet culture and think as they used to live during socialism.

Voting is seen as not important in terms that it will not change anything. A parliamentarian said that people are not proud of fulfilling their civic duties. They believe that their vote will not count and they have other more important things to do. This happens because of the increased corruption cases in the election process, the candidates' promises that are never delivered during their offices, and remaining the Soviet Culture among the older generation. Politics are not an important part of their lives and most of the people are not following parliament's work or watching news. Many parliamentarians have to spend a lot of time trying to access and organize residents during the campaign process and people are not treating elections as a special event. Vaida said:

> It needs to observe or talk to citizens at the Election Day and you can notice how people are interested in the politics and want to change their lives. Lithuanians always talks negative things about politicians and they think that it makes them look better. They do not treat Election Day as a priority and consider civic duties seriously. These attitudes do not do any good for everybody and at the same time it shows and sets negative examples for future generations.

Citizens are very pessimistic about parliament's work. The parliament is frequently blamed for shortages and unemployment. They believe that all politicians are stealing, dishonest, and lazy. Women are affected by these views. The work of the parliament is viewed negatively. In general believe is that politics is dirty business and politicians dishonest, liars, and stealing money from the taxpayers. One interviewee said that most women refuse participate in the parliament's election because of these negative views.

Stereotyping and Gender

Lithuanians think not only that politics are dirty and politicians are dishonest but also that politics are not for women. There is a widely held opinion in Lithuania that women have no place in politics, not only because they lack men's strength of character necessary to endure its

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demands but also because woman's role is in the home raising children and being a homemaker. This became a traditional gender stereotyping based on economic and political dimensions and it is a system in which the status of women is defined by the society and current economic situation. Due to increased unemployment and patriarchic views, women's primary role is considered to be reproducers that it is closer to nature an primary responsibility of taking care of their children.

Parliamentarians described stereotyping and gender traditional perceptions as one of the main obstacles that women face in Lithuania. They explained that women and men have tasks along gender specific duties and responsibilities. In Lithuania, private and public spheres divide gender lines. Some parliamentarians complained that in Lithuania men have higher financial statuses than women, which means that it is assumed that men are responsible for finance. Stereotyping, which emphasizes generalization about women and men in Lithuanian society by considering women being, weaker and homemaker while men being a leader and breadwinner of the family, encourages women staying at home and taking care of their family rather than taking leadership positions. The stereotyping and gender roles diminish women's participation in the politics because most Lithuanians believe that women are not good in politics. Some authors suggest that Lithuanians prefer to see women at homes and jobs where services are provided.

Gender stereotyping includes not only systematic discrimination but also simple questions and gestures that people assume to be natural and no one questions. Stereotyping discourages women's participation in the parliament because society has expectations and assumptions about gender roles. Stereotyping is a form of discrimination based on a person's sex, with such attitudes being based on beliefs in traditional stereotypes of gender roles. For

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instance, women have ascribed characteristics, occupations, strengths and weaknesses and

people believe that these characteristics fit all women. For example, Irena shared her story:

> While being in the parliament numerous times I was asked who is taking care of my children. I do not think that men in the parliament are being asked these questions, but women parliamentarians who have children are often asked this question. We should be equal and our personal lives should not be discussed publicly. There are men in the parliament that have children why they are not asked who is taking care of their children? There are more responsibilities and blame put on women who are mothers and it seems that mother's status is more important and only women can take care and raise their kids.

Women in the parliament are asked about their families and who is taking care of their kids

while they are at work. Their motherhood status is discussed and questioned publicly. It shows

that a strong commitment to motherhood is instinct important to Lithuanian society. The

assumption is that women should raise and be responsible for their children. Motherhood and its

duties ascribed to women. They face barriers in trying to find jobs because all employers and

coworkers question their motherhood role and place motherhood roles a more important than job

duties. Lithuanian society emphasizes women's primary roles are mothers and homemakers and

men are leaders and breadwinners of family and country.

Furthermore, ascribed gender ideologies create obstacles for women to participate in the

elections. One parliamentarian said that the campaign process is very time consuming and some

women do not have time for all this work because they have families that they need to take a full

responsibility. One parliamentarian said:

> Campaign process and visiting different places in Lithuania requires a lot of time. People do not come to meetings; they do not discuss issues or problems but rather makes angry comments or blames us for unemployment or bad life conditions. My political party wanted to use printing materials such as brochures, radio, and television commercials but all these items are very expensive. I personally decided to walk door to door and meet people. This required psychological preparation and a strong teamwork. Some people do not appreciate or do not understand how difficult it might be. Not all politicians are bad. I want to make changes and make people's lives better. I understand why some women refuse to participate in politics because they know how difficult it will be and they do not want to begin this process because you give up so much and you gain very little.

This shared experience shows that it is a very difficult process and some women are discouraged from participating. Many do not have time to do all this work by themselves if they have family or kids. This difficult campaign process and residents' pessimism discourages women's participation in the elections.

On the other hand, Lithuanian voters do not elect women politicians. Society is more comfortable seeing men in the parliament due to existing gender ideologies. A survey conducted (2003) by the Centre for Equality Advancement showed Lithuanian's views of women in the politics. Two thousand people expressed their opinions what they deemed appropriate for men and women engaged in politics. About 52 percent of those surveyed believe that men have better professional qualifications in the political area compared to women. About 30 percent think that men and women have equal political skills and aspirations. Only 2 percent think that women are better suited for political life. Only 26 percent of people who took the survey stated being interested in politics and following events and discussions of the Parliament (The Centre for Equality Advancement 2003). Hence, the survey speaks directly to gender ideologies in Lithuanian society. Most voters believe than men are better politicians. These opinions discourage women's participation in politics. Moreover, men have more support in the campaign process.

Interviewees experienced mistrust and negative attitudes. Irena said that she felt unaccepted:

> Many times I was asked and I know that other women receive the same question why we participate in the politics? This question always insults me. I remember this question always made me angry and I always answered by saying that women participate in the politics because they are human beings. It made and still makes me angry because nobody asks men why they go to politics, it seems natural for everybody men's abilities to be politician. I always show people that this question irritates me and makes me feel uncomfortable. As we need men in the politics, we need women in the politics as well.

Another parliamentarian had similar example, she said that many times she heard that there is no place for "boboms" in the parliament (boboms is an insulting word used in Lithuania to name women). It shows that women face obstacles and gender discrimination. The public produces barriers for women to gain power make changes. There is a view that depicts the sentiment that women need to work hard in order to be heard or respected in the parliament.

> After working in the parliament, I put some 'layers of my skin in order to be protected from many bites'. I felt more discriminated and watched through a 'magnifying glass' while men have more freedom. I felt that all my actions were followed and very often are judged negatively while other parliamentarians, especially men, did many careless decisions and their decisions was not judge the same as women's.

Women are starting from a diminished position just by virtue of being women. They generally need to work hard and prove themselves more. Discrimination has a detrimental effect on women parliamentarians and necessitates harder work on their part just to prove themselves.

Interviews with parliamentarians highlighted the perception that women politicians need to display masculine traits. They need to be aggressive, assertive, critical thinking, and confident. Some Lithuanians believe that good parliamentarians should have masculine characteristics. Jurate shared her story and she said that she was very insulted by the comment about her having a man's brain:

> I remember, before my parliament career, I was a mayor and many residents and my colleague politicians still knew me as mayor. In one event, at my district where I was a mayor, at the stage a speaker who was my colleague introduced me as a guest. In the introduction speech he said that at the beginning they all questioned what is going to happen and how things will be organized and completed because women was elected mayor but she proved to be bright, smart, and very successful because she has 'man's brain'. For that event, I had a speech but at that moment I totally changed it because his comment about my brain insulted me. When it was my turn to speak, I said that I came here and people elected me not because I have man's brain; God created me as woman and I have woman's brain. I proud of being a woman and I do not try to be a man and I have woman's brain.

During these circumstances, this politician changed her speech and addressed publicly gender discrimination. There are many other occasions when these concerns cannot be addressed. This

story shows that she was not trusted at the beginning of her career as a mayor not because of her experience and knowledge but because of her gender. By being a woman, she needed to work harder to prove to everyone that she can make changes and is successful. Yet, when she succeeds, she is complimented on the fact that she has men's brain and men's characteristics.

Another interviewee, Elena, said that the current Lithuania's president Dalia Grybauskaite was elected because she has men's traits. Some women believe that in order to be elected and become successful in the politics she needs to show masculine characteristics. Elena believed that current Lithuanian president was elected because she showed her masculine side:

> Now, we have a woman president in Lithuania. She is really an exception because she is not really a woman. She is a very strong woman and she has attitude and features of man. Also, she has very strong support from society because people can see that she can make firm decisions.

People do not want to admit that women can be good presidents and politicians. They look for traits that would remind voters of men. It shows gender discrimination. Gender ideologies and stereotypes create attitudes and behaviors by which people pass judgment against normative values. Hence, if the values are conservative the stereotyping of the values emphasizes a conservative picture of women's lives. This creates a division of labor between two sexes within a society. The division of labor helps to create gender roles, which in turn, lead to gendered social behaviors. As a result, gender becomes more important than lives, experiences, and education.

These examples show how women try to resist the stereotyping used against them. Others do not try to resist but accept it as a natural practice and they think that there is no need to be embarrassed or try to resist a natural phenomenon. Some parliamentarians believe that by nature women and men are different and that these differences create a division between them and their

labor. There is a division of jobs for women and men. One parliamentarian said that being a woman benefited her in the parliament:

> I was successful in the parliament because I am a woman. It was easier for me to work in the parliament because I used my woman status to operate. It gave me more power and tools to make changes and be successful in delivering my projects. In the parliament, men were gentlemens, they do not argue with women. By talking with them, being kind and soft they listen to you and agree with you. By using these strategies, it helped me to pass some policies and make them to agree with some of my projects.

Men and women in the example below might work differently in parliament. The same interviewee said that currently three women hold the most important positions in the country: president, minister of the national defense, and speaker of the house. She said that these women were elected for these positions because society is tired of conflicts and disagreements and people want more peace. This shows a widely held belief that women are not aggressive and always try to find balance, mediate for the solution that everybody would be happy.

Most parliamentarians agreed that women are not trying to gain recognition or respect for the things they do. Besides work, most women need to take care of the household duties, cook, and take care of their kids. They work hard, and very often, their jobs are not recognized. For example, one parliamentarian said that women hold three corners in the home and the fourth they keep with their men. At the same time, women do not complain and they willingly take all the responsibilities and duties. In order to gain more power and support women need to be supportive and help each other. Many parliamentarians said that women in Lithuania do not support women and there is no solidarity among women.

No Solidarity Among Women

It has been argued that the women's movement has not been strong enough in Lithuania to pressure the parties into nominating more women to winnable seats (Taljunaite 2005). The

Equality Commission was created that implements and promotes gender equality policy. Even though the commission exists, women still face barriers in Lithuania. Changes and policies cannot always be implemented and enforced from the top to bottom, but it also has to be organized at the societal level. It was argued that women's movement is weak in Lithuania because of the low participation. There is a low membership in organizations and women do not organize actively into the groups.

Lack of participation, clarity about the organizations' missions, and negative views about feminism cause women not to support each other. All of the interviewed parliamentarians said that women do not support each other and that women do not vote for women. The low number of women in the parliament is due to the low support. One of the parliamentarians said that women in the public gained as much as she supports other women. It means that women supporting each other would help them to gain more power and civil rights in the public. One of the parliamentarians gave me an example about The Social Democrats Party and the quota system. They place some women at the top in their list and low voter support places them at the bottom of the list. It means that voters are more likely to vote for men in the parliament elections.

There are many women's organizations but there is a low membership. Women do not want to join women's organizations because of the negative views about feminism. Most people think that women's organizations embrace and support feminist ideas, organize movements, and hate men. This is a negative view of feminism and misunderstanding in the society. Most people associate feminism with lesbianism, and a hatred of men rather than with the social transformation of society in protecting women's interest. For example, one parliamentarian gave me an example:

> Society views feminist as a women who failed in their lives: divorced or spinster. Now, these women who stay at home are angry and jealous for women who are successful in businesses and politics. For example, parliamentarian Birute Visockaite is feminist. Society thinks that she is unmarried women and calls her a spinster, they believe that she do not have family which is not true because Birute has family, is married and have kids. When you tell this story to people, they do not believe you."

Most of women organizations do not identify their mission with feminism. These organizations do not use feminism in their mission statements because of the negative views. At the same time, women dare to officially identify themselves as feminists because of the negative views of this word. One parliamentarian, Ingrida, who calls herself a feminist, said:

> I call myself a feminist because I do not lie to myself and other people. I work for women and I want to help women. I think there is a misunderstanding about this 'feminism' word definition. For example, Kazimiera Prunskiene, before beginning her speech always reminds everybody that she is not feminist but all the issues and problems she states is a feminist ideas and theories. Furthermore, in 1996, she established Women's Political Party and still she is not calling herself feminist and tells everyone that she is not advocating feminist ideas. I am not like her or others, I do not feel embarrassed by telling people where I stand and that I am feminist and sometimes I receive negative and sometimes positive outcomes.

Ingrida's ideas and identifying herself as feminist is not a norm in Lithuania. Most women do not want to be called feminists because there is a negative connotation with the word. Furthermore, some women vote for men because they believe that men are better politicians. Parliamentarians explained that there is a simple reason why there are more men in the parliament because men are more likely and willing to fight for their truth and their acceptance. They are brave. Men are more willing to take a risk and always fight for their truth and rights. There is more solidarity among men. Vilija said that women are not fighters and easily give up their ideas:

> Women are more likely to complain and blame others for their unsuccessful projects. Moreover, most women do not support other women because they envy other women's power and lives. Women do not want to see other women holding leadership positions because they do not want to see that every woman can achieve better lives and gain acceptance in the society. This is one of the heritages of the mentality from the Soviet Union.

Lack of women's solidarity is a result of ineffective and not widely known NGOs and community organizations in Lithuania. During interviews, I asked parliamentarians if they know organizations that help women and if these organizations are popular and well known. The common answers I received was that these organizations exist and they knew only governmental organizations and two main organizations names such as Women's Issues Centre and Centre for Equality Advancement. Women's organizations exist in Lithuania especially after joining the EU. Many of them are not popular in Lithuania.

Organizations that have a mission to help women are very ineffective because they tend to focus on the same problems and mainly the provision of services. Very often, these organizations change their mission based on the funds that the EU is distributing. Organizations are dependent on donors and they tend to target projects at available money due to the lack of autonomous funding. In other words, NGOs redefine their mission and agenda in a way that donors want them to reorganize. Very often organizations compete with each other for funding; there is no solidarity or common project. Without funding, it is difficult for organizations to exist. At the same time, these organizations put so much pressure and emphasis on funding while the whole idea and mission stays in the second plan. Women rarely know about women's organizations unless something happens to them and they have no choices but to contact the organizations. Inga said:

> Women organizations exist in Lithuania. There are many of them and have a great staff and provide many services. These organizations become more popular because women starting to access this help. Many women need help and these organizations can provide many services such as psychological, financial, and legal help. Women start to use this help and more women reach these organizations. Very often, women get to know these organization when something happens or for the last resort when they have no other choice.

Besides women's organizations, there are groups in the parliament that advocate for women's civil rights. Parliamentarians told me more about the parliamentarian groups. One such group is the Women's Parliamentarian Group. I had a chance to talk to a parliamentarian that was part of this group and to find more information about the goals and missions of the group. I asked about her personal experiences. I found that the goal of the group in the parliament is to divide parliamentarians into a smaller numbers of groups, research more about the problems that exist in the society, present and advocate for issues. In addition, they need to prepare projects and policies of how these issues can be solved. In this case, I was more interested in the women's parliamentarian group. I wanted to learn more about their meeting, membership, and projects. Neringa shared her story and experience about this group:

> When I was elected and started working in the parliament, I did not know what the parliamentarian groups do and why we need them. I still needed to join some of the parliamentarians groups because parliamentarian needs to belong to at least one of these groups. Therefore, I decided to join Women's Parliamentarian Group that was organized and created by Birute Vesaite, who is very active with NGOs work. I did go to meetings and participated in the discussions but later I regretted joining this group. I think this group is pointless and do not do any good for society, women, or parliament besides existing and showing people that there is something exists in the parliament that tries to protect women's interest. After time being part of this group, I noticed that they do not need me there. I felt that my participation there was only for maintaining a number, so I decided to quit. Moreover, issues and questions they discuss were not acceptable for me. For example, one of the projects they talked about was quota's system. I personally believe that the purpose of this group is support Birute Vesaite and to show society that she is a very active in protecting and working for women's rights. This group is not popular or well known in the society. I think it is more important for these group members to visit NGOs and give a speech about their work in the parliament or tell them how difficult they work on trying to make a change. At the same time, I think we need to pay more attention to different issues and problems rather than forming these groups and showing up in the society.

There is not always solidarity in the parliament. Based on this parliamentarian's experience, some groups are pointless and do not address serious issues. They do not influence policies. At the same time, another interviewee raised the issue of increased competition. Parliamentarians

sometimes compete with one another in order to be reelected for a next term. Birute Vesaite established a women's group in which she tries to influence policies and improve women's lives in Lithuania while other parliamentarians interpret this action as an attempt to be reelected. This general view among parliamentarians fosters competitive spirit and damages solidarity. Competition and disagreement among parliamentarians is one obstacle that discourages women from participating in the politics. In addition, media is another obstacle that discourages women's participation in the public.

Media's Influence and Women

The media heavily influences women's representation in the politics. Very often media portrays women politicians being responsible for the actions of their children and family members. They rarely hold men candidates accountable to the same standards. Journalists tend to ask women politicians questions they do not ask men. In addition, media uses vocabulary that emphasizes and encourages traditional gender roles. For example, the emphasized women parliamentarians' appearance and behaviors.

Prevailing traditional gender ideologies associate women with children and their families. Women's lives are very often discussed in paying a lot of attention to their kids, husbands, and homes while men politician are more often asked about their career, businesses, and the work they do. Irena said that her family was treated unfairly:

> When I started to work in the parliament I faced many obstacles. Media was very unfair; they discussed my private life and details about my family. Because I did not want to share this with them, they just tried to make some not true stories. Media paid more attention to my personal life rather than on my work in the parliament. For example, one of the projects I had in the parliament was 'life window' and it was opened first 'life window' in Lithuania. The project was about women's psychological stress after giving a birth. This project brought many benefits to the country and saved many babies' lives but nobody wrote about this project which I think is much more important.

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The media is interested more in covering personal lives than work of parliamentarian women. Some parliamentarians are not comfortable in sharing their personal lives publicly and it might affect their work in the parliament.

The differences that the media emphasize is directly based on gender biases which in turn create an untenable position for women. By enforcing some of the traditional roles, the media may influence people's choices in the elections. After independence, there were more images coming from Western countries and women are more standardized and had to fit a standard guidelines in order to be accepted. Vilija for many years worked for television and was a journalist. She said that she noticed that media coverage and images have been changed:

> Look at the newspapers, magazines, or television and how women are shown and standardized. It seems that every woman should be skinny, with blond hair, with makeup, and dressed nicely. It seems that women always have time for her and had to take care of their look. There is no individuality shown. Nobody values women's intelligence, skills, and capabilities. In this way media negatively forms society's views of women and stereotyping images. What about jokes and anecdotes about blond women? Do you think society would vote for a blond and skinny woman? Of course not. There are so many negative images of women in media. I think this affects the number of women in the parliament and many other women that would like to become parliamentarian.

Sometimes media affects voters' choices and decisions. Parliamentarians that I interviewed noticed and shared their findings with me. They said that people very often votes for people that they see on television and read in the newspapers and it does not matter if it is a positive stories or crimes. People vote for candidates that they think they know. They gave me one example of Viktoras Uspaskich who is reelected in the parliament. Even though, Viktoras Uspaskich was charged for corruption and needed to face the court, voters continued to support him. He has many businesses and people vote for him because he created many workplaces in Kedainiai, small city in Lithuania. Moreover, people see him at many television shows. People are familiar with his name and they vote for him.

Moreover, appearance and dress code are very important for women in the parliament. There is more pressure for women than men in this regards. Women parliamentarians more often try to dress in businesslike attire and to smile significantly more often than men do. Both of these characteristics shows gendered expectations of candidates. Businesslike attire that most women wear in the parliament reflects the gender based norm that society impose on women and expects them to act like men, serious, and legitimate. Inga talked about appearance. She said:

> Women need to prepare more in the parliament and take care of their look. The way they look and dress is discussed publicly and commented by other people. For example, first day when fall session starts, journalists from different television shows come with cameras to record women parliamentarians' changes in their appearance. For example, they look who lost or gained weight, which changed their haircut, skin tan, or clothing style. These are things that are discussed and women more than men have to face these comments.

Media covers these images and stories because people are interested in watching. After independence, the media became privatized and information shown on television depends on society and directors always want to have higher ratings. One of the parliamentarians who for many years was working for the television said that she was viewed as a positive person that everybody loved and admired. When she started to work in the parliament, she became a negative character in the society, liar, and dishonest person. Another parliamentarian had a similar story. Irena said that it does not matter how you work or what you do television can interpret it differently:

> When I started to work in the parliament, I noticed whatever I do it can be taken as positive or negative action and it depends how media is going to interpret. For example, very often parliamentarians are asked to come and visit different villages. People from different places in Lithuania call parliamentarians and ask them to come and visit them. I believe my duty is to visit these people. I need to listen to their problems and concerns. When they invite me, I have two choices to go to meet with these people or not to go. Either of these choices can be interpret negatively by media. If I will not go to meet these people, media will say that I do not do my job and I do not care about people's problems and I am in the parliament only for self-interest. If I will go, they will say that I try to advertise myself and work for the next elections. There is no good decision for media.

With independence, media's and society's preferences changed. The media tries to show and emphasize on stories that are interesting to people in order to increase their ratings. Media makes difficult for parliamentarians because their actions can be always interpreted negatively.

The media can also help to build confidence in women and encourage them to participate in politics. There are many things that the media can do differently to help women participate and be elected in the parliament. The media should provide more gender sensitive coverage of elections, avoid stereotyping, and present positive images of women leaders. This is one of the ways to help women to increase confidence and encourage them to participate in politics. Moreover, there should be more attention given to issues of special concern to women in news programming. For example, there should be more television shows or the news should be covering women's problems and paying more attention to women. Women need to speak in public and address women's underrepresentation in the parliament.

Lack of Women's Participation

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, women have increasingly been active in a variety of activities in the public sphere, engaging issues of political importance, as well as directly in the realm of formal politics. The first parties focused around women's issues where The Women's Political Party, The Peasant /Farmers' Political Party, and The New Democracy Party established and leaded by Kazimiera Prunskiene. These political parties were mostly active in 1996, but after years, it was collaborated with other parties and their mission had been changed. The sudden awakening wave of gender equality touched society after independence and quickly dissolved after years. These increased women's tries to gain more power failed.

During the first half of the 1990s, Lithuania's economy shrunk, unemployment rates

increased, and tax revenues declined (The Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2010). Women,

more than men, experienced increased unemployment, poverty, and violence as well as

inadequate pensions. Limited opportunities in the labor market, economic disadvantages, and the

importance of the family pushed women to become homemakers and dependent on their

husband. Motherhood became a desired destination and to be a homemaker was not shameful but

a women's duty and responsibility.

Many parliamentarians during an interview addressed importance of the family. They

said that family is a base for country's future. Some parliamentarians said that motherhood

should be desirable and the blessed responsibility of women who need to take a full

responsibility of raising their kids. One of the parliamentarians got little angry when I asked

about women's responsibility in participating in the country's governing process and being part

of the parliament. Vilija said:

> Why do we need women in the parliament? Why do we need to encourage more women
> to participate in the parliament's elections? I do not think we need more women to
> participate in the parliament, it is unnecessary. There are jobs for women and men and we
> should not go against nature. I think, there are jobs for women and men but absolutely
> either of them cannot perform it. On the other hand, all of us want to be happy and have a
> family and be loved by our men. All women by nature have a motherhood instinct and
> nobody else can raise kids better than mother can. I do not think politics is for women
> because politics are very aggressive place, there is no privacy, and there is no time for
> self or family. Women cannot perform well in family and politics. They need to choose
> one or the other but I think priority should be family. We need only those women, who
> are strong and can fight for their ideas. It has to be naturally. Some women cannot be
> parliamentarians because they are too weak, they become tired after all day being at
> conferences and they no longer can be a good mothers and wives

Some women in the parliament believe women's primary role is caretaking of their family. It

shows that women need to sacrifice their goals and their dreams in order to keep their families

together and make everybody happy in their family. As in this example, women rarely support

women due to widely held stereotypes and values society admires. This belief influences women's lives and their everyday activities. It puts more pressure on women to take care of their families first.

As a result, the women themselves do not want to participate in the politics because they will be questioned about their motherhood responsibilities and how their duties are fulfilled. Due to widely held beliefs and expectations, women lose confidence in themselves and do not even take a risk in becoming leaders. During interviews, most of the parliamentarians said that women themselves do not want to participate in politics; they do not even try to become candidates. Most of these parliamentarians blame women for not trying and working towards their goals.

At the same time, one of the parliamentarians addressed a difficulty becoming a parliamentarian because it needs a be strong. Adele said:

> In general, for every new candidate it is difficult because former parliamentarians who want to be reelected try every technique in order to be reelected. In addition, they do not welcome new parliamentarians. New parliamentarians need to work hard in order to learn new environment, find their supporting groups. This is not an easy because you need to have support if you want to actualize your ideas and pass policies.

New parliamentarians are not easily accepted and welcomed in the parliament. New members need to be strong and have a support not only in the parliament but also at home in order to establish a healthy environment and do not lose self confidence. They cannot do this on their own. This process sometimes discourages women from participating in the parliament because women are more likely to support others in the family than receiving help and support from others. This is one of the things families and society in Lithuania need to work on in helping women to become more confident and encouraging them to take a risk and occupy a leadership positions. This is one of the ways women's lives can be improved in the parliament. At the same time, parliamentarians proposed other solutions that might improve women's lives.

Proposed Solutions to Increase Women's Representation

During interviews, I asked parliamentarians if they know any solution or maybe recommendation of how to increase women's representation in the parliament. I got many different answers and many different suggestions, but most of the parliamentarians agreed that this is not an easy process and solutions might be very different. All of the parliamentarians, except one, agreed that there are not enough women in the parliament and Lithuania needs more women's representation in the government institutions and decision-making process.

One of the solutions parliamentarians proposed was time. They said that it needs more time for people to adapt new changes in economy and politics. By proposing this idea, this parliamentarian focused on the Soviet's mentality and older generation with deep patriarchic views. They said that the older generation and remaining the Soviet culture in Lithuania resist changes. This makes harder for new generations to adopt new political ad economic system. She said that women will gain more power when there will be more solidarity in the society. People should respect their neighbors and their elected officials instead every day complaining about their lives and doing nothing. Most of the people still remember old Soviet times and especially older generation wants these times to be back. People need to stop complaining and asking the government to fix their problems; they need to take a leading role and try to fix their problems and increase their living standards. People need to work harder and help government to build the economy. Only solidarity and positive people's attitudes can make changes and increase women's participation in the parliament and other institutions.

Another parliamentarian focused on the financial situation. The election and campaign process is a very long and very expensive. It is difficult to start if you have ideas and passion but nobody knows you in the society. If people do not know the candidate, they are less likely to

support that candidate that places this candidate in a financial distress. Not many companies and businesses are willing to support not well know candidates. Virginija addressed this financial problem:

> Women are very active in job market. Women are educated and want to take a leadership positions. I think one of the reasons of women's underrepresentation in the parliament is difficulty to find financial support. Nobody wants to support women or provide financial support. Politics became very expensive, especially if you want to send your message to the society by using television or ads. If candidate does not have a strong financial support that candidate is more likely to lose elections.

The solution would be to increase or give women some financial supports instead of making them to look by themselves. Because finance is very important in the campaign process, women and men should have an equal access. Increased financial support will help women to focus more on the program and ideas rather that looking for funding. At the same time, there will be more women willing to participate in the elections.

Increasing the number and importance of NGOs in Lithuania was proposed as a solution to help women to increase their solidarity and establish a support groups. Currently there are about 130 NGOs in Lithuania but only few of them are known and actively work for women. Most of the parliamentarians addressed lack of solidarity and support among women. If there are more women's organizations and who receive stable financing, women will be willing to participate more and become part of the group. These organizations are necessary in helping to shape women's lives and encourage them to seek a leadership positions.

The media is also very important in Lithuania, and sometimes influences people's choices, views, and decisions. Very often, the media shows information that society wants to see in order to increase their ratings. Most of the parliamentarians addressed media influence and change in media coverage that could dramatically change society's views.

> In Lithuania, media is very aggressive. I think, people would trust more parliamentarians if media will focus more on positive things. At the same time, it would encourage women to participate in the politics. Now, look at the newspapers, television that shows only a personal lives and bad things. They always criticize politicians and create this image of politics as dirty place.

Due to the aggressive and negative media coverage, society has a negative image of politics. Most women are discouraged to participate in the decision making process they might get the same negative image and their personal lives will be discussed publicly. Media coverage and attitudes need to change and show more positive things in order to help women to participate more in politics.

Only one parliamentarian believes that no more women are needed in the parliament. She believes that it is better for women, families, and country if women stay at home and focus more on household duties. Vilija said that men should make decisions in the parliament about families and women. She said:

> Men are responsible and sensitive and men can make good laws that protect families and women's rights. Women do not need to participate in the parliament. Women can address issues and problems they see and men can solve these problems and establish laws and policies.

Some people in the society believe that women do not need to participate in the parliament. They think that women's presence will not change anything. These people believe that men are better politicians and can make right decisions for women and country.

Since Lithuania gained independence, the numbers of women represented in the parliament did not increase dramatically. There were some improvements but the representation still remains very low. The quota system presents one such a mechanism and some parliamentarians proposed this project. The introduction of a quota system for women represents a qualitative jump into a policy and gender equality. A quota system for women would entail that women must contribute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body. The core idea

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behind this system is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are part of the political life. Some parliamentarians that I interviewed stated that quota system would guarantee women's rights as citizens for equal representation. It would encourage women to participate in the election process and might change society's views and build confidence about women's representation and abilities to govern country.

Moreover, many parliamentarians do not agree with the quota system and they called it undemocratic and ineffective way to solve women's political underrepresentation. They do not agree that the implementation of a quota system sill change anything. Irena said:

> I think, quota system is against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference over men. It is very unprofessional because in quota system gender matters more than ideas, education, and experience. This system can do many bad things in Lithuania. There are many other problems and issues in Lithuania that need to pay more attention besides gender discrimination.

Another parliamentarian had a similar opinion and view about the quota system which she believed to be a mechanism that creates more conflict than does good. A prevailing view was that women should not be elected jus because they are women.

These are the main solutions that parliamentarians recommended in order to increase women's participation and representation in the parliament. Most of these solutions need more time. For example, people cannot change overnight and their habits and believes cannot be changed quickly. It needs time, for people to change. Most of the parliamentarians see changes and improvements in women's lives coming within society and not policies. They believe that women's lives will improve but it needs more time.

At the same time, all the parliamentarians stated difficulty of making a change in the parliament. All of them at the beginning came to the parliament with the projects and ideas and wanted to make a change. After working in the parliament, they realized that to make a change is

very difficult and sometimes is impossible. There are many reasons why it is so difficult to make a change. One of the reasons is society's attitudes and beliefs that are unacceptable for the public. Second obstacle is the term of office. In the parliament, parliamentarians are elected for four years and they stated that it is a very short time in order to develop projects. Lastly, the political system in Lithuania is very complicated and confusing. It is in the process of changing because not long time ago Lithuanians gained independence and it needs to reform all the system. Moreover, there is not always solidarity in the parliament and among the parliamentarians. One of the parliamentarians said that sometimes she felt that parliamentarians were competing with one another in order to be reelected for the next term. These obstacles create a difficulty for parliamentarians to work effectively in the parliament and make changes that would benefit women and society. If the process would be faster to make amendment and changes in the policies, it would be easier to pass policies protecting women's rights.

Analysis

Collected statistics and interviews help to understand the post-socialist situation in Lithuania. Specifically, the findings focus on women's civil rights and political representation. My collected data shows that women face many obstacles and that there is an increased level of women living in poverty, unemployment, violence, decrease in income and availability of social services. According to the data, women need help to become more independent and to increase their standard of living. This will not happen if women continue being inactive in politics and if society does not elect women in the parliament. In order to help women, Lithuanians need to admit that women are discriminated. Once the problem is widely recognized, there are many different ways against determine solutions. This section analyzes the statistical data and responses of women parliamentarians from interviews.

The economic changes, such as a shift from state controlled to an open market economy, influenced relations among people and introduced new gender roles in Lithuania. The process of privatization altered the economy of the families as well as gender employment opportunities. Inequality among sexes and gender roles arose as a byproduct of the economic stimulus and economic sectors. After Lithuania gained independence, it needed to reorganize increased unemployment and limited services from the government. This change influenced gender relations in a new way. The shift in the economy altered power relations among men and women in Lithuania. Due to increased unemployment, inflation, a limited availability of welfare benefits, women were encouraged to leave their jobs and become mothers and homemakers while men were encouraged to become breadwinners of the family.

During the Soviet Union, women were dependent on the state while after independence in Lithuania women became more dependent on men as state no longer interfere in families' lives.

As a result, an ideology of motherhood ideology and homemaker role became a natural role of women in the society. Women today continue to face unemployment and limited job opportunities with a very low pay. They are encouraged to become mothers and homemakers in order to live decent or comfortable lives.

At the same time, the recreation of an independent Lithuanian state increased pressure on men to earn money and support their families. There is an expectation in the public that man should earn money for his family, to do male housework such as home remodeling and technical jobs and take care of his wife (Tereskinas 2010). These are very high expectations for men during an economic downturn with limited job opportunities, low wages, and high inflation. Most of men cannot meet the expectations that push them to depression, exclusion, anxiety and insecurity, and committing a suicide (Tereskinas 2010). These gender roles and expectation are set for men and women in the post-socialist Lithuania. In order to solve this sexes inequality and bring more equality in Lithuania, women need to increase their participation and representation in the parliament.

Since Lithuania is part of the international community, it is important to understand influences of international policies and international events to power relations. The inequality and women's discrimination are influenced not only by the internal factors but also by the external factors and international relations. There are many authors that examined women's discrimination and changes in power relations that were influenced by the international policies and international events (Peterson and Runyan 1993, Enloe 2004). These authors show that international relations and international events justify masculinity power and expand patriarchy.

Gender inequality is an international issue and it is imbedded in the system and institutions. Spike Peterson and Anne Runyan analyze gender inequalities and international

relations between and among men and women with the world politics of global governance, security, political economy, and ecology (Peterson and Runyan 1993). They show the gendered division of power, violence, labor and resources, as well as the power of gender as a meta-lens that keeps gender, race, class, sexual, and national division in place. These two authors argue that gender is socially learned behavior and there are set of expectations that distinguish masculinity and femininity. These norms become institutionalized and people began to see them as "natural" rather than socially constructed. Peterson and Runyan analyze international relations through gendered lens in which they see how class, gender division, and resources are situated in the state and international level. They show that gender inequality is not a natural process but rather it is produced, structured, and impacted by external forces that justify masculinity power and inequalities in the international relations. These forces controls power relations and justifies masculinity power.

The process of globalization with deterritorialization and financial globalization affects gender relations. Spike Peterson argues that globalization is a large scale of transnational processes occurring today at an accelerated pace and have uneven effects on different countries (Peterson 2002). This is a process of making and remaking localities and redefining global power relations. The globalization process erodes state's control of national economic and social planning. Power relations and gender relations are effected and it is more likely to expand patriarchy and masculinity.

Enloe talks about masculinity and privilege and she says that women and men may adopt identities and aspirations. She looks at daily realities of women and how it is affected by globalization and international politics, especially during the era of unprecedented American influence (Enloe 1993). The stories of women and militarization process unveil the processes

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through which the invisibility if these women in mainstream international politics that

reproduces a male-centered international system and global economy. The author focuses on the

marginalization of women in the hegemonic international system framings and explores ways in

which the lives of ordinary women are constitutive of the global political economy. Enloe

analyzes global gender inequalities by looking at the power relations between men and women,

women and state, militaries and transnational corporations. It shows that in these power relations

masculinity dominates (Enloe 2004).

<u>Reasons to Increase Women's Representation</u>

Most of the interviewees said that it needs more women in the parliament not only

because Lithuania is a democratic country but to enhance political culture and help women in

Lithuania. They said that women parliamentarians bring different experience, goals, and

perspectives to political decision-making process. They are more likely to bring a positive impact

on both the culture of parliamentary politics and quality of policy making. Women focus on

feminine traits such as consensus seeking, softness, and gentleness. It is a different way of

exercising power and introducing different policies.

Based on parliamentarians' experiences, women pay more attention in the parliament to

health, education, and social protection. In Lithuania, the public assume that women are

responsible for raising their kids and housework. Women are more likely to know women's

problems and families' issues. Some parliamentarians addressed disliking the feminist label and

not working only for women in the parliament but others explained that women's experience in

the family and society bring these issues indirectly in the decision making process. This is one

of the positive experiences that women parliamentarians can bring and address into the policy

making process. There is no argument made that all women in the parliament should address women's issues but it has been argued that women's experiences can bring an impact into policy making process and policies that could benefit families.

Overall, not only can women bring their experience but also women can address women's discrimination in the society and economic sector. In Lithuania, women face disadvantage in the labor market. During the transition period, women in Lithuania faced many obstacles in obtaining better paying jobs: they face discrimination in the labor market, lower salaries, less choices and opportunities in different careers and positions, and have a higher risk to be fired due to their gender and stereotyping in Lithuania (LaFont 1998). By seeing and experiencing sad disadvantages, women can bring these issues in the parliament and decision making process.

Private companies offer most well paid jobs. Moreover, men occupy the higher positions such as managers, financiers, and accountants while women are more likely to become secretaries, bookkeepers, and language interpreters (LaFont 1998). Even though, there is 10 percent difference in the employment in the private sector, men occupy better paid and higher rank positions than women. Private firms typically look for men for higher paid positions, and women for lower paid positions (Einhorn 1993). An unwritten rule exists about the sex segregation in the workplace and very often job advertising, specifies which sex the employer is looking (Lithuanian newspaper "Lietuvos Rytas" 2011). In addition, the structure of Lithuanian language promotes and reinforces job specific advertisements where sometimes it is difficult to formulate gender-neutral sentences (LaFont 1998).

After the reorganization of the old industries, there were increased efforts to introduce new technologies and machineries in the industry. At the same time, an introduction of new

technologies and machinery requires new trainings in which men are more engaged because they can have more time for this training as women are more responsible for household duties and childbearing work (Gal and Kligman 2000). In addition, men feel more responsible for providing money and food for their families. Generally, men experience more pressure to become a breadwinner and provide money to their families. They are responsible and engaged in the private sector where jobs require knowledge and skills about technology and new machineries. During the transition period, when there are more jobs available for men than women and due to patriarchic views, men faced more stress and involuntary financial responsibilities.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the process of privatization reformed industries and sectors that existed in Lithuania. During the Soviet era in Lithuania, there were machine building and metalworking, textile, leather, and agro products such as meat, fish, and wheat (Europa World Plus 2011). It also included oil refinery in Mazeikiai, and energy production at a power plant in Ignalina power plant. In this industry there were men and women employed for many different positions. The process of privatization reformed industry. Currently there are about 80 percent of enterprises privately owned and most investors are interested in food and clothes production for exports (Europe World Plus 2011). In order to attract investors it needs to have intermediate products and machinery such as buildings and physical infrastructure such as highways that it would make easier to move products and export them (Harvey 2010, 67). These conditions reduce the barriers and increases investors trust and willingness to invest in that location. Construction work such as building highways and airports increased in order to modernize economy and attract foreign investors. This shows that at the beginning of the economic transition in Lithuania an industry was very weak and had a few investors that wanted to invest because of the bad roads and old technology. Increased unemployment pushed women

to become homemakers and increased their dependence on men. Lithuania used capital to modernize and build roads, highways, airports, and a train system. It needs first to modernize in order to attract foreign investors (Europa World Plus 2011). At the same time, it is considered to be masculine work in which men are most likely to be employed.

Food production and textile production were major fields of employment in which women and men participated in the previous system. The economy was reoriented towards open market system and old inefficient factories were closed. It was reoriented to the Western market. Because it desperately needed foreign investment in order to decrease unemployment, Lithuania was very open to different investors. The investors and companies do not always look at the localities and efficiency to localities rather it emphasized on the demands for the global economy. Different countries and companies invest in locations by looking for their own benefits and interest (Mitchell 2003). Currently, in Lithuania the main export is mineral production, machinery and mechanical appliances, chemical, vehicles and transport equipment (Europa World Plus 2011). These sectors of machinery production and chemical production are considered masculinized and in these sectors men are mostly employed due to their training and physical abilities (Daukantiene 2006). There are fewer opportunities for women in this kind of industry. In addition, there is tourism encouraged in Vilnius, Lithuanian capital, with the EU funding (Europa World Plus 2011). This encourages construction work such as building and fixing roads, sidewalks, painting buildings, and building new hotels and in these positions men mostly employed, while women are working more in service jobs such as hotel services, salons, or gift shops. Even though, tourism is encouraged, it is still very slow and weak in Lithuania (The Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2011).

My interviews reveal that enhancing women's representation in the parliament can bring benefits not only to women but also it can benefit country. They said that women pay more attention to society's well being such as education, health, and social services. These issues are not only helping women but also otherwise focusing on the society for a long run. At the same time, gender relations changed after Lithuania gained independence and increased unemployment and economic downturn pushed women to stay at home and take care of their families. This is an important reason for women to unite and work together in protecting their rights and gaining more independence. Many parliamentarians said that there is a need to increase women's representation in the parliament. Also, there are many barriers that women face in accessing political power and some women are discouraged from the participation.

According to observations and collected contact information about parliamentarians, I noticed that most parliamentarians continue working in the politics or government institutions. Most of the former parliamentarians continue being active in politics, work for government institutions, have their new businesses. Most of the parliamentarian women after serving first term in the parliament participate in the election for the next term. After serving first term in the parliament, most parliamentarians are elected for the next term. Most of the parliamentarians I interviewed, served in the parliament at least two or three terms. Other former women parliamentarians remain active in the politics and become ministers or work for government institutions. Also, many former women parliamentarians have their own businesses. This observation shows that women working in the parliament gain skills, knowledge, and resources that help them to be successful in the future positions. Parliamentarian position provides tools, resources, and network for their future work. The parliamentarian position empowers women and helps them to be successful in the future.

Barriers for Enhancing Women's Presence in the Parliament

According to data I collected, in 1992 the numbers of women represented in the parliament were very low. Most of the members elected in the parliament were *Sajudis* members. This was a dangerous activity where only few women participated due to patriarchic views and economic downturn. Men were more active in Lithuania's independence movement because it was dangerous work and it required a lot of time spending in organizing different activities (Petersen 2001). In 1996, women's representation in the parliament increased due to women becoming active in the society. There were Women's political parties established by Kazimiera Prunskiene that advocated women's rights and encouraged women to take an active role in protecting their rights (Jureniene 2007). This political party encouraged women to participate and in 1998 Lithuania passed the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men that introduced obligation for all state institutions and municipalities to ensure that no legislation in the area of their competence should break the principle of gender equality (European Commission 2011).

The highest number of women in the parliament was in 2004. It was years when Lithuania was preparing to join the EU. One of the requirements Lithuania needed to meet to be accepted to the EU was to improve women's situation and give them more rights (European Commission 2011). There were many different governmental programs that encouraged women to be active in the society and women gained many benefits due to the government's and organizations' support. Even though, women's situation in Lithuania has been improved since the first years of independence and women gained more rights and support from the government; women's representation in the parliament remains low. Low rates of women's representation in the parliament are influenced by social, political, and economical situation in Lithuania.

Women I interviewed addressed the main barriers they face during the election process and some obstacles they face being a women in the parliament. They also shared their own views and opinions about women in Lithuania. They identified that main obstacles of women's representation in the parliament are lack of women's interest to participate, gender stereotyping, and lack of solidarity among women.

The data shows that after the fall of the Soviet Union, people were very passionate about the beginning and they were very optimistic about the process of transformation. While their expectations for the better living standards, higher wages, and better opportunities were not delivered right after the first two elections, people gave up and did not believe in promises and their government anymore. People started to avoid going to elections and believe that their participation would not change anything (Kostadinova 2003).

These pessimistic views, low engagement in the politics and following everyday news are influenced by the Soviet ideologies. Some people believe that these negative views about politicians are continuation from old Soviet times and it needs time for people to change. During the Soviet Union, people did not trust government officials and they blamed government for their life conditions and poverty. Lithuanians were optimistic and thought that their life will change after independence. Due to the economic downturns and economic shock therapy, when all the reforms were introduced immediately, Lithuanians' lives did not improve and people still blame the politicians for their life. People are not interested in politics and they believe that situation will not change. They consider politics being a dirty business. Women are discouraged to participate in the politics because politics are considered to be a "dirty place" where there are dishonest and selfish people.

Most women addressed that women themselves do not want to participate in the politics. I found that journalists are following parliamentarians every day. Journalists want to get as much information as they can about parliamentarians personal lives and discuss their findings publicly. Journalists criticize parliamentarians' work. Many parliamentarians addressed that society considers politics to be a "dirty business" and that all politicians are dishonest and wants to steal money. This view very often discourages women to participate in the politics because they do not want to be blamed for the problems in the country and bring shame to their family. This discourages women to start participating in the politics.

Another major obstacle is gender stereotyping. In Lithuania, most people still believe that politics is men's responsibility and that men are better politicians. On the other hand, women's role in the society is rooted in women's reproductive role. Many people in the society believe that women have a natural attachment to family and children. The most important job ascribed to women in Lithuania is to take care of the family and raise good citizens. This stereotyping very often encourages women to stay at home with their kids and be responsible for the household work. Women that decide to participate in the politics are asked about their families. Men do not need to answer these questions and their fathers' roles are not so much discussed publicly. This stereotyping practices and gender role traits discourage women's participation in the politics.

Overall, women's situation could change if women would start to organize together and try to resist these views and try to protect their right. According to the statistics and interviews, there is no solidarity or strong support system among women in Lithuania. After joining the EU, there are an increased number of organizations exist but these organizations are not very popular among women and they participate in these organizations if they have problems. Due to no

strong support system, women do not gain power and their issues are not well known and addressed publicly.

Collected data responses by women parliamentarians reveal that there are barriers that women face before elections and during the campaign process. These barriers include women's attitude, society's gender stereotyping, and lack of solidarity. The next section represents some strategies that could improve women's representation in the parliament.

Strategies to Enhance Women's Political Participation

Parliamentarians addressed many strategies that could enhance women's participation and representation in the parliament. Some strategies includes introduction of quota system, establish women's political parties, increase the number of women's organizations, change in media coverage and other soft measures that encourage women's participation. Besides all these improvements, the situation in Lithuania will not change until society will support more women and women will gain more rights in the labor market. Women need to become more independent from their men and state.

According to the statistics, women face increased unemployment and are unable to find better paying jobs with a good education. At the same time, widely held society's gender stereotyping discriminate women and discourage them to participate in the elections or seek higher positions. Women are encouraged stay at home that places them into a vulnerable positions and dependence on their partners' income and services provided from the state. When women will become more independent, their confidence will increase and their participation in the politics will increase. Then we will have more women in Lithuania's parliament. It works from both ways: addressing problems in the parliament can introduce policies that would help

women to become more independent and help to participate in the politics, at the same time,

society needs to be more open and recognize women's discrimination.

Conclusion

This thesis reveals that economic reforms affected the role and status of women in Lithuania. The collapse of the Soviet Union changed the world. The freedom of consumer practices and an increased availability of goods and services became accessible than ever before. At the same time, the financial uncertainty became a big issue. Lithuania looked for help from the experts in the economic and social fields, bureaucrats, and foreign organizations. AT the same time the globalization and international relations influences power relations. The privatization process affected many changes. The cost of transition differently affected women and men to a lesser extend. Specifically, this thesis emphasizes women's participation in the parliament.

State institutions are still in the process of forming their policies and procedures. They are mainly not sensitive enough to the needs of different social groups. As a result, a lack of trust, effectiveness of women's organizations, responsibility, and communal activity discourages marginalized groups and individuals to engage in civic duties. This leads to a further inequality, marginality, and discrimination of women in Lithuania.

According to the data presented in the thesis, women are struggling financially to support their families. Women became dependent on men due to increased rates of unemployment, inflation, and violence against women escalated at the same time. They receive a limited services and financial support from the government that posed further set back in their standards of living. The power relations shifted in which more women became homemakers and more men became breadwinners.

Women struggle to find jobs, achieve equality at homes, and in the political domain. They remain underrepresented in the parliament. They face many obstacles in accessing political

power and civil rights. My interviews reveal obstacles that women face in trying to access political power. They include patriarchic views, media coverage, difficulties finding financial support, and women not supporting women. These and other barriers discourage women from participating in politics. Furthermore, due to women's underrepresentation in the parliament women's civil rights are not addressed in the decision making process. On the other hand, parliamentarian women benefit from participating and serving a term in the parliament because they gain an access to the resources and tools for a future career. In order to boost women's civil rights and underrepresentation in the numbers of women active in the parliament need to increase. This thesis addressed women's underrepresentation, and the barriers women face in the campaign process and parliament.

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