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Ethnicity and Occupational Differences in the Transforming Homogenous Culture: The Case of Lithuania

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Abstract. This article presents empiric research on respondents' self-identification of *ethnicity* in such culturally homogenous country as Lithuania and comparisons among three occupational sectors: education, healthcare and business. The results reveal the difficulty when attempting to self-identity *ethnicity* resulting in high nonresponse rate. Furthermore, results indicate effects of occupational background of the respondent and influence of EU membership on the perceived ethnicity. The contextualisation of results within social and historical context of the country is outlined, as well as methodological implications.

Keywords: *ethnicity, homogeneous culture, quantitative research, focus group, Lithuania, occupation.*

Introduction

Lithuania is a multi-ethnic state with 115 nationalities but only 29 nationalities account for 100 or more people (Census, 2001). In 2011 situation did not change significantly – even though the number of the nationalities increased to 154, but the residents of other ethnicities than Lithuanian accounted for from 6.6 percent (Census, 2011). Thus, Lithuanians accounts for an overwhelming majority (Kasatkina & Beresnevičiūtė, 2010). Cultural homogeneity is also related to the fact that numeric superiority of ethnic Lithuanians implicitly tends to treat ethnic Lithuanians as an indigenous group, particularly

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in the public sector (Kasatkina & Beresnevičiūtė, 2010). This is why from cross-cultural perspective, Lithuania is considered a homogenous society (Snaebjornsson, 2016).

Lithuania can be considered culturally transitioning country (Huettinger, 2008), as in 1990s country went through major changes which resulted in shift in societal cultural values (Snaebjornsson, 2016). The social, political, and economic changes and issues of statehood that took place less than three decades ago had affected all ethnic groups in Lithuania and had an impact on the relatively young history of the country (Kasatkina & Beresnevičiūtė, 2010). The above mentioned changes resulted in the continuing need for research in self-identity of Lithuanians, presenting the evidence of complexity in this field even among young Lithuanians who were less affected by Independence period as outlined in the recent research by Juškevičienė (2014). Therefore, it is of interest for multiple disciplines (e.g. education, cross-cultural management, sociology) in social science to investigate perceived ethnicity of different groups of members of society in a country which is in societal cultural shift. The above mentioned highlights the relevance of this article for the Lithuanian context and its timely nature.

This article was inspired by results of the global research project *A Study on Leadership and Values* (see *Centre for Cross Cultural Comparisons*[1]) which was carried out in Lithuania. One of the questions of the survey was related to the ethnicity of the respondents. More than a quarter of the respondents did not answer this question, even though nearly all answered the prior and following questions. Such results have aroused interest to the instances of non-response to survey items relating to ethnicity. *This article aims to analyse the implications of the use of ethnicity and contextualise it within occupational differences of respondents in culturally homogenous country*. Furthermore, to determine whether and how the perception of ethnicity relates to occupational background of the respondents.

Theoretical framework

Ethnicity definition and complexity of the concept

Pamir (1997) states that no common definition of ethnicity exists; it is generally described as "the awareness on the part of a particular community of having a separate identity on the basis of common history, race, language, religion, culture and territory". Ethnicity is a complex and multi-dimensional concept, which is difficult to define and it has many interpretations that depend on the context. The conflict surrounding the field of ethnic phenomena are caused by the disagreement about the meaning of the central concepts of ethnicity and how they should be used both within and between individuals and groups.

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The word *ethnicity* is derived from the ancient Greek *ethnos*, which means *group of people* of the same race or nationality who share a distinctive culture (Shahabuddin, 2016), and implies "a range of situations in which a collective of humans lived and acted together" (Ostergrad, 1992, in Jenkins, 2008, p. 9). Ethnicity is a complex and multifaceted concept (Meer, 2014), which is difficult to define, and has many interpretations depending on the context in which the term is used. In the academic literature, several issues arise when explaining possible origins of the confusion in the use of *ethnicity*.

The first issue is related to the meanings of central concepts around the phenomena. Hutchinson et al. (1996) suggests that lack of agreement on central concepts is a source of confusion and conflict surrounding the field. Scholars explain this lack of agreement by emphasising the novelty of the use of the concept, particularly in ***non-multicultural*** (homogeneous) societies (Joseph, 2015).

The second issue stems from the first one (or possibly contributes to the difficulty of interpretation and understanding), related to an approach or school of thought that guides the use of the term and the idea of ethnicity. Literature on ethnicity is divided into two major approaches: the *primordia list* and the *instrumentalist* (*constructionist*). The comparison of these two approaches and implications of differences is presented below.

The third issue in the literature is the confounding of meaning stemming from the use of ethnicity as a substitute/synonym for concepts like race, nationality, (ethnic) minority and others. While ethnicity includes all of these categorizations, the interchangeable use as a synonym of a single concept leads to confusion, resulting in vagueness of meanings, and reduced confidence in research results (Beresnevičiūtė, 2005; Ruegg, 2016).

Even though it is stated that the concept of ethnicity has been used in many directions academically (Hutchinson et al., 1996), the most general definition of the concept is based on Fredrik Barth's suggested explanation of ethnicity as the "social organization of the culture of difference" (1969, p. 6). Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* is considered as a seminal discussion of the contemporary studies of ethnicity. Barth criticized previous definitions of ethnicity and developed a contemporary model of the phenomenon which has withstood the test of time.

One of the focuses on ethnicity in the literature is its interactional nature. Eriksen (1993) suggests ethnicity to be a socially interactional process, and highlights the functional aspect of ethnicity as the means for people to cope with demands and challenges in life. However, the social anthropology literature focuses on relational aspects of empathy, referring to empathy as a relationship between groups which consider themselves being culturally distinctive, hence "ethnicity is essentially an aspect of relationship, not a property of a group" (Eriksen, 1993, p. 12).

Meanwhile Jenkins (2008) summarizes the basic social anthropological model of ethnicity emphasising that ethnicity is a matter of a cultural differentiation and shared meanings that are produced and reproduced through social interaction. Also, ethnicity is fluid and not so stable as "the way of life of which it is an aspect, or the situations in

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which it is produced and reproduced" (2008, p. 14). The complexity of the discussion of ethnicity lies in its collective and individual nature. Ethnicity can be both collective – externalized in social interaction and the categorization of others, and individual – internalized in personal self-identification (Jenkins, 2008). This dual nature of ethnicity is seen as a root of political conflicts (Yuval-Davis, 1999), which are implemented through boundary making and dividing the world into *us* versus *them*. Typically, such division is accommodated by creation of myths of common origin and/or common destiny, and engaging in constant processes of struggle and negotiation (Yuval-Davis, 2003).

Yang (2000) provides several synonyms of ethnicity including ethnic affiliation, ethnic group membership, as well as ethnic identity, and states that ethnicity can be subjective and objective. According to Yang, ethnicity "is subjective since it is a product of the human and human sentiments" (2000, p. 40) and it is related to the sense of the belonging to the particular ethnic group. On the other hand, ethnicity is objective as it is constructed by social forces and power relations and "must be based on some objective characteristics" (2000, p. 40). Yang (2000) concludes that on balance, ethnicity is the result of subjective perceptions based on such objective characteristics as national origin, culture, presumed ancestry or physical features.

As stated above, an explanation of the concept of ethnicity depends on the context and on the approach adopted, as they emphasise different aspects of the phenomenon. The United Nations Statistics Division (2003) in *Ethnicity: A Review of Data Collection and Dissemination* remarks that ethnicity, language, religion and place of birth are often used to express the identity and cultural affiliation of persons in a population.

The United Nations *The Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* (1998) states that cultural diversity may be measured depending on the national circumstances by taking into account the language spoken in the home of community, religion, national and/or ethnic group. Ethnic data is useful for the elaboration of policies to improve access to employment, education and training, social security and health, transportation and communications, and many other services. It is important for taking measures to preserving the identity and survival of distinct ethnic groups, which is deemed important by many.

Theoretical approaches to ethnicity

As mentioned above, there are two approaches to explaining ethnicity, the primordialist and the instrumentalist (constructionist) schools of thought. They are compared below and explained in more detail, along with some critical points for both.

Primordial school

Hutchinson et al. (1996) inform us that according to the primordial school of thought ethnicity is an 'ascribed identity' which is deeply rooted and fixed; this theoretical ap-

proach to defining ethnicity is represented by Clifford Geertz and David Schneider, who have separated social reality from the cultural system and have seen the culture as the key to understand the society. Geertz has emphasised the importance of such cultural 'givens' as "religion, language, race, nationality and customs to which people attach a 'primordial' quality" (in Hutchinson et al., 1996).

The concept of primordialism contains three distinct ideas. First, it is characterized by the aspect of 'apriority', as primordial identities are 'given' prior to all experience or interaction. As Hutchinson, et al. (1996) indicate, primordial attachments are not sociological, because they are natural and even sometimes called 'spiritual'. Secondly, primordial views cannot be investigated in relation to social interaction, because belonging to the group does not necessarily mean that the person feels that s/he has certain attachments to a particular ethnic group and its practices, such as language and culture (Hutchinson et al., 1996). Finally, Hutchinson et al. emphasise an aspect of affectivity, as this concept identifies feelings and is based on emotion.

According to Yang (2000), within the primordial framework two different views could be mentioned. The sociological perspective emphasises the importance of sociobiological factors (kinship) in defining ethnicity as "ethnic identity develops and persists due to the common ancestral bonds of group members" (2000, p. 43). The second view is related to a culturalist perspective. According to this perspective, in determination of ethnic group membership the most important factor is common culture (language, common religion, etc.). Common biological bonds are not necessarily required to create an ethnic group and develop ethnic identity, as a common culture "determines genesis and tenacity of ethnic identity even in the absence of common ancestors" (2000, p. 43).

This school of though is criticized by some scholars of contemporary studies of ethnicity. First, it is criticized for being aprioristic and a-sociological, consequently "reducing social phenomena to inherent bonds and thereby precluding the possibility of explaining collective passions" (Hutchinson et al., 1996). Secondly, this perspective does not explain an ethnic change – why ethnic identity changes, why new ethnic identities appear, as well as why some of ethnic identities disappear (Hutchinson et al., 1996; Yang, 2000).

Despite the criticisms of the primordialism school of thought, scholars such as Kasatkina and Leončikas (2003) continued analysis of the primordial interpretation combined with situational factors, particularly in Lithuania. Kasatkina (2007) claimed that ethnicity as a multi-dimensional phenomenon is closely related to social context, which influences expression of ethnicity or even constructs it (Kasatkina, 2007). According to the scholar, such objective characteristics as language, religion culture or common history not always define ethnicity of the person and various subjective factors or self-identity are also important. The fact that ethnic identities are not always recognised and are mostly constructed predetermines the choice of other schools of thoughts of ethnicity.

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The instrumentalist (constructionist) school

Development of the instrumentalist approach to defining ethnicity, which prevails in contemporary anthropological studies of the field, has evolved from *"Ethnic groups and boundaries"* by Barth (1969). According to Barth, ethnicity is a form of social organisation of culture difference. Barth emphasises that the persistence of an ethnic unit depends on the persistence of the differences of cultural features between groups, "while continuity can also be specified through the changes of the [ethnic] unit brought about the changes in the boundary-defining cultural differentiation". Barth has focused on the boundary and its maintenance, but not the cultural features. Even though Barth had a great impact on the development of the instrumentalist school of thought, he is criticized for treating ethnic groups as fixed categories with borders permanently guarded by linguistic and cultural symbols (such as clothing, food, and architecture, etc. (in Hutchinson et al., 1996).

According to the instrumentalist approach, ethnicity is dynamic and ethnic boundaries are flexible and changeable. It emerges as a response to the structural changes of the society, thus ethnic groups are not primordial, but situational. Ethnic identity is also understood as useful social, political and cultural resource (Hutchinson et al., 1996; Yang, 2000).

As one of the representatives of instrumentalist approach Eriksen (1993) emphasises that the most important factor for defining ethnicity is social relationships between individuals who assign themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. Social relationships have an ethnic component if cultural differences cause differences in interaction between the group members. Eriksen (1993) emphasises that ethnicity refers to aspects of gain and loss in interaction, as well as to aspects of the sense in the creation of identity.

Jenkins (2008) also interprets ethnicity as a social construct which emerges during social interaction. According to the scholar, ethnicity is not stable, but an ongoing process of ethnic identification. He highlights, neither ethnicity, nor culture is something that people 'have' or to which they 'belong'. Both ethnicity and culture are rather a complex of pieces that individuals "experience, use, learn and 'do' in their daily lives, within which they construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows" (2008). Finally, ethnicity as social identity is both collective and individual; it can be expressed through social interaction, but also be internalized to his/her own self-perception.

Even though the instrumental school of thought is widely accepted, some drawbacks of this approach should be mentioned. First, some scholars criticize this approach to the study of ethnicity as a struggle for societal resources (Eriksen, 1993). Such an attitude pays less attention to the ***symbolic*** aspects of ethnicity and ethnic identity. The approach also limits understanding and explanation of power distribution among the members of society. Yang (2000, p. 46) states that this approach does not pay enough attention to "the role of political and economic interest in the construction of ethnicity".

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Academics generally consider ethnicity to be a *social construct*. Social construction is the way in which society places individuals in groups and of times provides certain privileges for one group over another. Most people are unaware of social construction, as much of it takes place subconsciously. Points of differentiation in social construction include race, class and gender (Frable, 1997). An example of *social construction* is how people are identified as belonging to a specific race; they do not choose their race. Social construction begins from the moment a baby is born. Once a baby comes into the world, gender is determined, and the gender process of social construction has begun. As that baby grows up to become a child and then later an adult, he or she is treated based on gender.

***Ethnicity* as a variable in surveys**

Even though *ethnicity* as a variable is widely used in social surveys, it always raises additional questions and concerns for indicating one's ethnicity, as different interpretations of the concept by the participants of the survey complicate data analysis and inferences from analyses in the study. As mentioned above, ethnicity is a multi-dimensional concept that includes various elements (e.g. national identity, religion and country of birth) and might vary from one context to another. Therefore, it seems impossible to use widely accepted ethnicity interpretations attempting to measure it in a simplistic allocation of individuals to a single group category, because "ethnicity is a changeable, complex and multidimensional concept" (Aspinal, 2011 in Gayle et al., 2015, p. 8) and as fluid elements appear through social interaction of individuals (Aspinal, 2007).

Burton et al. (2010) suggests three main issues related to the use and interpretation of the ethnicity concept in social studies. The first and central issue is to measure such dynamic and multi-dimensional concept by using a single categorical question. Secondly, researchers have different understanding of the concept in their studies, consequently their expectation of what a given measure can and should bring might be different. Hence, how effective is a measure or a set of measures in a given survey? According to Burton et al. (2010), some practical issues related to the measurement need to be addressed if surveys are to improve the extent to which they meet existing and evolving research interest in ethnicity (2010, p. 1334).

Burton et al. (2010) emphasise that there is a need to recognise that ethnicity and ethnic group are identified by several characteristics such as race, national identity, ancestry, nationality and citizenship, religion, language and country of birth. Identification with any of these dimensions or their combination may vary between individuals, across groups, according to context, and as internal and external variables change across time. For example, different approaches to ethnicity data collection vary in the continental Europe compared to studies in Great Britain and North America (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, 2003, in Aspinal, 2007). As an example can be used the Eurostat survey of the countries' practices in their civil registration processes. We note different emphases in such

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dimensions of ethnicity as citizenship, country of birth, language, religious denomination, migrant status and nationality of origin, and much less focus on race or ethnicity in representation of self-identity.

In summary, the application of a multi-dimensional concept of ethnicity in the social studies raises challenges and additional questions, due to the different interpretations from one context to another. The greatest challenge is to find a middle way between the expectations of the scholar and the most effective measure to define the ethnicity in the research implementation context where surveys are completed by non-academics.

Research questions, hypotheses and method

Research questions and methods

In order to investigate the term *ethnicity* in quantitative method research using a field survey we employed particular data sets (Snaebjornsson, 2016; Endriulaitienė et al., 2016) that were collected as a part of a global research project *A Study on Leadership and Values* (see Centre for Cross Cultural Comparisons[2]). The aim of the study was to analyse the implications of the use of *ethnicity* and contextualise it within occupational differences of respondents in culturally homogenous country.

Focus groups

Two focus group discussions were organised, including in total 11 people. The focus groups were organised with Lithuanians in the Lithuanian language. The age diversity varied from 26 to 55 years of age. The groups had varied educational and professional backgrounds.

The main purpose of the focus group discussions was cultural validation of translated survey: A Study on Leadership and Values (see Littrell, 2002, 2010, 2012; Littrell & Valentin, 2005; Northouse, 2013), that combines well validated and widely used questionnaires (Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire, see Stogdill, 1974 and Value Model Survey 08, see Hofstede et al., 2008).

Survey Structure

For the purpose of this research paper and investigation of the use of the concept of *ethnicity* in a quantitative survey in homogeneous society, we use the data of the project *A Study on Leadership and Values* collected in Lithuania. The survey has included about 150 questions. One of these questions has been the open-ended question "Your ethnicity is…"

The data in Lithuania were collected from three employment sectors: general business, healthcare, and education. Even though members of focus groups expressed negative at-

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titudes to the question about ethnicity (presented below), the question of ethnicity was left in the questionnaire in order to collect evidence as to how the concerns expressed regarding this question during focus group reports would manifest themselves in the questionnaire completions. We also searched for meaningful differences within the three occupational backgrounds of respondents (business, education, healthcare). For example, an assumption could be made, that respondents from the education sector are more familiar with various concepts such as ethnicity, and hence will be more inclined to answer related questions.

Sampling strategy

- **Sampling Healthcare sector**

An email invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all healthcare institutions in Lithuania encouraging the contact person of receiving organisation to distribute invitation to take part in survey among members of organisation listed on webpage of the Health Care Ministry of Lithuania (n. d.).

- **Sampling Education sector**

An email invitation was sent to the representative of educational institution, listed on the webpage of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic.

- **Sampling General business sector**

The questionnaire was distributed in cooperation with the Council of Small and Medium-sized Businesses – SVV, which comprises about 47 business associations. SVV sent an invitation to all its partner associations, encouraging them to distribute the online questionnaire among their members.

Results

Focus groups

Members of both focus groups made remarks about the question on ethnicity ("Your ethnicity is…") in the questionnaire. The results of the focus groups reveal that term ethnicity is met with negative reactions from focus group members. The comments that followed could be categorised in two categories (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The first is relating this concept with oneself, including acknowledgement of cognitive inability to produce the answer and doubting oneself in alternatives for this question among others. The second category relates reactions to the concept of ethnicity to the societal context, as seen by participants of the focus groups and considering the term as alien and not belonging in Lithuanian society. These results are in coherence with suggestions of Jenkins (2008) presented in literature review where ethnicity is considered both collective – exter-

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nalized in social interaction, and individual – internalized in personal self-identification. As presented in Table below, participants "react" to the term of ethnicity considering individual and societal relation to it, indicating its societal extraneousness for Lithuanian context and individual confusions while attempting to self-identify oneself with a particular ethnic group and experiencing difficulty. This lack of relatedness to the concept of ethnicity on individual and societal level can be partially explained by the cultural homogeneity of Lithuania, as presented in literature review, suggesting (Joseph, 2015) that the novelty of the use of this concept, particularly in non-multicultural societies is one of the hindrances in research and in general agreement regarding use of the concept.

Table 1
Categorisation of answers by focus group participants regarding question on ethnicity (source: authors)

Group	Comment	Code of the comment	Implications/directions to
1st group	*"This is a very unusual term in Lithuania"*	Absent in society term	Society/ Individual ("I")
	"I do not know what it means"	Unable to understand	Individual ("I")
	"Should I say Lithuanian, European or what?"	Unable to understand	Individual ("I")
	"This question about ethnicity should be removed from the questionnaire"	Should not be asked	Individual ("I")/ Society
2nd group	*"What does "ethnic group" mean? I do not understand"*	Unable to understand	Individual("I")
	"Should I write that I am European here?"	Unable to understand	Individual("I")
	"Should I write that I am Lithuanian here?"	Unable to understand	Individual ("I")

Important is to mention, that these attitudes were indicated during cultural validation/adaptation procedure of widely used questionnaire (Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire XII), and came as sort of surprise to the research team. This indicates the importance and need for above mentioned procedure when using international surveys within specific cultural context.

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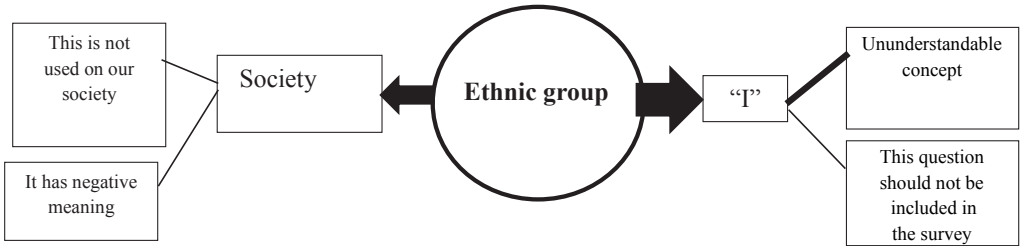

Fig. 1. Visual representation of focus group responses to ethnicity item (source: authors)

Survey Item Analyses

The focus group research allowed to indicate just general attitudes of the participants towards the term *ethnicity*. However, the difference of the answers regarding the individuals' ethnicity among the representatives of different occupational groups are not visible in the focus group research. Therefore, the data from three data sets, representing three occupational backgrounds, namely business (N = 109), healthcare(N = 241), and education(N = 457), was used to determine overall non-response rate to this question in relation to other demographical questions, and also identify whether occupational background had any influence on such response.

In order to show nonresponse rate to the question "Your ethnicity is…" we compared it to the other two sociodemographic questions – "Your current city…" and "Your gender", which in the questionnaire were placed respectively before the question about ethnicity and after. As seen from the Table 2 below, considerable part of the participants of the survey from all three occupational sectors indicated their gender and the city they live. Meanwhile about a quarter of the respondents did not answer the question regarding their ethnicity even though nearly all answered the prior and following questions.

The numbers outlined above might give wrong impression of somewhat casual case in the survey where respondents decide not to continue to answer the questions or skip part of them. However, when compared to prior and following questions where rate of unanswered questions is less than 2 per cent (compared with 19 per cent to 26 per cent), these numbers and its implication on research in social science cannot be ignored.

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Table 2
Responses to Ethnicity item and preceding and following demographic items

Question in the survey		Your current city	Your ethnicity	Your gender
Healthcare (N = 241)	Not answered	N = 3, 1.2%	N = 62, 25.7%	N = 3, 1.2%
	Answered		N = 179, 74.3%	
Education (N = 457)	Not answered	N = 5, 1.1%	N = 106, 23.2%	N = 2, 0.4%
	Answered		N = 351, 76.8%	
General business (N = 109)	Not answered	N = 1, 0.9%	N = 21, 19.3%	N = 2, 1.8%
	Answered		N = 88, 80.7%	

Source: authors

- It is important to mention that some of the participants noted the answer 'other'. Among the answers within "other" category respondents from healthcare sector wrote words such as: "city inhabitant", their social class, "Vilnius" (name of the city of residence), "middle", "hired labourer", "young family", "white skin", etc. Meanwhile the participants from education sector within the "other" category for the ethnicity item wrote words such as: "servant", nationality, "traditional", "Vilnius resident", "intelligent", etc.
- Great difference regarding this question is noticed in the responses of the business sector. The nonresponse rate to the question was lower compared to the other two occupational sectors as more than 80 per cent of respondents from this group indicated their ethnicity. The possible explanation is that business people tend to exhibit more confidence and possibly, can be more inclined to take decision to answer the question, even though the question might not be fully clear – 'to take a chance'. Overall, Figure 2 (see below) presents some interesting findings when comparing results across the three samples. Business people tend to most clearly identify themselves as Lithuanians. However, educators and healthcare employees were more likely to identify themselves with specific regions in Lithuania. This could be explained by the possibility that educators are more likely to engage in analytical categorization of types of groups in their countries in the course of

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their work. These findings support sociological approach of primordial framework (Yang, 2000), emphasizing the importance of sociobiological factors (kinship) in defining ethnicity. Healthcare specialists were the group with highest nonresponse rate. One possible interpretation is that ethnicity is not a salient factor in professional everyday life, as races, nationalities, and ethnicities have nearly identical physiology.

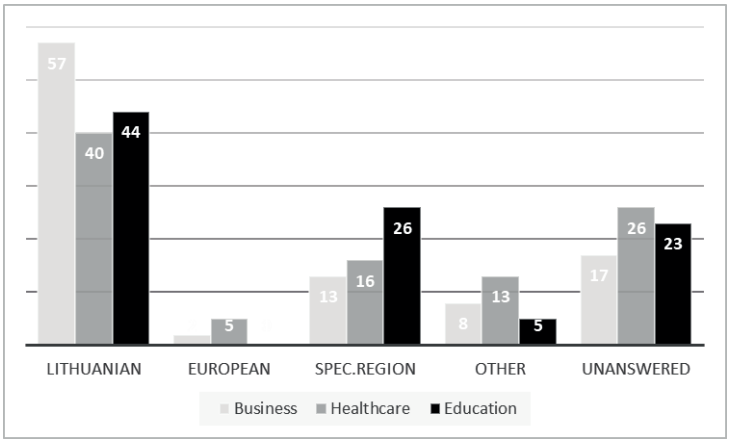

Fig. 2. Answers to the question on ethnicity, % (source: authors)

Figure above indicates that business people among all the three occupational sectors were most likely to answer "Lithuanians" to the question about ethnicity, yet again suggesting some sort of "problem" solving attitude in "need" to answer the question. This is also in line with other results presented in Figure 2 where educators seem to involve themselves in more finer grained self-identification, as 50% more of them (compared with business people) identified with specific cultural region in Lithuania. Representatives of education sector might represent specific group of the society that does not assign themselves to a specific ethnic group rather to the people of the region they are descended from. As Jenkins (2008) noted that ethnicity is not a property of a specific ethnic group, but an aspect of relationship that emerges during social interaction.

Moreover, respondents from the education sector do not relate themselves with 'European' dimension. In order to find an answer why after more than ten years of membership in the European Union educators still do not identify themselves as Europeans more comprehensive studies would be need to be carried out. However, this might be related to the specific context of Lithuania and due to historical reasons. After the restoration of independence of Lithuania, cultural Lithuanian identity aspect was particularly emphasised in society and education (Rindzevičiūtė, 2002) and this was deeply rooted in the education institutions in order to liberate national history in the independent Lithuania.

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There is still strong attitude that one of the roles of education system are related to the spread and protection of the traditional and national values.

In general, "European" dimension was chosen by the least part of the respondents of the survey. Rindzevičiūtė (2002) suggests that due to modernization in Central Europe "most of the countries felt like smaller brothers of the bigger European" (2002, p. 79), thus for Lithuanians have never meant to be European, to be equal. The scholar (2002) distinguishes several reasons why European identification of Lithuanians is so weak, most important of them related to the fact that national identification is appreciated more highly than others (Rindzevičiūtė, 2002).

Regarding high overall nonresponse rate, the historic and societal context of Lithuania can provide explanation. Since restoration of the independence, Lithuania went through many societal changes such as value shift from eastern to western (Huettinger, 2008), few waves of migration and membership in EU, to name a few. These processes of change had an effect on perceptions of ethnic self-identity in Lithuania, as mentioned in the literature review, ethnicity is fluid and is produced and reproduced as a result of changing circumstances (Jenkins, 2008).

Furthermore, the research results are also in line with theorizing of Yang (2004), suggesting subjective and objective nature of ethnicity, as was elaborated in the literature review. Subjective nature is related to human sentiments and belonging. However, objective level relates to societal frame and is based on objective characteristics (national origin). It might be suggested that in the Lithuanian context and the above outlined societal changes (e.g. EU membership) have not allowed objective characteristics defining ethnicity, to mature and come into balance with subjective level of perceived ethnicity.

Conclusions and Discussion

There are few conclusions that can be drawn from the results of the study presented in this paper. First of all, focus group research provide the empirical support for literature, indicating that ethnicity in culturally homogenous societies is perceived as a novel concept, hence results in nonresponse and negative attitudes of the participants of social research. The latter is also confirmed with quantitative data, indicating high non response to the open question about respondent's self-identified ethnicity. Furthermore, in coherence with literature, when considering the concept of ethnicity, individuals engage in analytical frame using two levels of analysis: externalization – considering it from societal perspective, and internalizing – relating with self-identification. The diversity of the answers and the non-response rate to the question confirms the insights of instrumentalist approach by which ethnicity is dynamic and changeable, besides emerges as a response to the structural changes of the society. (Hutchinson et al., 1996; Yang, 2000).

Third, belonging to a particular occupational group results in somewhat different perceptions of ethnicity by respondents, indicating certain underlying values that need further investigation. This finding is in line with literature (Burton et al., 2010) suggesting that ethnicity is identified by several characteristics and shared belonging, and that identification with particular dimensions of belonging or their combination may vary between individuals, across groups, and according to context.

Fourth, research result implies coherence with literature (Burton et al., 2010) regarding influence of time and external variables on perceived ethnicity. The results presented in this paper present part of respondents ethnically self-identifying with Europeans, which is a result of recent effect of joining EU a bit more than decade ago. This finding partially challenges claims of primordial school of thought (Hutchinson et al., 1996), suggesting fixed and deeply rooted nature of ethnicity, as part of respondents in our research self-identified with ethnic group of recent membership. Further research is needed in order to elaborate as to why this group of respondents self-identify ethnically with Europeans. Possible theorizing could come from Eriksen's (1993) categorization of gain and loss in interaction. Longitudinal study in this regard would be particularly illustrative.

Our results also indicate that item difficulty increased non-response rates, particularly the item relating to self-identity of ethnicity. These results indicate that further research is required to determine how to appropriately specify item phrasing that will conform with local populations' vernacular definition of ethnicity, and avoid items that appear to be difficult to answer. Hence, we conclude that *ethnicity* is not a sufficient term to be used in culturally homogenous societies.

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Etniškumas ir profesiniai skirtumai besikeičiančioje homogeniškoje kultūroje: Lietuvos atvejis

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Santrauka

Etniškumas yra sudėtinga sąvoka, tačiau socialinių mokslų tyrimuose daroma prielaida apie šios sąvokos, kaip lengvai suprantamo sociodemografinio bruožo, vartojimą. Toks požiūris lemia problemas vykdant socialinius tyrimus. Šiame straipsnyje pristatomi empirinio tyrimo, diskusijų grupių ir kiekybinės apklausos rezultatai, rodantys sudėtingumą vartojant etniškumo sąvoką kultūriškai homogeniškoje šalyje – Lietuvoje. Šiame kontekste Lietuva yra ypatingoje situacijoje dėl nesenų istorinių įvykių bei vykstančios socialinės kultūros transformacijos. Šiame straipsnyje taip pat lyginamas etniškumo sąvokos suvokimas trijuose sektoriuose Lietuvoje: švietimo, sveikatos priežiūros ir verslo, pateikiami su sektoriumi susiję etniškumo suvokimo skirtumai ir šių skirtumų paaiškinimai. Be kitų rezultatų, pastebėta, jog dalis respondentų save identifikuoja su ES tapatybe, tai rodo nesenų įvykių įtaką etniškumo suvokimui. Daroma išvada, kad *etniškumo* elementai yra sunkiau suvokiami už kitų tipų demografines charakteristikas, ypač kultūriškai homogeniškose šalyse ir (arba) šalyse, kuriose vyksta kultūrinis visuomeninis virsmas. Be to, daroma išvada, kad suvokiamas *etniškumas* yra paveiktas išorinių ir vidinių procesų bei gali pasikeisti laikui bėgant.

Esminiai žodžiai: *etniškumas, homogeniška kultūra, kiekybiniai tyrimai, grupių diskusijų tyrimai, Lietuva, profesija / išsilavinimas.*

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