



## Article

# Emotional Capital and Its Uses in Lithuanian Middle-Class Fathers' Narratives

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**Abstract:** The article examines Lithuanian middle-class fathers' uses of emotional capital to learn which patterns of emotional engagement with children they employ in their fathering. Emotional capital is defined, in the article, as a type of interpersonal resource that consists of emotion-based knowledge and emotion-management abilities that can lead to social benefits. The 24 in-depth interviews with 35- to 48-year-old fathers show that males believe they are emotionally prepared to cope with their children's concerns and challenges. The use of emotional capital is an attempt to strengthen their standing as fathers and gain pleasure. Emotional capital is activated by fathers regulating negative emotions and using positive emotions to speak with their children and form friendship bonds. Emotion-based knowledge, management abilities, and capacities to feel provide fathers with a sense of authority and pride. Importantly, in the interviews, it is indicated that men and women have similar emotional resources. Compared to their female partners or wives, men generally consider themselves capable of skillfully enacting emotional capital in their interactions with children.

**Keywords:** emotional capital; emotion work; fathers; involved fathering; emotions; Lithuania



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## 1. Introduction

Emotional capital and emotional dimensions of family life, particularly parenting, have been a significant research focus for several decades. The researchers analyzed parents' emotional investments and the transmission of different capitals through emotion work (Lareau 2003; Gillies 2006, 2007). Much attention has been paid to the role of emotional capital in the reproduction of class (Lareau 2003; Irwin and Elley 2011). The research on classed emotional capital demonstrated its relation to parenting styles (Lareau 2003; Weininger and Lareau 2009). An interest in the emotional side of parenting has been prompted by feminist theories that challenged the gendered division of emotion work (Hutchison 2012, p. 196).

Emotion work as people's ability to use emotional resources to create and maintain relationships becomes increasingly important in understanding themselves and finding their social location (Hardt and Negri 2004). Responding to the emotional needs of others and being an emotional caretaker indicate not only individuals' social location but also new modes of subjectivity. Emotion work helps people draw boundaries between themselves and others; they respond to objects that make up their everyday lives through emotions. The management of emotions and engagement with diverse forms of emotionality constitute emotion work (Hochschild 1983; Wharton 2009). That said, emotion work changes the long-established hierarchies of work in which emotions take up a privileged place. To engage in emotion work, one needs emotional capital, which could be defined as "emotion-based knowledge, management skills, and capacities to feel" (Cottingham 2016, p. 452). According to Beverly Skeggs, this capital, like other capitals, is affected by individuals' classed, racialized, and gendered positions (Skeggs 1997).

One of the crucial problems that scholars encountered in their research of emotional capital in family life is a shifting boundary between capital as a resource and capital

as activated in practice. Most often, the family research focused on practical aspects of emotional capital, i.e., the ways that parents use emotion-based knowledge to advance their children's social position. Another problem is related to the view that women have more emotional capital than men, which makes men incapable of dealing with family life challenges. However, as some researchers argue, despite the dominant gender discourse about different amounts of women's and men's emotional capital, the issue lies rather in different ways that women and men embody and activate their emotional capital in practice (Cottingham 2016, pp. 457–59; also see Chaplin et al. 2005; Holmes 2015).

Over the last few decades, there has been an increase in researchers engaging with emotion work and emotional capital in family life (Nixon 2011; Hutchison 2012; Yarrow 2015; Gabb et al. 2020). Nevertheless, men's emotion work in their fathering practices remained at the margins of academic debate (Cherry and Gerstein 2021; Gruson-Wood et al. 2022). Despite the abundance of research on men's engagement in fatherhood in Lithuania and other post-socialist countries (Pajumets and Hearn 2012; Maslauskaitė and Tereškinas 2017; Palenga-Möllenbeck and Lutz 2016), there has been little discussion of fathers' emotional capital (Lutz 2018). This article is one of the first attempts to fill this gap.

By continuing the tradition of qualitative research on the emotional dimension of parental involvement in childrearing, this article examines Lithuanian fathers' emotional capital and its practical uses. Most attention is paid to the situational use of emotional capital in fathering practices. In the first part of the article, I focus on the concept of emotional capital that frames the analysis. The second part describes the research context and methodological tools used to research fathers' enactment of emotional capital. In the main body of the article, the ways in which fathers conceive of emotional capital in the father–child relationship are analyzed. I will focus on the practical aspects of emotional capital, i.e., fathers' emotional experiences and emotion management concerning their children. The analysis illuminates emotional capital's role in childrearing and fathering strategies. The last part of the article summarizes the research findings. Keeping in mind that men's emotional capital in families has received limited research attention, the analysis will also point to how emotional capital works in men's everyday lives.

## 2. Emotional Capital in Families: A Theoretical Overview

One of the biggest problems with the concept of emotional capital is that it carries different meanings, particularly in family research. In the earliest work done by Nowotny, emotional capital is defined as “knowledge, contacts, and relations as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets [that is] largely used for family investments in children and husbands” (Nowotny 1981, p. 148). Nowotny follows Pierre Bourdieu's idea about the family as a site for the accumulation of capital in its different forms and its transmission between generations. Bourdieu's definition of capital as “the set of actually usable resources and powers” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 114) also applies to emotional capital. Although Bourdieu has never explicitly theorized this type of capital, he acknowledged that women were primarily involved in emotion work in families (Bourdieu 1998).

Later family research (Reay 2000, 2004; Parcel et al. 2016) conceptualized emotional capital as parents', particularly mothers', emotional support of their children. Here, emotional capital refers to emotional resources activated to maintain children's wellbeing and achieve positive outcomes. Parents could use both positive (love, care, and affection) and negative (concern, anxiety, and guilt) emotions to further these goals (Parcel et al. 2016, p. 3). Reay defined emotional capital as a resource confined “within the bounds of affective relationships of family and friends” and handed “to those you care[d] about” (Reay 2000, p. 572). In her view, it was a resource used more extensively and frequently by women than by men. Similarly, according to Hutchison (2012, p. 197), emotional capital is a type of social capital found in families, and it is predominantly employed by mothers to provide their children with an educational advantage.

The recent work on emotional capital covers the emotional dimensions of mothers' involvement in their children's education (Al-deen 2017). As in the previous research,

emotional capital is theorized here as a form of emotion work that reproduces privilege in the field of education. As the research shows, emotional capital, an individual's ability to recognize, process, and mobilize emotions to attain specific goals, is immensely relevant to education since emotional resources may shape children's academic outcomes (Bodovski et al. 2021; Webber and Dismore 2021). The concept of emotional capital is also a helpful instrument for comprehending parenting in general (Bodovski 2020).

Another strand of research focuses on the extensive use of emotional capital in emotion work. It also identifies emotion work's relation to gender inequality and emphasizes a highly gendered nature of emotion work since traditional masculinity prevents men from engaging in it (Dyck 2018; Chavez et al. 2021). Here, emotional capital serves as a possible tool for engaging in the struggle around childrearing's economic and symbolic worth (Yarrow 2015, p. 663). The issue of the impact of emotion work and emotional capital on mothering practices is also a focus of recent research (Gazso 2021).

Family researchers have widely used the idea of transmission of class practices and class privilege through cultural, social, economic, and emotional capitals in the family. Different capitals produce profit, and the volume and composition of different capitals position people within social space. In other words, people's social position depends on "the relative weight of the different kinds of capital in the total set of their assets" (Bourdieu 1992, p. 231). Combined with other forms of capital, emotional capital could be used to achieve desired results (children's wellbeing, and development of their social skills). Thus, emotional capital has been analyzed in the class framework; it has been argued that middle-class mothers have better skills to support their children emotionally. Gillies's research (Gillies 2006) examined working-class mothers' emotional support for children in the field of education. By considering emotional capital "as part of their [parents] desire to promote their children's wellbeing and prospects" (Gillies 2006, p. 285), she showed the impact of class on the deployment of emotional capital in the service of educational goals.

In analyzing parent-child relationships, researchers draw the link between emotional capital and social profits that could be achieved in effectively activating this capital. It has been argued that parents' ability to activate emotional capital for their children's social advantage depends on class contexts and other forms of capital at parents' disposal. It is to say that middle-class parents need smaller emotional investments than working-class parents to get the same returns on children's social achievements. However, we should also keep in mind that the understanding of emotional capital seems "to vary between different class contexts" (Lareau 2003, p. 68).

The relation between emotional capital and class also points to different childrearing styles employed by the parents of different social backgrounds. One of the styles, called "concerted cultivation" is based on parents' close emotional ties to children and intensive emotion work (Carolan and Wasserman 2015; Bodovski and Farkas 2008; Mukherjee and Barn 2021). According to Lareau, middle- and upper-middle-class families use concerted cultivation in their children's upbringing by actively developing their children's skills, interests, and behaviors. Concerted cultivation that includes highly structured children's leisure time administered by adults also requires a high level of emotional capital, which strengthens other capitals that parents use (Lareau 2003; Lareau and Weininger 2008). Another childrearing style, called the "accomplishment of natural growth," is prevalent in lower-income and working-class families. This childrearing style is oriented towards children's spontaneous development, based on "a more open-ended agenda that is not heavily controlled by adults" (Lareau 2003, p. 68). The use of directives and disregard for children's opinions and judgements within the "accomplishment of natural growth" indicate a lesser role of emotional capital in parent-child interactions.

Emotional capital is linked not only to class but also to gender. In other words, emotional capital is gendered. Women are often portrayed "as emotional experts and males as helpless when it comes to affective work" (Whitehead 2002, p. 156). Emotion work is tightly linked to femininity, implying that women do most of it, whereas males are less willing to undertake it (Erickson 2005; Froyum 2018). Therefore, emotional capital is sometimes

described as a type of gendered knowledge acquired through caregiving practices, positive emotional relationships developed over time, and personal and emotional support (O'Brien 2008, p. 139).

However, a cultural shift in ideas about men's involvement in childrearing and fathering has altered the established understanding of the relation between gender and emotion. Men have been increasingly considered to have the same childrearing potential as women, including emotion work. They are now viewed as playing a critical role in satisfying the emotional needs of their children (Gillies 2006, p. 9; also see Knijn and Selten 2004; Kerr et al. 2021). Fathering has been increasingly described as an emotion-infused practice (Macht 2020; Kaplan and Knoll 2019). Moreover, men are encouraged to become more involved in fathering and childrearing in social policy documents. Men's significant role in childrearing is acknowledged, and the consequences of absent or distant fathers are widely discussed (Lupton and Barclay 1997; Williams 2008; Parke and Cookston 2021). Fatherhood's emotional demands have also been an important research focus (Åsenhed et al. 2013; Gruson-Wood et al. 2022). Despite this cultural shift, there is remarkably little research on fathers' emotional capital.

As noted by some scholars, despite being groundbreaking in the field of emotions and family practices, some research obscures the relationships between gender, capital, and practice (Cottingham 2016, p. 455). First of all, in most works, emotional capital is feminized and fails to analyze its link to masculinity. It has been argued that women have more emotional capital and can use it more proficiently (Manion 2007; Zembylas 2007). Secondly, the distinction between emotional capital as a resource and its practical uses has also been obscured, presenting theoretical and methodological difficulties (Cottingham 2016, p. 457). Both conceptual limitations are difficult to resolve because of the dominant gender discourse and the difficulty of researching emotions.

To make the term more conducive to empirical research, I define emotional capital as an interpersonal resource comprised of emotion-based knowledge and emotion-management skills that could translate into social advantages (Froyum 2010; Cottingham 2016). Moreover, I focus on how fathers activate emotional capital through their emotional experiences and practices with children in my analysis. The relevant aspect of enacting this capital includes fathers' everyday emotion sharing with children, dealing with emotions that children provoke, and their emotional engagement with children's pastimes. Regardless of conceptual difficulties, the term "emotional capital" remains valid, particularly in a relatively new research field of men and fathering. It allows us to observe how emotional capital is "masculinized" and how it could be mobilized in fathers' everyday lives. It also lets us see to what degree fathers emotionally invest in their children and the profits they expect from these investments.

### 3. Data and Methods

This article draws on data collected from 24 in-depth interviews with 35- to 48-year-old fathers. Among these informants, twenty-one were married or partnered and three were divorced. All of them had children younger than 18 years of age, although the age of children varied from 2 years and 9 months to 23 years. The face-to-face interviews were conducted from April 2018 to January 2019 in different regions of Lithuania. In conducting in-depth interviews, a script of open-ended questions was used. This script focused on 11 sets of questions related to different aspects of family lives, ranging from family history to parenting styles and childrearing practices, and from the management of children's everyday lives to the futures that parents envisioned for their children. The situation of the whole family was also investigated. For the purpose of this article, only questions focusing on parent-child relationships, parenting styles, childrearing rewards and difficulties, fathers' emotional investment in their children, the management of their own and their children's emotions, and attitudes towards their children's futures were chosen. The median duration of the interviews was two hours. All interviews were recorded and

transcribed. All research participants were briefed about the research objectives; anonymity was ensured by assigning each informant a new name and coding the information.

The interviewees belong to the 1970–1984 birth cohort, which began their life course under the conditions of the emerging neoliberal capitalism in the decades beginning from 1990, the transition from socialism to capitalism in Lithuania. Although this generation marks an interesting epoch in Lithuanian family life, it has not been sociologically studied.

To better understand a relatively homogeneous group, the informants were chosen using a purposive sampling method. Although the whole sample comprised 88 interviews with fathers and mothers of different social backgrounds, I chose only middle-class fathers based on thorough information provided by each informant on their educational background, occupation, income, social networks, and patterns of cultural consumption. All fathers had a university education and were in managerial, professional, or skilled occupations. During the interviews, detailed questions about their parents' economic, cultural, and social capital were asked to better locate the informants' original and current position in social space (Bourdieu 1986). All this information placed informants within a group with sufficient economic, cultural, and social capital. The interviews provided me with rich data about fathers' daily lives, family histories, and parenting practices.

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis techniques and theory-guided qualitative research that allowed me to grasp men's practical use of emotional capital in their family environment. Dominant themes were identified in the interview transcripts, and the views of the interviewees concerning their investment in their children, their emotional experiences while caring for children, and the ways they conceived of emotions as a social resource were examined in relation to discourses of gendered emotional capital within the existing literature. The analysis was organized after broad categories that reflected themes found in the interviews. These included the fathers' management of negative emotions, the level of their engagement in children's lives, patterns of everyday communication with children, the management of children's pastimes, emotions related to fathering, and the fathers' expectations of their children's future.

Fathers' narratives cannot be taken at face value: As a researcher, I constantly kept in mind that personal histories, emotional relationships, and social conditions affected these men's lives. Furthermore, because the data were gathered through interviews, it is impossible to know whether the fathers actually followed everything they told the interviewer since they were not exempt from normative public discourses about the relationship between gender and emotions. Because of all of these factors, the interviews were challenging to interpret: To better understand the men's perspectives, practical sensitivity had to be used in analyzing men's emotion work and emotional capital.

#### 4. Empirical Findings

As has been documented in some research (Hutchison 2012), the manifestations of emotional capital in everyday life are somewhat elusive. Moreover, researchers encounter contradictions in the relation of emotional capital to gender and the divide between emotional capital as a resource and its practical uses. This article attempts to trace emotional capital across relationships between fathers and children as perceived by the interviewed men.

How do men activate emotional capital in their relation to children? First, the fathers argued that strict management of emotions, particularly negative ones, was necessary to promote their children's wellbeing. According to 43-year-old Domas, who was raising two daughters aged six and eight,

Emotions . . . Sometimes I let my emotions run wild but afterwards I feel bad, I understand that is not acceptable . . . it should not be used in a child's upbringing. [When it happens], you go, let yourself breathe, open the book, read it and return to childrearing duties . . . It often happens that you react emotionally; of course, it depends on your mood and wellbeing; but if you feel relaxed, you explain everything to your child in a relaxed way but if you feel irritated,

then your interaction with children is overly emotional . . . Perhaps you need to communicate with children in a calmer way.

Similarly, another informant argued that emotion management is integral in his attempt to create and maintain his emotional bond with children: “Emotions accumulate, they spill over . . . but there is a lot at stake, you don’t want to ruin everything by being embroiled in the emotional war” (41-year-old Dovydas). In 46-year-old Saulius’s view, it was necessary to manage negative emotions and uphold an optimistic life view because it helped with everyday challenges encountered by his offspring: “If you react to problems not as life tragedies, but as challenges which you seek to resolve every day, so do your children. And that’s very simple: if you want to change a child, change yourself” (46-year-old Saulius). These fathers regularly encouraged their children to accept and overcome failures and negative emotions.

Not being violent and not using violent emotions was also part of appropriate emotion management. As one father said, “I try not to use violence at all; it is always possible to reach a consensus and agree with children. Well, sometimes it seems difficult, I raise my voice, but I never use violence” (41-year-old Dovydas). This case shows that men attempted to exclude negative emotions such as anger and frustration from their interaction with children. Moreover, emotional and physical violence was not compatible with the fathers’ understanding of parental investment in children. The fathers’ narratives point to their efforts to suppress negative emotions that require a certain degree of self-surveillance. They also raise an important question of which emotions should be denied and allowed in the activation of emotional capital. It could be inferred from the interviews that positive emotions are viewed as resources or a collection of assets that can be acquired and circulated in father–child interactions to the children’s advantage.

The second way for men to activate emotional capital was to actively engage in developing their children’s skills, interests, and behaviors. In the words of 35-year-old Dainius, who was raising a two-year-old son,

[it is crucial] simply to do something with your child, something that would interest him but not necessarily you . . . If you play with him from a young age, later he will want to spend more time with you; I think that you will be satisfied and he will be happy. Moreover, I try to spend as much time as possible with my child; I like it so much, and I see that he likes it too; I don’t know how he will feel in the future, but I hope he will want to spend time with me . . .

In another informant’s opinion, although one has to monitor their children’s interests closely, one should not contradict them and “let [them] try different things.” In talking about his son, this informant asserted that “He has to choose [things he likes] and must understand what he likes and what he doesn’t like . . . ” (41-year-old Dovydas). Fathers’ “most significant duty,” according to 39-year-old Tauras, with three sons, was “to communicate with children, to show attention, care . . . [to show] that we care for them and that we are interested and always ready to communicate with them, be with them and talk to them. And this way they would feel the connection . . . that we are not simply parents but also friends . . . I want to be like a friend to [my son], not only a father . . . ” Similarly, 43-year-old Marijonas, who was raising two sons and a daughter, stated that “ . . . as I have learned from my parents, parents should be their children’s friends, that’s why I am a friend to my children too. My children know that they could tell me anything, even things that they could not tell anyone else.” This and some other informants argued that they benefited personally and emotionally from maintaining friendships with their children. Friendship was experienced in terms of strong emotional bonds with children as a way to activate emotional capital: “[I am] like a friend to my [three] sons. I am not a strict [parent]; I am just trying . . . Simply I am more like a friend” (39-year old Tauras). By focusing on being friends with their children, men imparted to children the emotional resources to deal with everyday challenges.

Emotional capital was also activated through fathers' listening to children's needs and ideas and negotiating with them on various matters. It was emphasized in many interviews:

What did you do at school today? . . . How did you solve one or another problem? Why didn't you do this or that? Why did you do these things one or the other way? Well, there are many questions that could not be answered in one word. [When you ask open questions, the child] gets involved in dialogue . . . and he just opens up. He communicates with you and feels your emotional support. (46-year-old Saulius)

Another informant said, "Well, you have to negotiate with children on [many matters]. When we were buying a house, we consulted our children. When we wanted to buy some board games, we went to a shop and collectively decided which game we would buy. You present your argument, and then you listen to theirs" (46-year-old Algirdas). These fathers helped children relieve tension and make decisions by listening and negotiating. Here, the rhetoric of shared decision-making also emphasized emotion sharing.

Active listening to children and talking to them is a practice integral in creating emotional bonds and promoting children's wellbeing: "I don't know whether we tried to implant anything in our children or not. We simply talked with them a lot. A simple situation: we sit, talk, and find a solution to a problem. We didn't have any beforehand rules. If there was a conflict at school, we would sit down and resolve it together" (43-year-old Marijonas). Similarly, another informant stated that they "try to agree on issues all the time. Talking and figuring out what's wrong again, why you need to study one or another thing . . . Talking [to a child] helps resolve more problems than punishment. If a child feels confused or lost, you need to have a conversation with him" (33-year-old Ernestas). The same informant says, "We talk with our child [about emotions]. I don't remember whether I talked about emotions with my parents; perhaps I did not care about it when I was a child . . ." Although his family history did not allow for the development of emotional capital, this man was invested in the notion of providing his son with emotional support. Everyday active interactions with children helped him to support his child emotionally. This way, he also contributed to the child's psychological wellbeing.

It should be added that it was active administration and purposeful management of children's leisure time that triggered most fathers' positive emotions. Fathers talked about time with children as a part of the rewards of being a father. Pleasures were to be derived from letting children choose their hobbies freely as well as controlling some areas of their lives. According to 39-year-old Tauras, "Perhaps there is too much control, but sometimes there is too little. I don't know how to evaluate it. I could pay more attention to some areas of my children's lives and less attention to others. I could give more freedom to them." Another father was more inclined to grant his children more freedom: "We always strived for perfection. We tried to instill it in our children but never limited their freedom. If my son knows his duties, he can do anything in his pastime; it is his choice" (43-year-old Saulius).

Nonetheless, the fathers in the sample were motivated to stimulate children by applying themselves to both school and extracurricular activities. According to 46-year-old Jonas, who was raising a daughter and a son, "Children and their education are my ultimate goals. [I want] them to find themselves . . . My most important priority is that they would get educated." According to 37-year-old Antanas, with an eight-year-old daughter and a five-year-old son, "Yes, one of our children is involved in extracurricular activities; we strongly encourage it. But if after a while he says, 'I don't want to do it any longer', we let him stop, we let him choose by himself, we don't want him to hate activities in which he is involved." Another informant encouraged his son to try out everything he wanted: "I will attempt to give him a chance to explore many possibilities . . . in education, sports, travel . . . If he sees and experiences more, it will be easier for him to decide what he wants to do in the future . . . And I will try to help him with this" (32-year-old Dainius). To help their children

achieve their goals, the fathers had an obligation to “help [children] psychologically in their choices related to professional occupation . . . ” (41-year-old Dovydas).

It is possible to see from the above quotes that men’s emotional capital and their ability to activate it in their interaction with children also determined their fathering style, which, in the case of the interviewed men, could be called involved fathering (Lutz 2018, p. 1070). This finding is aligned with the results of the research on parenting styles that also points to the importance of emotional capital in intensive parenting (Lareau 2003; Mukherjee and Barn 2021). Fathers’ emotional capital could be characterized as a resource that encourages them to do what they see as the labor of being an involved father. Spending time with children, offering emotional support, providing day-to-day assistance, and keeping track of children’s behavior are part of involved fathering.

Thus, based on the interviews, it is possible to argue that fathers’ emotional capital is a set of qualities developed in caring for children over time. In other words, childcare is made up of emotion work, among others (Stevens 2015). Although the interviewed fathers did not have enough chances to develop it during their childhood (their parents were usually too busy to engage them in meaningful activities), they acquired emotional knowledge essential to fathering and its emotional demands by listening to their children and gaining their trust. In their turn, children emotionally opened up to their fathers. This openness functioned like a reward for being a father:

Well, we really talk every day; in fact, I really appreciate that he is open to me . . . Let’s just say that our relationship is a little more than that of a father and son; we are the best friends. I would repeat that I really appreciate his openness and that he will talk to me in any situation, good or bad. On the other hand, he really listens to my opinion and sometimes does as I say, not because I tell him to, but because he takes my advice to heart. (44-year-old Giedrius)

Thus, the men in this study placed a high value on fatherhood, which brought them pleasure and satisfaction.

Some fathers’ expectations of their children were also associated with positive emotions and emotionally satisfying lives. The fathers wanted their children to be happy regardless of their life choices or future professional occupations: “I want them to be happy. Nothing else . . . It is important that my children find themselves and feel good by being themselves. How, where and what circumstances [help them become happy] are secondary to me” (39-year-old Lukas). This father conceptualized future happiness as highly dependent on his 11-year-old daughter’s and 14-year-old son’s individual choices and interests. It could be argued that he viewed developed emotional capital as inextricably linked to children’s happiness in adulthood.

It is possible to infer from the interviews that the men had a sufficient stock of emotional capital, which ensured that they could supply their children with instruments for dealing with their everyday problems. It should also be kept in mind that all interviewed fathers had a high level of cultural capital: All of them had a university education and could boast of their professional achievements, which contributed to the fathers’ increased ability to activate emotional capital, which was naturally aligned with being a father. The interviewees also contested the belief that women had greater competence in managing emotions and using emotional resources to a certain degree. One informant argued that his wife was too emotional and not always able to control her emotions: “It’s still a more difficult challenge [to control emotions], because, well, perhaps my wife is more emotional, she speaks with strong emotion, and it’s harder for the children to separate the boundary between emotion and [the reason]. For example, [it is difficult] to know whether she just shouts at the children, disrespects them or simply expresses a pure emotion . . . ” (37-year-old Jokūbas). With the exception of this informant, the difference between men’s and women’s emotions was not normally emphasized by the research participants. Thus, although emotional capital is not gender-neutral, it is not exclusively feminine. Men also possessed emotional capital and were skillful in using it. In most informants’ views, men and women do not essentially differ in emotion norms to which they adhere. Men felt

competent in managing their own and their children's emotions; sufficient emotional resources helped them maintain relatively close relationships with their children. This finding questions the dominant gender discourse on the difference between women's and men's emotional capabilities.

Many of the data point to the importance of emotion-based knowledge and the need to manage emotions in father-child interactions. Moreover, men felt to be sufficiently emotionally equipped to deal with their children's concerns and problems and their ability to do so was related to involved fathering. The activation of emotional capital was an attempt to enhance their position as fathers and receive pleasurable satisfaction. Fathers activated emotional capital by managing negative emotions and employing positive emotions to communicate with children and create friendship bonds. Thus, emotional capital was a valuable resource.

## 5. Conclusions

Despite widespread agreement that emotions are at the center of family life, they are frequently omitted from sociological research. Even less attention is paid to men's emotional capital in their childrearing practices because of its exclusive association with women. In this article, fathers' practical uses of emotional capital were analyzed to learn how men emotionally engage with their children and which patterns of emotional engagement with children they employ. Based on the in-depth interviews, this qualitative study showed how men cope with the emotional demands of fatherhood.

At a broad level, fathers' emotional capital was viewed as resource activated in three main ways: (1) by a strict management of emotions, particularly negative ones; (2) by active engagement in the development of children's skills, interests, and behaviors; and (3) an attentive listening and negotiating with children on a variety of matters. In all cases, emotional capital functioned as an essential resource that fathers drew on in their engagement with children. By using emotionally valued skills and assets, the fathers in the study promoted their children's wellbeing and reproduced the so-called involved fathering associated with emotional rewards. Moreover, men adhered to fathering norms that implied an extensive use of emotional resources in their interaction with children.

More importantly, most men did not emphasize different cultural expectations that they had to meet concerning emotions and emotionality. Although women typically engage in emotion work and hold the emotional capital crucial to this work (Reay 2004; Dyck 2018), the equity in possession of the same or at least similar emotional resources as women was mentioned in the interviews. Compared to their female partners or wives, men generally saw themselves as fully capable of skillfully enacting emotional capital in practice. Thus, by showing how emotional capital is integral to the day-to-day process of raising children, the research challenges the understanding of emotional capital and emotion work as women's domain.

The fathers used emotional capital in their emotion work, which benefited both them and their children. They derived a sense of power and pride from emotion-based knowledge, management skills, and feeling capacities. Differently from previous research on mothers (Hutchison 2012; Al-deen 2017), the study demonstrates that fathers' attempts to activate emotional capital positively affected their emotional wellbeing. The men in the sample associated fathering with pleasurable experiences. The interviews did not mention emotional or physical exhaustion in caring for children.

The study has some limitations. First, it was impossible to grasp the impact of carefully managed negative emotions on fathers' wellbeing and whether they generated any profit for both fathers and children. The fathers simply avoided a more detailed discussion of negative emotions. Second, because of the character of the in-depth interviews, the study did not explore the interconnection of emotional capital with other types of capital and its conversion into other forms of capital that could become a social advantage. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to explore how emotional capital could be translated into cultural or social capital.

Although limited in scope, the study points to the importance of emotion work in fathers' lives and the emotional politics of fathering saturated with emotion management. It also raises questions about frequently overlooked emotional dimensions of fathering and the emotional skills and assets necessary for involved fatherhood. Future research could assess to what degree Lithuanian fathers' class and professional occupations might influence the activation of emotional capital in family life. More attention should be paid to fathers' management of negative emotions and their repercussions for both fathers and children. The mentioned research could help to clarify gender and emotion dynamics that underpin fathers' involvement in childrearing and could provide new ways of understanding what returns emotional capital produces for children in the long run.

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