

ANASTASIYA FIADOTAVA

Family Humour in Contemporary Belarus:
Forms, Practices and Vernacular Reflections



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To my family who have never failed to laugh at and with me

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research question and aims

This research stems from my interest in jokes on family topics, which informed my MA thesis and my previous research (Fiadotava 2018). Initially inspired by Christie Davies's studies on ethnic (1990, 2002) and stupidity jokes (2011), I aimed to explore what kind of information about family life a researcher can uncover by analysing family jokes. However, I gradually realised that joke texts alone – especially in the case of canned jokes¹ published in joke books and on the Internet – lack many contextual clues and do not reflect the essential features of the jokes' performance. Thus, in my PhD thesis, I decided to broaden the focus and look at the family not only as a set of protagonists, but also as a milieu for spreading humour. While doing my fieldwork among Belarusian families, I encountered a vast variety of genres and topics of family humour, as well as people's reflections, evaluations and critical reassessments of humour, and I decided to embrace emic perspectives on humour in my research. Vernacular perceptions of humour may parallel academic discussions in the field in some respects, but they also open up alternative dimensions and encourage new approaches to the study of humour.

The central research question of this thesis is how families engage with humour in their daily interactions by negotiating between social conventions and their idiosyncratic experiences and preferences. The aims of the thesis are:

- to analyse the content and form of humorous expressions performed in the family and larger social context;
- to explore the ways that people share, perceive and react to humour, as reflected in their own contemplations and observations;
- to examine the interrelation between humour and aggression from emic perspectives;
- to understand how the intimacy of the family setting affects humour production and appreciation.

While aiming to reach generalisable conclusions, I also take into consideration the specific demographic, social and gender-related circumstances in which I conducted my fieldwork and which condition many ideas, topics and forms of the family humour that I collected. This approach has enabled me to investigate multiple layers of humour production and appreciation in Belarus and contributed

¹ By 'canned jokes', I refer to verbal jokes that consist of a build-up and a punchline. The term is used mainly to place these jokes in a specific category and distinguish them from other kinds of jokes (e.g., conversational jokes, puns, etc.). These jokes are also sometimes referred to as 'formulaic jokes' (Bird 2008), 'set-piece jokes' (Davies 2011) and 'anekdoty' in Russian and Belarusian.

to a deeper understanding of humorous practices and the factors that shape them in that particular sociocultural environment. At the same time, many of my research findings have parallels in other cultures and reflect trends in different parts of the world. Therefore, the case study discussed in this thesis can serve as a model that can be tested in other sociocultural settings.

Belarus, much like the broader post-Soviet Eastern European region, has not been a particularly popular locale for humour studies so far. The most prominent topic of humour research in Soviet and post-Soviet countries has been political humour, particularly in the form of subversive canned jokes ridiculing the authorities (on political humour in Belarus, see, for example, Astapova 2015, forthcoming; on political jokes in other (post)Soviet countries, see Draitser 1989, Oring 2004, Adams 2005, Davies 2007, Krikmann 2009, Mel'nichenko 2014). Humour revolving around everyday life and mundane topics, as well as other genres of humour, has thus been overshadowed and almost neglected. Similarly, little attention has been paid to the gendered aspects of humour, which often play a crucial role in its production and appreciation, especially in the domain of family humour. In my thesis, I intend to fill this lacuna and show that by bringing family humour to light, it is possible to add new layers to our understanding of how humour functions in society.

1.2. Key terms and features of family humour

Family humour may seem to be one of the most undemanding topics to research: most people belong to a family, and most families have some forms of humour that they are willing to share and comment on. The abundance of readily available humorous data is supplemented with myriads of vernacular interpretations of what is funny (and what should be funny), who are considered to be family members, what one can share only within the family, and what would be inappropriate even in an intimate family setting. However, the ostensible straightforwardness of the concept of family humour is also one of the most challenging aspects of studying it. The trivialisation and the recurrent use of both terms ('family' and 'humour') in everyday life and media discourse discourages critical evaluation of this research object, and it is tempting to focus on its functions, forms and other features without subjecting the terms themselves to in-depth analysis.

In order to provide a background for my conclusions, I will discuss the meanings that are ascribed to these concepts. As my research relies primarily on self-reports (see Methods and Data), it is crucial to consider both *etic* (analytical) and *emic* (vernacular) interpretations. In this thesis, I will examine a range of *emic* understandings of what humorous folklore encompasses, what it means for a family, and what a family is, based on research participants' accounts. Yet, in doing so, I will also inevitably rely on analytical frameworks in order to make sense of these accounts. In my analysis, I aim to demonstrate how these two perspectives interweave with and affect each other. I will not, however, attempt to

introduce comprehensive definitions here; rather, I will outline the (fuzzy) boundaries of what can be incorporated into the notions of ‘family’ and ‘humour’.

Analytical interpretations of the family often remain rigid and focus primarily on the nuclear family (see, for example, Treuthart 1990: 91–92); however, there are also multiple, and sometimes contradictory, emic interpretations of this family phenomenon. It is necessary to take them into account in order to be able to outline a more extensive picture of family life (Tillman and Nam 2008). The ways in which people define the concept of ‘family’ are closely connected to their conceptualisation of family communication (Edwards and Graham 2009), including its humorous side.

The most common emic understanding of the family among my interviewees largely corresponded to the analytical one: they understood the concept to refer to the nuclear family, that is, parents and their minor children. Many of my interviewees used it as a point of reference and sometimes even contrasted it with the extended family in the context of humorous communication by underscoring the fact that the jokes that they share within their nuclear families would not be understandable to members of their extended families.

There were other interpretations, too. Some of the interviewees mentioned members of their extended family when discussing their family folklore, especially when they lived with them or visited them frequently. Moreover, in some cases, people traced the origins of the humour in their nuclear family to the families of their parents or drew parallels between the humour within their nuclear and extended families. This was particularly common for the younger couples among my interviewees who had not been married for long by the time of the interview, but it was also sometimes mentioned by older couples. One of my interviewees explained it in the following manner when discussing the use of humour as a means of conflict resolution in her family:

Female (25 years old): *It is like this in my parents' family as well. That's because my mother has such a fiery personality and my father is very calm, and when something [quarrel] starts, my mother needs a drama and my father begins to joke at her, and everything calms down.*

The continuity of family humour across generations is thus important not only at the level of individual jokes or preferences towards certain humour styles, but also at the level of general attitudes towards humorous expressions that prevailed in the family in which one was raised, as such attitudes are likely to determine children's (and, later, adults') humour-related skills (Bergen 2007: 32):

Interviewer: *Do you often joke and laugh in your family?*

Female (56 years old): *Yes, it is common in our family, it is encouraged, moreover, it's impossible to live without it. As I grew up in my own family, the one of my parents [where I was born], then after getting married, throughout all this time I have realised that it's impossible to live without it...*

Along with personal references, family humour also incorporates broader social attributes. Two tendencies transpired from my interviews. First, there were people who, when discussing their family humour, tended to explicitly connect it to the wider social context, often using the marker 'like everyone else': 'We do have these stories, just like everyone else', 'We often joke, probably like everyone else', 'Like everyone else, if we have a chance, we make jokes', etc. These claims about being 'like everyone else' do not understate the value of the respondents' own family humour; rather, they point to the recognition that their ways and forms of humorous interaction belong to a wider tradition, which they have also observed among their relatives and friends.

However, the opposite tendency also exists. Several interviewees labelled their humour as 'strange' or 'peculiar', and one of the couples asked me to treat them and their family folklore as an 'exceptional case' even before I started the interview. The self-professed strangeness of their humour had to do with the fact that virtually all their shared jokes revolve around themselves and their shared experiences (cf. Fine and De Soucey 2005: 3–4). 'Strangeness' thus implied that people outside of their family circle would probably not understand or appreciate the joke if they heard it in a conversation. However, many of the forms and topics of these couples' humour can be encountered in other couples' family folklore, although in order to appreciate the specific jokes, one indeed would have to be aware of the context of a particular family. In describing his family's personal narratives, William Wilson argued that 'to understand one of these stories, then, one has to have heard them all and has to bring to the telling of a single story the countless associations formed from hearing all the stories' (2006: 270). This is also true of the family humour of my respondents, and perhaps family humour in general.

Another challenge in my research had to do with pinning down emic understandings of humour, the connotations this term invokes and the genres and forms that can represent it. During my fieldwork, I tried to use the word 'humour' as an umbrella term that encompasses a broad array of different forms of non-serious expressions, such as conversational joking, telling canned jokes, teasing, making satirical and ironic remarks, performing practical jokes, etc. The responses of my interviewees to my opening questions about humour and humorousness were almost always endowed with positive connotations, as a sense of humour tends to be a highly valued virtue (Wickberg 1998). However, later in the interviews, some couples explicitly distinguished between different modalities of humour and explained which of them they considered appropriate in their family communication. Many of my interviewees made a point of emphasising that they did not use mean and malevolent humour. Over the course of my fieldwork, I came to realise that emotionally loaded terms such as 'sarcasm' and 'mockery' can trigger instant denial in some interviewees, who do not wish to be seen as using 'mean-spirited' humour. While I tried to use these terms sparingly, there were certain areas in my research where I could not proceed without referring to non-benevolent humour. One of them involved asking my interviewees about teasing each other and their family members. These questions inevitably provoked conflicting

emotions: the positive connotations of having a good sense of humour clashed with the idea that family members should be benevolent towards each other. There are multiple ways to handle this ambivalence (see Article I), but, in any case, it challenges the usually unambiguously positive connotations of the term ‘humour’ and inspires reflections on the phenomenon. This demonstrates that the manifold concepts that hide under the umbrella of humour resonate differently with different families and encourage people to re-evaluate the role of humour in their lives.

Another important aspect of my research concerns the specificity of family humour. One of its defining features is the private context in which family humour emerges and thrives. Privacy manifests itself on several levels. Firstly, it is reflected in the means of humour transmission: it mostly spreads through personal interactions within small groups of people, or, in the case of digital sharing, via private messages (see Article IV). Access to such humour is therefore restricted, and it is difficult for outsiders to wholly appreciate it (Oring 1984).

Secondly, the form that humour takes in private settings is, to a large degree, conversational and thus intertextual (Kotthoff 2007, Demjén 2016: 21, Laineste and Chłopicki 2019): different genres interweave and create a pattern tailored to the particular communicative event. Family humour often tends to be economical in its form: long narratives are replaced by ‘kernel’ stories (Kalčík 1975), which evoke specific memories in a simplified form (Morgan 2011: 118). Some genres of humour found in public settings can also come close to private formats of communication (see Brodie 2014 for a discussion of stand-up comedy as a form of small talk), but they are often more conventionally structured and lack the immediacy of personal communication and the shared experience that connects its participants.

This leads to the third and the most crucial feature of humour in the private context – its content. The content of a humorous utterance has to be both incongruent and context-appropriate in order to be recognised – if not necessarily appreciated – as a joke (Oring 2003). In private settings, much of the humour derives from the shared personal experience of the joke tellers and their (small) audience. The joke target often coincides with the audience; even in the case of more impersonal humorous genres, such as canned jokes, the content may be adapted to fit the particular small group (see Article II). Such a close interaction with the audience necessitates considering various factors associated with the recipients of humour, such as their age, gender, relations between one another and with the joke teller, the immediate context of the joke performance, as well as the larger social and cultural context, etc., in order for the joke to succeed.² While it would perhaps be difficult for the joke teller to consciously take all of these aspects into account, they are all likely to, on some level, factor into their humorous

² The success of a joke often implies eliciting laughter from the audience, but in some cases, a joke teller’s aim might be quite different, i.e., to provoke unlaughter (for a discussion on unlaughter, see Billig 2005: 192, Smith 2009). Intentional provocation of unlaughter is more typical for public rather than private humour (Marsh 2015: 79–84).

performance, giving it a distinctly personalised nature largely absent from humour shared in the public sphere.

Finally, the humorous performance itself often differs depending on whether it takes place in a private or public context, particularly with regard to the setting and distribution of agency between participants in the interaction. In a family conversation, the participants enjoy a more equal status in terms of humour production and performance than the audience of a public humorous performance, such as a stand-up comedy show (Lindfors 2019). Moreover, the more intimate relationship between the performer and their audience has an impact on the evaluation of the humorous performance: when the humour fails in private settings, it is more common to react with an evaluation of the joke itself rather than of the joke-teller in order to prevent 'the even greater face threat' (Bell 2009: 1830).

All the observations above apply to different private settings, such as, for example, interactions within a group of friends, between close colleagues, etc. But is there anything that sets family humour apart? To answer this question, it is necessary to look closely at the nature of family relations and communication. The members of nuclear (and sometimes also extended) families share many daily interactions, many of which revolve around the intimate and personal spheres, and the relationship between them is characterised by emotional salience (Fine 1982: 47). Such a relationship presupposes that families encounter a great variety of communicative situations, often involving complex and conflicting emotions. Therefore, family members have an opportunity to use humour in very diverse settings and to develop long-lasting humorous traditions, running jokes, etc. Many of the conversational jokes that they share are not totally innovative but rather constitute a part of a joking schema that has been shaped by years of continuous interaction (Fine and De Soucey 2005: 15). Moreover, such frequent interactions ensure that family members can, and do, adjust their humour to match one another's expectations and tastes, as suggested by research that has found that long-time romantic partners' sense of humour tends to have similarities (Saroglou et al. 2010, Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra 2010). Chiaro's (2009: 225) findings indicate that married couples often make a special effort to adapt to each other's humour, even if they come from different countries and do not share a mother tongue. Moreover, expectations and perceptions related to humorous communication within a family are often conditioned by gender, age and the relationships between the humorous performers and their audiences. This also has an impact on family humour: some topics and forms of joking might be acceptable and appropriate when performed by certain family members but would not work if performed by others.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. (Inter)disciplinary background

The theoretical background of my study is rooted predominantly in two academic domains: folklore studies and humour studies. The intersection of these scholarly fields enables me to take into consideration both the subject area to which my data belong and the vernacular tradition that conditions their use. In this section, I will introduce the theoretical frameworks and conceptual apparatus from these two domains that proved to be particularly relevant for my thesis.

Humour studies offers two perspectives on humour: humour as a process (practice and performance of humour) and humour as an outcome (humorous texts and genres). Both of these directions informed my research.

One of the key elements of research on humorous texts and genres is establishing why certain texts are perceived as funny while others are not. The answer to this question lies both in the content of the text and in the context in which it emerges and circulates. Three main theories (and many variations of them) are used to explain why certain types of content are regarded as funny: superiority theory, relief theory and incongruity theory (for a concise overview of these three humour theories, see Morreall 2016). Proponents of the superiority theory argue that interpreting something as funny results from feeling superior over somebody, namely, the joke target (for an overview, see Lintott 2016). The relief theory understands humour as a mechanism through which one can express desires, fears and other feelings that are difficult to articulate in serious communication (Spencer 2009 [1911], Freud 1963 [1905]). The largest group of theories falls under the umbrella term ‘incongruity theory’ and explains ‘funniness’ as a result of an unexpected ending in a humorous text (for an overview, see Attardo 2014, Deckers and Buttram 1990). One of the best known versions of the incongruity theory, the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), adds that the unexpected ending should still be compatible with the build-up of the joke, or, to use the theory’s own terms, a joke should consist of two overlapping, but also opposing, scripts (Raskin 1985: 99, see the basic outline of GTVH in Attardo and Raskin 1991). Another important addition to incongruity theory was suggested by Elliott Oring, who argued that incongruity should also be appropriate (i.e., to make sense) in order to provoke laughter rather than a sense of absurdity (Oring 2003: 1). Even though I do not subject all of the humorous texts to a scrupulous formal analysis in my thesis, these theories informed my understanding of why certain texts are labelled as humorous in family conversations, while others – which might sound funny to those outside of the family – are not.

The study of social, political, cultural and economic contexts of humour as necessary preconditions for its appreciation was carried out, among others, by Christie Davies (1990, 1998, 2002, 2011, etc.). He demonstrated that the choice of targets and the way they are depicted depend on the relative positions of the joke-tellers and joke targets in society. Even though Davies mainly focused on

stupidity jokes, many of his observations can be extended to other topics and genres (see, for example, Laineste et al. 2019). In one of his studies, Davies specifically discussed family humour, namely, mother-in-law jokes (2012). This study laid the groundwork for Article III of my thesis, as many of the social-demographic trends described by Davies can also be identified in late 20th to early 21st century Belarus and thus, to a certain extent, account for the popularity of this joke subject among my interviewees. However, Davies's approach focuses on joke texts and does not take into consideration the practice of performing these jokes (especially in family settings) and the personal meanings with which they are endowed by their performers and audiences. The theory thus proved useful on certain levels of analysis but required further elaboration for the purposes of my study.

The practice-oriented approach in humour studies looks at how humour is performed in conversations in terms of its verbal and non-verbal presentation and functioning (see, for example, Attardo et al. 2013, Norrick 1993, Norrick and Chiaro 2009, Hay 2001). This approach also sheds light on the co-creation and co-narration of humour (Norrick 2004). While examining performances of humour, researchers also pay attention to the performers, their identities and their relationships with their audiences and with each other (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997). All of these aspects are highly relevant to research into family humour, as humour and its effects depend to a significant degree on its presentation and its specific uses in interactions between family members. It relies mostly upon co-creation, particularly (but not exclusively) in such recurrent forms as conversational humour, banter and joint fantasising (for a discussion on these forms of humour, see Dynel 2009, Chovanec 2012, Kotthoff 2007). As the discussion on topics and forms of humour illustrates (see "Forms, topics and sources of family humour"), the identities of performer(s) and their audiences condition the choice of humorous material and the way it is performed. My interviewees' and survey respondents' replies suggest that humour in the family is viewed as a dynamic continuum rather than a set of individual examples. This holistic perspective allows us to account for specific instances of humour while calibrating them against the broader family humour style (Everts 2003).

While the interdisciplinary field of humour studies provided me with insights from various academic spheres, my primary disciplinary background and conceptual apparatus come from folklore studies. The approach of folklore studies involves inductive reasoning and a meticulous examination of vernacular practices. An analysis of folklore thus involves not only a close reading of a specific text, but also understanding the general context in which this text is being spread, the specific context behind the particular instance of its performance, the identities (which are often manifold and sometimes in conflict) of its performers and audiences and other closely related factors. Such an approach still leaves room for generalisations; however, it ensures that these generalisations do not remain abstract but rather are grounded in empirical material and regarded as a patchwork of different elements, each of which is indispensable to understanding the whole.

Much of the theoretical background of my thesis derives from the research of scholars who have also been working at the intersection between humour and folklore studies. Elliott Oring's work on dyadic traditions (1984) served as a starting point for my research and informed my understanding of how to approach the folklore of groups whose members are intimately related to each other. His work also cautioned me against treating my corpus of humorous examples as a representative sample for analysis and thus prompted me to focus on the meta-discourse surrounding the humorous folklore in the family rather than on the examples *per se*.

Another important insight that emerged from the convergence of folklore and humour studies is the attention to individual performances of humour and their reception. Oring's contribution to the study of joke performances in intimate settings (2016) sheds light on the ways people use humour and speak about its use in family contexts. In his analysis of a joke-telling event involving two experienced joke-tellers (who also happened to know each other quite well), he illustrates how different people rely on different aspects of humour performances. Oring concludes that the emphasis on a particular aspect relies ultimately on performers' personalities, thus implying that the analysis of humorous texts (even in the form of recorded performances) is not sufficient to understand why a person uses humour in a particular way. The preferences towards certain genres of humorous (and non-humorous) performances may create a 'symbiosis of ... narrative art', which reinforces the bonds between the intimately related people (Dégh 1995: 305). In her research on practical jokes, folklorist and humour scholar Moira Marsh also looks at specific instances of humour and examines their nature and the effect they produced based on the circumstances in which they were enacted or told and the participants involved in these humorous interactions (2015, 2012: 295). By emphasising the importance of context, she shows that the boundaries of what is permitted in humour can be flexible (2014: 137). Similar issues are touched upon by James Leary (1984), who discusses the link between the joke-tellers' personalities and life histories, on the one hand, and their jokes on the other. This aspect is especially crucial in family interactions, in which personal relations and shared experiences lie at the heart of most humorous communication and the boundary between performers and their performances is often non-existent.

The notion of 'unlaughter', coined by sociologist Michael Billig (2005), refers to "a display of not laughing when laughter might otherwise be expected, hoped for or demanded" (Billig 2005: 192). This concept was later picked up by folklorists and applied to the reception of some practical and verbal jokes (e.g., Smith 2009, Marsh 2012, 2014, 2018, Schmidt 2013, Gürel 2019). Unlaughter is also frequently invoked in emic reflections on family humour, albeit without using the succinct academic term. Deliberate refusal to demonstrate one's appreciation for a joke shifts the power dynamics in humorous communication and gives the audience a degree of control over the flow of the conversation. It is hardly surprising, then, that my interviewees often reflected not only on actual displays of

unlaughter, but also on how the possibility of such a display might affect their humorous performances.

Another intersection between humour research and folklore studies lies in the field of digital humour. Digital folklore – and digital humour in particular – flourishes in multiple varieties and shapes that are hybrid and expressive, often drawing upon mass media, but, at the same time, they follow many patterns of oral vernacular communication (for a detailed discussion of folklore and humour in the digital realm, see, for example Blank 2009, 2012, 2013). An important feature of humour – its intertextuality – is especially prominent in humour that is transmitted digitally (Laineste and Voolaid 2016, Gerhardt 2009). As I tried to establish parallels between digital and analogue humorous communication, I realised that many of the genres and topics of family humour travel freely between the two domains, and the interlacement of different texts itself often causes a humorous effect.

Other sub-fields of folklore studies on which I relied in my theoretical framework are family folklore and the study of personal narratives. Family folklore was already an object of scholarly interest as early as the 1970s (Yocom 1982: 251, Fine 1982, Zeitlin et al. 1982), and in the following decades, its researchers have produced numerous reflections upon the ethical and intellectual challenges that arise during its collection (Miller 1997, Borland et al. 2017). Family folklore – including its humorous part – can be used to construct and contest individual and family identities (Dargan 1979, Tye 2017). Discussing it and reflecting on its meaning may thus prove to be a sensitive issue that is subject to self-censorship. Consequently, while trying to interpret it, one must always keep in mind not only what has been said, but also what might have been omitted because it was deemed too intimate and intimidating to share with strangers, because it could contradict the informant's carefully constructed self-image, or for various other reasons.

A special place in the study of family folklore belongs to research on family narratives and the practices of family storytelling (see, for example, Brandes 1975, Stone 1988, Langellier and Peterson 2006, Borland et al. 2017). Such practices can take various forms, ranging from long and elaborate storytelling events to the many barely noticeable references to family history that are interspersed in daily conversations. The stories might be conceptualised as *memorates*, 'first-person narratives about personal experience' (von Sydow 1948: 60, cited from Honko 1989: 103) or derivative memorates, which are retold by friends or relatives of the original participants in the event (Morgan 1973: 595). Other similar terms employed by folklorists to refer to this genre include *autobiographical sagas*, which are defined by Dorson as 'highly colored personal experiences' (1952: 249) and *personal experience stories*: 'first-person narratives usually composed orally by the tellers and based on real incidents in their lives [that] "belong" to the tellers because they are the ones responsible for recognizing in their own experiences something that is "story worthy" and for bringing their perception of those experiences together with the conventions of "story" in appropriate context and thus creating identifiable, self-contained narratives' (Stahl 1986: 268–269). Much of family humour is represented by such stories or derives from them. The

features emphasised by researchers – colourfulness and story-worthiness – are often highlighted through the use of humour as a rhetorical device. The humorousness of certain personal stories is what makes them enjoyable and memorable, thus contributing to the traditionality of family folklore.

2.2. Previous research on family humour

Scholars from various disciplines have studied the ways in which humour functions within the family. There are several key (overlapping) topics that existing research on family humour has focused on. First, some of the studies have underscored the analytical distinction between positive/benign forms of humour and negative/aggressive ones and their varied impact on family relationships. Wuerffel et al. (1990) argue that strong families³ use more positive humour and condemn using aggressive humour, while weak families use more put-downs, i.e., a form of teasing that might combine benevolence and aggressiveness (Murphy 2017: 111; see also Abrahams 1962, Smith 2009). Alberts (1990: 114) likewise makes a distinction between benign and hostile humour. De Koning and Weiss (2002) add another layer to this dichotomy by introducing instrumental humour, which ‘measures the extent to which the person uses humor to avoid tension or tries to smooth over negative feelings’ (p. 8), thus narrowing Hiller’s conceptualisation of instrumental humour as humour aiming at ‘the support of a cause or a point of view’ (1983: 258).

Secondly, researchers have focused on the role and functions of humour in family life. Ziv (1988) has outlined 5 functions of humour in marital life: aggressive, sexual, defensive, intellectual and social, and emphasised the particular importance of the last one. The function that has received the closest attention appears to be the use of humour to stimulate conflict resolution. While acknowledging the fact that humour can be used to resolve or prevent conflicts, researchers have also offered several qualifications in this regard. Alberts (1990) argued that only certain types of humour can contribute to conflict resolution and only when used by couples who already have strong relationships (p. 117). Campbell and Moroz (2014) reached similar conclusions, adding a correlation between instrumental humour use and apathy in conflict resolution. Interestingly, the role of humour in times of family distress can be different depending on the gender of the spouse who uses it. A husband’s humour has been argued to be more likely to lead to the couple’s separation, as it often functions as a way of avoiding dealing with problems, whereas a wife’s humour, conversely, can stimulate solving these problems without resorting to direct instructions, rebukes or moralising (Martin 2014: 143, Cohan and Bradbury 1997, Gottman et al. 1998). Much of the previous

³ ‘Strong’ and ‘weak’ families are defined according to Stinnett and DeFrain’s ‘Family Strength Inventory’, which lists qualities characteristic of harmonious and resilient families (for an in-depth discussion, see Wuerffel et al. 1990, DeFrain and Asay 2007, Trivette et al. 1990).

research on family humour has also highlighted the therapeutic potential of its use (Brooks et al. 1999, Rieger & McGrail 2013).

Third, some research has been conducted at the intersection between individual humour styles and family humour. For example, both Alberts (1990) and Ziv and Gadish (1989) pointed out that romantic partners' perceptions of one another's humour is of utmost importance to the longevity of their relationship. Moreover, the interconnection between the family environment and family humour, on the one hand, and individual preferences towards particular forms or topics of humour, on the other hand, has inspired scholars to treat family humour as a distinct phenomenon (Wilson et al. 1977, Everts 2003).

The existing body of research into family humour has enriched our understanding of the general features of this phenomenon. Most of the scholarship in this field has so far concentrated on the macro level – that is, on family as a generalized category (with a few notable exceptions: see, for example, Everts 2003; Norrick 1993). My primary interest, however, was in uncovering the specific features of family humour at the micro-level and integrating emic perceptions of humour into the analytical frame of academic research. In this thesis, I address the three aspects of family humour research outlined above and integrate them with vernacular reflections on humorous communication within the family.

As mentioned above, many of my interviewees made a point of distinguishing between benevolent and aggressive humour, thus in a way conforming to the analytical categories of positive and negative humour. However, in vernacular discourse, these categories are never rigid. Neither are the boundaries of the category of humour itself, as many forms of humour are situated on the borderline between mirthful and aggressive behaviour, or are even conflated with the latter. Depending on various contextual factors, similar forms of humorous expressions are perceived differently: they might either be denounced as overt and serious aggression or embraced as a sign of affection and in-group belonging. In contrast to Wilcox's (2002: 2) argument that aggressive humour can hurt the relationships in a family, my data support the idea that it can actually be used to enhance family in-group solidarity and establish intimacy (Everts 2003: 370). This is not inherent to aggressive humour; it is rather a function of the practice of its use.

Another ambiguous aspect of the interconnection between humour and aggression is intentionality. In family interactions, similarly to other contexts, the label of 'humour' can be used to downplay a serious offence (Lockyer and Pickering 2008), and jokes can indeed disguise assault in some cases (von Broembsen 1986: 69). However, the speakers' intentions in family conversations are usually more transparent to their interlocutors than the intentions of the distant public personae who utter ambiguous (but presumably humorous) statements in a public context. Moreover, when family members do in fact try to disguise serious messages with a humorous utterance, this usually has some instrumental purpose; for example, humour may be used to express criticism in a milder and less offensive way. In many other cases, though, aggressive family humour does not pursue any serious purpose, but is instead used to play with aggression (see articles in Chiaro and Kuipers 2017). The rules of this play are generally well known and (at least

partially) accepted by all participants in the interaction. The intimate relations within a family constitute a specific frame that allows the interlocutors to explore the boundaries between aggression and humour while at the same time maintaining the overall atmosphere of trust, love and support.

By integrating the perspectives of humour scholarship and folklore studies and building upon the works of folklorists who study humour, I have approached my data from various angles. This approach, and the subject matter under scrutiny, distinguish my project from existing research on post-Soviet humour.

2.3. Previous research on Belarusian and (post)-Soviet humour

As discussed above, the everyday humour of Belarusian families has not often been a focus of academic research. However, broader research on humour in Belarus and the wider post-Soviet region does exist and can both provide useful insights for my analysis and help to situate my own project.

The earliest attempts at the formal study of humour in the region that is currently Belarus date back to the late 19th century, when ethnographers and folklorists started collecting humorous texts in rural areas of the country. These early collections usually did not constitute special volumes of humorous texts but included them in folklore anthologies alongside other (mostly narrative) genres. Sometimes, individual humorous texts were cited in ethnographic accounts (for example, Maksimov 1882: 440). Many folklore anthology compilers of that time did not distinguish between humorous and non-humorous texts (Shein 1893) or even classify them by genre (e.g., Dobrovolsky 1891, Serzhputousky 1911). Others, however, recognised humorous folklore more explicitly and dedicated special chapters to it in their collections (for example, Romanov 1887). The most systematic and extensive among these early collections of humorous folklore, comprising 446 texts, was published by Michał Federowski (1903). The texts in this anthology belong to different genres, such as fables, joke tales and humorous poems. They are arranged according to their topics, one of them being humorous texts about family members (pp. 63–85).

Despite their considerable volume, these 19th-century collections of Belarusian folklore provided little to no analytical commentary. Systematic scholarly work on folk humour in Belarus thus only began in the Soviet era; however, it was limited by ideological constraints: for example, the study of popular political jokes was impossible (Astapova forthcoming). The most prominent Soviet Belarusian scholar who dedicated much of his career to studying humour was Anatol' Fiadosik. He compiled an extensive joke anthology (1984, second edition in 2005) that includes more than a thousand jokes both from the 19th and early 20th century and from the Soviet era. The jokes in the anthology come from previously published joke collections, ethnographers' and folklorists' research publications and archival material. Fiadosik also authored several books in which he analysed

Belarusian humorous folklore (1969, 1971, 1978). Other Soviet-era folklorists who touched upon the subject of humour usually published their research in pre-faces to joke anthologies (e.g. Byaspaly 1970, Kahanouski 1989). While their interpretations were largely conditioned by the dominant ideology (humour was treated as a weapon of peasants' class struggle against their oppressors, such as nobility and clergy) and their corpora did not include political jokes that were in oral circulation at that time (Mel'nichenko 2014: 34), their works were an important step towards legitimising humour as a subject of research in Belarusian academic discourse.

Contemporary studies of Belarusian folk humour also mostly focus on the genre of canned jokes, which is considered to be one of the most popular folklore genres among the Belarusian working class (Fiadosik 2005: 25, cf. Mel'nichenko 2014: 8). Folklorists examine thematic (Ken'ka 2009) or formal (Luk'yanava 2011) characteristics of the genre. There are also studies dedicated to the targets and the composition of humorous folk songs (Pryjemka 2004, Karataj 2012). Similar aspects of Belarusian folk humour (including a broader range of its forms) are approached from the methodological positions of neighbouring disciplines, for example, linguistics (Famichova 2011) and literary criticism (Udodava 2009). However, in many cases, these accounts of Belarusian folk humour do not take into consideration the social, cultural and historical context in which it circulates, as well as the more immediate context of humorous performances. Moreover, they rely extensively on published and/or archival materials rather than on data collected via fieldwork. A notable exception is the work of Anastasiya Astapova (see, for example, 2015, 2017), in which she analyses the spread of political humour in Belarus based on extensive fieldwork among Belarusians.

Contemporary research on folk humour in the (post-)Soviet nations is more extensive and diverse. While a comprehensive overview of post-Soviet folk humour studies lies outside of the scope of the present thesis, it should be noted that the aforementioned focus on canned jokes is still visible in many studies, including several fundamental ones (see, for example, Shmeleva and Shmelev 2002, Arkhipova 2003, Krikmann 2004, Graham 2009, Arkhipova and Mel'nichenko 2011, Mel'nichenko 2014). A more diverse and contextualised approach to Soviet-era humour and irony is offered by Yurchak (1997, 2006), who illustrates how humour and irony functioned in late Soviet political and everyday discourse.

Unlike the Soviet scholars, contemporary researchers of post-Soviet humour do not unanimously consider it to be a weapon of class struggle; however, the prevalence of scholarship in a particular thematic field (politics) and a particular genre (canned joke) means that other aspects of humour continue to slip under the radar. One such aspect is family humour. Some attempts to approach it were made by sociologists (see, for example, Butenko 1994, Lebed' 1999), but these studies also did not consider the context behind the jokes, the practices of their use, or other genres of humour. Instead, their conclusions are exclusively based on the content of the humorous texts themselves and do not reflect on emic perceptions of their meaning. Therefore, while acknowledging the value of the

quantitative results offered by these studies, I suggest that the research on humorous family folklore in Belarus could benefit from a more multi-layered qualitative analysis.

2.4. Theoretical perspectives on the gendered aspects of humour

Even though my project was not extensively informed by gender studies, it is still important to acknowledge the crucial role that gender plays in the production and appreciation of humorous texts, both at the level of the texts themselves and at the level of performance. I thus consider it important to draw a general outline of how gender manifests itself in humour and what aspects of gender relations are particularly pertinent in studying family humour.

2.4.1. Male and female characters in humorous texts

Gender issues arise in many humorous texts that circulate in the mass media,⁴ on the Internet, and in oral conversations and performances of practical jokes. This is particularly visible in canned jokes. They are (as the very name of the genre implies) more rigid than conversational joking and thus tend to be based upon scripts that persist for a long time in popular discourse. As I demonstrate in Article II, the portrayal of men and women in jokes with otherwise similar plots and addressing the same topic is different. Much of this difference is conditioned by the prevalence of the patriarchal model of gender relations, which is characteristic of Belarusian jokelore. In jokes about cooking, for example, women are frequently ridiculed for their lack of cooking skills or for (unsuccessfully) engaging in less “feminine” activities instead of cooking. In contrast, men do not become the targets of such jokes as often, and when they do, humorous texts underscore that they only cook occasionally and are generally not supposed to do it. Many of the jokes thus reassert traditional masculine values (and not only in Belarus: see Palmer 1994: 74), although there are occasional instances containing subversive humorous elements that challenge this worldview (Mackie 1990).

The difference in conversational jokes featuring men and women is more subtle, especially in the context of family humour, in which the jokes’ targets are usually not perceived in generalised gender categories, but are instead regarded as individual people whose personalities and relationship with the joke-teller are more important than their gender. However, sometimes generalised gender categories can find their way into humorous family folklore:

⁴ The prevalence of this phenomenon is reflected by the fact that even in popular publications targeted at female readers, there are jokes targeting women, despite the fact that some in the readership may find the content of such jokes offensive (Sidorskaya 2014: 382).

Wife (46 years old) [addressing her husband]: *So what kind of skills do you joke at?*

Husband (47 years old): *Well, let's say driving.*

Wife: *Oh yes, it's so natural to criticise the wife.*

Husband: *Not only the wife, by the way.*

Wife: [But] *women in general.*

Husband: *That is more correct!*

Interviewer: *Do you joke about it while you are driving, or in general?*

Wife: *In general.*

Husband [simultaneously]: *No, in general.*

Wife: *So there's a general stereotype that a woman cannot drive, that she drives like a hen. This stereotype is there, and we [meaning her husband] will [joke] at it, we like to point it out.*

Husband [gleefully]: *Yes! Yes!*

In this particular case, a generalised gender category is invoked precisely in order to make humour (which is again conflated with aggression) less personally directed. Moreover, the generalisation manifests itself on two levels. The wife mentions that 'it's so natural to criticise the wife', implying that the specific practice in their family is part of the broader cultural practice of husbands criticising their wives for their supposed lack of driving skills. The husband takes the generalisation even further, suggesting that the humour is based on the 'general stereotype' rather than on any first-hand experience involving him and his wife.

The above-mentioned trend of adapting canned jokes to the events and shared experiences in a particular family may also involve gender stereotypes:

Interviewer: *Do you use proverbs and sayings in your family?*

Wife (40 years old): *Rather like some anecdote [canned jokes]. You know, when a woman's, a wife's phone is ringing, we also have it [as if addressing her husband]: 'Give me my phone, it's in my handbag' – 'In that black hole?!'. He never even tries to look for it, immediately brings me my bag. To find something in a black hole...⁵*

Unlike in the previous example, here the interviewee exemplifies the general trend with a practice that exists in her family. However, by pointing out that her husband and she are in fact performing a canned joke, the interviewee also implies that the mess in her handbag is not her idiosyncratic trait, but rather fits into the general gender stereotype that prompted the creation and spread of such jokes.

However, the fact that some jokes that circulate in the family have a gendered 'flavour' is not always explicitly recognised by the joke tellers and their audiences. In many cases of telling mother-in-law jokes (see Article III), my interviewees instead prefer to focus on the connotations connected with family relations or the

⁵ A canned joke comparing a woman's handbag to a black hole can be found, for example, in *Anekdot pro zhenskuyu sumochku* [no date].

general message of a joke. Thus, while gender issues in humorous texts cannot be neglected, they are not always prioritised in the family context, where the intimate, multi-faceted relationships between the audience and joke tellers may mitigate some of the reductive effects of gender in humorous communication.

2.4.2. Gender differences in humour production and appreciation

It is not only the content of humour, but also the practices of performing it and preferences towards certain genres of humour that can often be influenced by gender. Gender differences in the use of humour, then, can be grouped into four dimensions: preferences towards specific topics and modalities of humour, reliance on certain genres of humour, views on the role of humour production/appreciation and the underlying power dynamics of the use of humour.

At the level of content, much academic attention has been focused on the perception of sexual humour by men and women (for overviews, see Palmer 1994: 68–74, Holmes 2006: 30–31). Some of this research indicates that women appreciate sexual humour to a lesser degree, as they are more likely to identify themselves with its targets and are more likely to have encountered sexual discrimination and abuse (Love and Deckers 1989). However, the idea that women enjoy sexual humour less than men do is controversial. For example, studies on gender preferences in humour that use non-sexist sexual humour have identified no gender differences in the appreciation of such humour (see Crawford and Gressley 1991: 228 for an overview of the studies). Moreover, another experiment showed that women and men produce a similar number of jokes that can be classified as either sexual or aggressive, while men are more likely to produce jokes that fall into both of these categories (Johnson 1991). Therefore, differences in the appreciation of sexual humour might have less to do with gender and more with individual people's values and preferences (Henkin and Fish 1986; see also Oring 2016: 63). Curiously, the two sexual jokes recorded in my interviews with Belarusian families (where I did not specifically seek out examples of sexual humour) were both shared by female interviewees.

Gender-related preferences towards other topics of humour are no easier to generalise. For example, a study by Mundorf et al. (1988) showed no difference between men's and women's appreciation of nonsense humour, while Marlowe (1989: 146) argued that women are more likely to enjoy absurd humour.

Humour researchers appear to be more in agreement with regard to gender-related preferences in humour styles. Men have been argued to prefer more aggressive humour (Apte 1985: 70, Marlowe 1989: 146), whereas women tend to rely on affiliative humour (Holmes 2006: 30). Moreover, women also prefer humour that can be collaboratively co-constructed (Eder 1993, on co-construction of humour; see also Valverde 2006) and create solidarity, while men's humour performances are more competitive (Hay 2000, Martin 2014: 135). Sometimes, co-creation and competitiveness may co-exist. For example, one of my interviewees (female, 25 years old) mentioned that she and her husband (who is also

a colleague) often make jokes together at the expense of their other colleagues, thus establishing both in- and out-group boundaries (see Article I for a discussion of this function of humour).

Mirroring findings from psychological research (see, for example, Goodwin 1990, McGee and Shevlin 2009), my interviewees of both genders viewed a sense of humour as a desirable and highly valued character trait in their partners, even though they did not expressly link humour to sexual attractiveness. In many families, spouses claimed to produce an equal share of humour. Whenever this was not the case, it was the husbands who were deemed to produce more humour than their wives did.⁶ This may be partly interpreted in light of the conclusion by Bressler et al. (2006) that men prefer female partners who are receptive to their humour, whereas women would rather choose men who are good at humour production (see also Bressler and Balshine 2006, Wilbur and Campbell 2011).

Another reason for such perceived differences in humour production in the family may lie in the fact that vernacular understandings of humour are sometimes limited to specific forms such as canned jokes, which are indeed more likely to be shared by men than women (Kuipers 2006: 44) and which male respondents are more willing to share with researchers (Lazebnaya 2018: 127). During my interviews, many women told me that they could neither remember, nor frequently told, jokes – two skills that research suggests are strongly connected (Kuipers 2006: 46–47). One female respondent (27 years old) indeed claimed that she could not remember jokes because she was bad at telling them. Sometimes, when I asked a couple to share canned jokes about family relationships, or when they referred to a canned joke during the course of the interview, a wife would remember the general idea of a joke. But instead of telling it herself, she would urge her husband to tell the joke: “I cannot tell the joke the way you [the husband] can” was a common refrain. When discussing the jokes, women tended to focus more on their topic and message while men underscored the importance of the very practice of joke telling (see Article III).

While canned jokes seem to be a male-dominated domain, women are more likely to prefer other genres of humour, mainly those whose content derives from personal experience (Kuipers 2006: 186, Kotthoff 2000). Such kinds of humour can be labelled personal anecdotes or personal experience narratives (memo-rates), as discussed above. These genres are much more context-dependent in terms of their creation and performance. Furthermore, they may rely on intimate experiences that many would not consider suitable for sharing with an outsider. This makes it challenging to capture women’s humour in an interview or through a similar ‘interactional’ data collection method. Indeed, women’s humorous preferences make their humour less visible not only to researchers (see a discussion in Crawford and Gressley 1991: 217–218), but often to the women themselves.

It should be noted that the above differences between male and female humour use reflect the power dynamics between these two genders rather than their tastes

⁶ Cf. Weisfeld et al.’s finding that wives produced more humour in a marital relationship (2011: 443).

per se (Apte 1985: 69, Palmer 1994: 72). Social constraints that are imposed on women and prescribe certain modes of behaviour often prevent them from using humour in the presence of men (in contrast to all-female gatherings, which often escape men's attention; see Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2001: 139). In other words, women are often not expected to have a good sense of humour (Walker 1988: ix–x), especially at the level of humour production. Consequently, women may experience biased attitudes towards their humour. This is perhaps most visible in a professional context, with female comedians experiencing more career challenges (see, for example, Dennison 2015), leading to uneven gender distribution in the field (Seizer 2011: 221, Marx 2016: 280). Even in personal and family contexts, such gender-related constraints can hinder the recognition of women's humour and prevent them from viewing it as having the same value as men's humour.

3. SOCIAL AND GENDERED ASPECTS OF FAMILY LIFE IN BELARUS

3.1. Social and demographic context

While humour is often perceived as ‘an internal redefining of sociocultural reality’ (Meyer 2000: 311), it is still deeply rooted in that reality and derives from it (see, for example, Davies 2011). Thus, in order to provide an interpretation of humorous family folklore in Belarus, it is necessary not only to analyse the individual personalities and interpersonal relations within a family, but also to discuss the social context in which the family lives.

Nuclear families, which consist of one (the spouses) or two (parents and their children) generations living under one roof, have a relatively short history in the Belarusian context. Up until the end of the 19th century, most of the Belarusian population lived in rural areas and was engaged in agriculture. The shortage of land and the reliance on crude farming tools made it necessary for large extended families to share a household and work together. Typically, a woman would join her husband’s family after marriage. The opposite situation was also possible under certain circumstances, such as when the husband’s family was much poorer than the wife’s family. The status of husbands in such marriages (called *prymaki*) was much lower than that of the other family members, unless there were no direct male heirs in the wife’s family (Rakava 2009: 80). The very term *prymak* still evokes negative associations to some Belarusians.

The situation in the urban areas was different. As there was no economic pressure to live and work together with the members of one’s extended family, nuclear families consisting of parents and their unmarried children were already dominant in Belarusian cities in the mid-nineteenth century. The advancement of capitalism in the second half of the century further accelerated the process of splitting large families into smaller ones. While the economic circumstances created favourable conditions for a transition towards nuclear families, the reasons for this transition often lay in the sphere of interpersonal relations (Kurylovich 2001: 20).

Whereas in the 19th century, nuclear families dominated only in urban areas, the October Revolution of 1917 created an additional stimulus for separation into nuclear families in rural areas, as private land ownership was abolished and land was redistributed according to the number of household members (Marot 2012: 70). Industrialisation, which began in the 1930s and escalated after World War II, led to rapid urbanisation. The state responded to the growing demand for urban housing with mass-scale construction of *khrushchevkas*, low-cost brick or panel houses, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This, in turn, furthered the atomisation of extended families; the nuclear family became the most typical family unit in urban areas (Karakova and Ryzhikova 2011: 94). Throughout the 20th century, families in rural and urban areas gradually grew smaller, and the average number of household members in 2009 amounted to only 2.43 persons (Belstat 2009b).

Two main factors lie behind this small family size in 20th and early 21st century Belarus. The first, as suggested above, is the continuing fragmentation of extended families and the dominance of nuclear families in the Belarusian demographic landscape (Andreykovets 2014; Lin 2014). This process has been actively supported by the government, which has taken measures aimed at providing cheap housing loans to young families (Yakovchuk and Stankevich 2013), thus creating favourable conditions for them to live separately from their parents. However, while many nuclear families prefer to reside separately from either spouse's parents, not all of them have the means to fulfil this wish. Despite state support, affordable housing in Soviet⁷ and present-day Belarus has still been in short supply (Zinchenko 2010, Burova 2015: 7). Even if a family does live separately from their parents, the parents' role in the life of a young family remains significant. Receiving support from parents is not uncommon for a married couple (Kalachova 2009: 52). This support may be financial (even if both spouses work, see Burova 2010: 92) or it can take the form of help with household duties, and particularly, child-rearing. While the latter was more prevalent in the Soviet era (see, for example, Dulov 2004: 177) than it is now (Lin 2014: 46, Zlotnikov & Zlotnikov 2017: 325), many families still rely on their parents' help and count on it while planning their family lives.

The second factor is the decrease in the number of children per family and the growing number of childless families. As the number of young childless families grows, children are no longer seen as an indispensable element of the concept of family. However, the notion that a woman is destined to have children still prevails in the popular imagination of Belarusians (Lashuk 2018), which means that those who voluntarily decide to remain childless have to cope with stigma (cf. Park 2002). A parallel trend is the growing number of older couples whose adult children live separately from them. This is especially visible in the rural areas, where children often already leave their parents in adolescence to study or work in a city (Lin 2014: 49).

On the one hand, the decline in the birth rate has contributed to the demographic crisis that has characterised the development of Belarus for the past several decades (Artyukhin and Pushkevich 2017: 295–296). On the other hand, this trend points to the increased role of women in the public sector and their willingness to pursue a career and get an education (Kurylovich 2001: 25). Increasing marriage age (27.4 years for men and 25.3 years for women in 2014, see Andreykovets 2015: 22) and the ever-growing age of first childbirth (25.9 years in 2014, see Andreykovets 2015: 23) also suggest that professional ambitions have become increasingly dominant in young Belarusians' lives.

Another important trend that is evident in contemporary family life in Belarus is the high divorce rate: in 2018, the number of divorces constituted more than 50% of the number of marriages (Braki, razvody i obshchiye koeffitsiyenty brachnosti i razvodimosti 2019). This prevalence of divorces suggests that the practice

⁷ Cf. Soviet Russia, where around 20% of households included grandchildren or other kin in the 1970s and 1980s (Semenova and Thompson 2004: 128).

has been relieved of the stigma that it was associated with in the Soviet era, when a divorce could be an obstacle for a successful career and a cause for social condemnation. The image of marriage as a permanent institution that was constructed first by the Christian church and then by the Communist state is thus being replaced by the idea of a less stable, potentially temporary union of two people. Some researchers (see, for example, Krivonos 2012: 56) also link the high divorce rate to the changing motivations for getting married. Whereas in pre-industrial society, the main driving force for marriage was economic sustainability, since the beginning of the 20th century, love and emotional intimacy have come to the forefront; however, these motivations tend to be less stable and thus do not always lead to a long and successful marital life. Along with conventional marriages registered by a state official in a registry office, new forms of civil partnership emerge and become more popular; the number of single-parent families is also on the rise (Kurylovich 2001: 26; Kargapolova and Lashuk 2017: 305).

All of the above-mentioned trends have had a transformative effect on the popular image of the family. Family is still named among the key values, but the practices of family life are departing from the conventional notion of what a family is (Kargapolova and Lashuk 2017), and the need to create a family is not so prominent among the younger generation (Luigas 2015: 438). Some features of family life that were taken for granted by earlier generations are questioned and challenged by younger families. The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1991 and the subsequent process of globalisation has had a two-sided effect. Unrestricted access to information and the massive influx of media content from the Western nations have introduced new forms of family life to Belarusians. While some have embraced these forms and ideas, others have been more cautious or even hostile towards them. Thus, hand-in-hand with the processes of transformation and liberalisation of Belarusian families, conservative views emerge and become more visible (Lashuk 2018). In a rapidly changing world governed by institutions and systems that are often too complex for an individual to grasp, family might seem like a safe haven and a social structure that is simple enough to control and understand. However, this seemingly basic institution does not exist in isolation and therefore is open to outside influences.

The ambiguities and challenges of contemporary family life are also reflected in folklore. One of the ways to cope with the change in family institutions and practices, for example, is the preservation of traditional rituals accompanying birth, marriage and death (Kalachova 2012). Such combinations of traditional elements (and/or conservative views) and contemporary ideas that manifest themselves in daily routines (which, in their turn, are conditioned by more general societal developments) are often incongruous, and consequently, provoke humour. A case in point, as discussed in Article III, is the practice of telling mother-in-law jokes and the attitudes towards them. While admitting the existence and the popularity of mother-in-law jokes as a cultural phenomenon and accepting the generic image of the mother-in-law as reflected in jokes as an archetype of the mother-in-law at large, my interviewees exhibited mixed feelings towards these jokes in the context of their personal joke-telling in a family circle. The need to reconcile

stereotypical representations of family life with real personal experiences can also provoke humorous commentary:

Male (31 years old): *When I have to do the cleaning, or wash the dishes, or something else that, well, it's incorrect to call it a 'female chore', but they are usually considered female chores in our Slavic mindset – when I have to do something like that, I remember my granddad said he had a friend who made fun of his wife and put on a shawl when his wife made him do some of these chores. So when she [my wife] makes me do it, I always make fun of her: 'Bring me a shawl, put it on me, so I won't be ashamed if the neighbours see'.*

The example above reflects persistent gender stereotypes about the household duties of men and women in Belarus. The amount of household work that family members do is the most remarkable aspect of gender inequality in family life, especially when the household duties also involve childcare (Limarenko and Prilepko 2014: 105). However, the unequal status of men and women may also be symbolically and playfully reversed, as the example below suggests:

Female (33 years old): *He [her husband] calls me 'a tyrant in slippers', because I love everything to be in order, you know how all the men are, there is a female orderliness. I tyrannise him constantly for this [not keeping things in order], you didn't do this, you forgot that. But this applies to everything, both in our work and in the household, that I constantly tyrannise him. And he responds to it with humour. He jokes, he is very tall, and I am very small in comparison with him, and he often jokes that I am a mouse-commander.*

Moreover, the patterns of communication that are emblematic of contemporary family relations are also evident in how, when and with whom humorous folklore is shared. While analysing the practices related to digitally sharing humour in Article IV, I observed many of the same trends that are prevalent in family life in general: the preference for private modes of communication, more recurrent communication within the nuclear family than with members of the extended family, the reliance upon shared tastes, etc. Even though Internet humour and digital methods of sharing it open up possibilities to transcend established patterns of communication, the ways in which they are used illustrate how people rather prefer to reinforce these patterns and thus act within the normative domain of family relations.

3.2. An overview of gender relations in Belarus

An analysis of the social and demographic contexts of family life in Belarus would be incomplete without a closer look at gender relations. It should be noted that in 21st century Belarus, as in many other Eastern European post-communist countries, the gender equality agenda and women's emancipation in the labour market have been in crisis (Fodor and Balogh 2010: 291). Conservative ideology,

as well as structural changes in the economy during the transition from socialism to capitalism, have led to a decrease in the number of women having paid jobs and the popularity of rhetoric that emphasises the woman's role as a homemaker (ibid, p. 292; for an overview of similar processes in neighbouring Poland, see Fuszara 2000: 278). The patriarchal views that were reinforced in the Soviet years (Yampolskaya 1997: 96) continue to thrive in Belarus today. Even political forces that proclaimed themselves to be advocating for democratic values supported the displacement of women from public life and their confinement to the private sphere (Gapova 2002). Women are sometimes – jokingly or seriously – represented as inept political agents (Astapova 2017: 37). Although this rhetoric is gradually changing, women still face a paternalistic attitude (Petina 2004) and experience gender discrimination, especially in the labour market (Radyul' 2011: 20). Many women work in low-paid jobs (including in such fields as education and academia); in turn, the high proportion of female workers in these spheres renders them less prestigious in the popular imagination (Chikalova 2009). The gender pay gap has also increased in recent years (Lomakina 2016: 172).

Despite being present at many levels in Belarusian society, the issue of gender is rarely voiced in public. Feminist organisations and political lobby groups are not especially popular, or even visible, in Belarus and in Eastern Europe in general. Academic publications, including those authored by women, tend either to avoid discussing gender issues entirely (Volina 2013), or even argue against the feminist agenda (for an example, see Kungurova 2004). Even when gender issues are touched upon in the mass media, their representation is not always accurate (Sidorskaya 2012: 79). However, that does not mean that women are indifferent to feminist ideas and liberal values; on the contrary, if asked directly about their stance on having a paid job and sharing household duties with their husband, women (more than men) tend to express a favourable view of both things (Fodor and Balogh 2010: 301). Women also express a stronger preference for an egalitarian family model (Limarenko and Prilepko 2014: 106). Changing perceptions of the woman's role in family life are also visible in young people's responses in recent opinion polls: while expressing some objectifying views of women (i.e., the woman as a vehicle of reproduction; the woman as an object of beauty), young people also supported the idea that a woman is an active and self-sufficient agent of family life (Lipai 2009).

In some cases, women can in fact play a leading and even over-dominant role in the family, thus reversing the patriarchal dynamics of family interaction. Consider this ironic, exaggerated response by one of my respondents:

Interviewer: *Do you make fun of your husband's hobbies?*

Female (51 years old): *No, the hobbies – over the many years [of living together] I have 'customised' him according to my needs. He used to be into football, but not anymore. It turns out, they are playing badly these days [laughs]. There always needs to be a woman; as they say, the man is the head and the woman is the neck: where the neck turns is where the head faces.*

Even when women perceive themselves as subjugated by men, they often focus on how they can subvert the power dynamics in the relationship and approach gender inequality from a totally different perspective, namely, that women are in fact superior to men at home and at work (Olson and Adonieva 2012: 15). Humour can also contribute to this reversal, being a widely used tool of female empowerment (Case and Lippard 2009).

The discussion above points to two kinds of discrepancies found in the context of gender issues in Belarusian society. Firstly, there is a discrepancy between the nominal gender equality proclaimed by the country's constitution and other official documents and the reality⁸ in which women do not always have the same access to power and labour opportunities. Some of the widespread stereotypes that prevent gender equality in the labour market include the ideas that men are more efficient, more enterprising and less likely to initiate conflicts; moreover, men are thought to 'deserve' promotions and higher salaries because they have to provide for their families as the main breadwinners (Loktev and Kuropatenkova 2011: 254). Career prospects further decrease if a woman has two or more children (Limarenko and Prilepko 2014: 103). Secondly, there is a discrepancy between public representations (or, rather, the lack thereof) of gender equality issues and people's private opinions, especially those of women, about them (for an account of similar tensions in St. Petersburg, Russia in the 1990s, see Haavio-Mannila & Rotkirch 2000: 12). Being forced out of public discourse, gender issues move into the vernacular discursive sphere. The latter is less homogenous and less regulated both in terms of its forms and its content. In some cases, especially those involving the LGBTQ community, vernacular discourse often takes the form of hate speech (Vasilenko 2019). However, in many cases, the commentary on gender issues is much more subtle and allegorical. One of the forms such indirect reflection on gender issues takes is humorous folklore.

⁸ This discrepancy dates back to the Soviet years; see Temkina and Rotkirch 2002: 7.

4. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

I obtained most of my research data through fieldwork, which was conducted in two phases. The first phase took place in 2016–2017 and consisted of 60 oral semi-structured interviews with Belarusian couples aged 24–66 years. Almost all of my interviewees were living in Belarus at the time of the interview, with the exception of two couples, one of which lived in Israel and the other in Singapore. The majority of the interviewees lived in Minsk, the capital of Belarus and its largest city. My interviewees also included couples from other Belarusian cities: Mogilev, Brest, Slutsk and Maryina Horka. Most of the interviews were face-to-face, but some were conducted via VoIP software, such as Skype/Viber, and over the telephone. The latter method was mostly used with older interviewees who lived outside of Minsk. Interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes on average. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interviews were conducted either in Russian or Belarusian (or sometimes in a mixture of both), depending on what language my interviewees preferred to use. The interview excerpts cited in the thesis are my own translations.

As my initial intention was to focus on dyadic traditions (Oring 1984) between husbands and wives, I mostly interviewed only spouses/partners. However, during some of the interviews conducted at the interviewees' homes, their children were also present and sometimes contributed their own responses or comments. Moreover, the parents themselves often referred to children's folklore and the children's role in the family's humorous communication in their responses. As a result, over the course of conducting the interviews, my research focus broadened, as I realised that it was both difficult and unwarranted to seek out 'pure' dyadic humorous traditions in family interactions.

Before each interview, I sent out a tentative question list (see Appendix 1, Article I) to my prospective interviewees, asking them to familiarise themselves with it and think of possible examples that they could cite during the interview. As the interviews were semi-structured, I left room for my interviewees to improvise and elaborate on topics that they might find relevant but that I had overlooked. One such topic was digital humour and sharing it with family members. Even though I did not originally intend to cover it in my research, several interviewees repeatedly brought it up, emphasising its recurrent nature in their family interactions. As a result, I began to ask about it during subsequent interviews. However, as most of the humour alluded to by my respondents took forms specific to Internet communication (i.e., image macros, videos, etc.), it was at times difficult for them to cite concrete examples of it during an oral interview.

This inspired me to conduct a second round of fieldwork in spring 2019. To that end, I created an online questionnaire about the practices of sharing humour digitally within the family, requesting respondents to share examples of such humour and comments on why they deemed the examples to be relevant and funny. The survey was anonymous. A total of 175 respondents (126 female, 48 male and one participant who chose not to disclose their gender, and with ages ranging

from 18 to 58) participated in the survey and shared more than 260 humorous items (see Article IV). This provided me with a variety of digital data that were available both for quantitative and qualitative analysis, and it gave me an opportunity to compare the practices of oral and digital sharing and the intersections between the two.

Interviews and an online survey undeniably have their limitations as methods for collecting humorous folklore. It was certainly not possible to collect humorous folklore first-hand by observing ‘natural’ family communication due to the intrusiveness of such an approach, and requesting informants to share examples of their family humour could not produce a fully representative account of it since much of the humour in family communication is too specific to remember and too context-bound to retell. However, this limitation was simultaneously a boon, since the setting of an interview stimulated people to reflect on their family folklore, which is something they largely take for granted and do not discuss in depth in their everyday lives. In my view, seeking individuals’ opinions on the meaning of humour (exemplified by different forms, topics and genres) and its role in family communication is crucial for understanding not only the structural, but also the personal aspects of humorous communication. In her article on neopaganism in contemporary Britain, Susan Greenwood argues that ‘[m]agic has too often been understood mainly in social and cultural terms and very infrequently in terms of what it means to the individual’ (2003: 203). The same is true of family humour, which is highly idiosyncratic and both reflects and produces deep personal meanings – yet many works on the subject (e.g., Alberts 1990, Campbell and Moroz 2014) view it through a larger societal lens without examining its personal dimensions. It is my hope that by addressing this gap, my thesis can contribute to an understanding of how multifaceted even a singular humorous utterance can be in the intimate milieu of family communication.

Another limitation of my data collection methods relates to the way the participants were recruited. I used snowball sampling, targeting primarily my friends, friends of my friends, colleagues, etc. This resulted in having a participant pool with a similar social (mostly middle-class) and educational (mostly people with a higher education) background, living in urban areas, consuming similar media, etc. As such, this pool cannot be argued to be representative of the entire Belarusian population (including, for example, such groups as rural dwellers or blue-collar workers). Even the basic premise that humour is important and highly valued in the family, which most of my interviewees appeared to share, should be treated with caution. As participation in my fieldwork was voluntary, it could be that those who did not share this view simply chose not to take part in the study in the first place (Bergen 2007: 31).

One more limitation was specific to the online survey. The lack of immediate contact with the research participants as they filled in the questionnaire created communication barriers that made it difficult for me to explain what exactly I was interested in, especially when asking respondents to comment on the humorous examples. The unfortunate result was that a few of the survey respondents thought

that they were supposed to explain why the humorous example that they contributed was *generally* funny, rather than why it was relevant and suitable for sharing in their specific family. Some of these respondents expressed reluctance to elaborate on their interpretations, as they felt that explaining the humour would ruin it.

Another consideration that influenced my data collection and interpretation was my status as a researcher. In order to provide a thoughtful account and deliver useful research outcomes, it is important to acknowledge my own subjectivity and biases that stem from my background (on researchers' self-reflexivity in the context of qualitative interviews, see Pezalla et al. 2012), as well as the nature of the interactions with my interviewees. Coming from a family where aggressive humour in the forms of teasing, mocking and banter constitutes a significant part of everyday interaction and is generally acknowledged as a highly positive communicative device, I was at first taken aback at the reluctance of many of my interviewees to acknowledge such forms of humour in their family folklore. The sensitive nature of the subject and the fuzzy boundary between humour and aggression signalled to me that the distinction between the humorous and the serious frames can prove problematic even in intimate settings where participants are well-aware of each other's motivations and expectations.

Moreover, the interview situation itself affected my respondents' reactions and behaviours, as this setting inevitably leads to engagement in impression management (Alvesson 2003). It was notable, for example, how the value that is placed on the sense of humour as a character trait in society prompted my interviewees to emphasise its presence in their family life and underscore its significance. The fact that the interview explicitly focused on humour also contributed to the interviewees' willingness to describe humour as being at the forefront of their family interactions. Furthermore, as they were aware of my status as a humour researcher, in some cases they treated me as 'an expert' who not only collects their humorous folklore and reflections thereupon, but is also likely to judge their use of humour. The following statement is reflective of that perception:

Female (44 years old): *We [my husband and I] try to outwit each other, but we haven't figured out yet [who is more humorous]. Maybe you will do the research and tell us the verdict.*

Such perceptions to some extent conditioned the responses that I received. This demonstrates that even a reasonably sized and thematically relevant corpus of data – in my case, families' reflections on their humour – is also limited by its nature. That, however, does not mean that these reflections are not useful; the above overview instead suggests that different factors (both internal and external to the family context) should be taken into account when analysing the data so as to avoid producing a simplistic, 'at face value' account of humour as a universally positive and prized aspect of family communication.

In addition to data collected via interviews and the online survey, I have also relied on jokes published in joke books and the Belarusian segment of the

Internet. This was done to add a comparative dimension to my study, allowing me to illustrate how, in some cases, family folklore appropriates, adapts and changes canned jokes, while in other situations, it relies on different semantic and pragmatic mechanisms to create a humorous effect. Diversifying the joke sources additionally helped to create a more comprehensive account of the landscape of Belarusian family humour. While some of the jokes published on the Internet and in joke books might not correspond to humour in oral circulation (Davies 2011: 13–14), their use in combination with other sources creates a background for analysing the jokes of the families that I have recorded during my fieldwork. The ways in which people frame their own joke-telling practices also depend to a significant degree on the jokes that they encounter online and in other media.

5. FORMS, TOPICS AND SOURCES OF FAMILY HUMOUR

In addition to mostly collecting my interviewees' and survey participants' reflections on their family humour, I also obtained a number of oral and digital examples of humorous folklore accompanied by my research participants' comments on their use. The forms and topics that my interviewees discussed were mostly prompted by my questions; however, sometimes they mentioned other topics and forms, which encouraged me to expand my questionnaire and ask about them in the subsequent interviews.

The most important tendency that transpired during my research lies in the close connections between humorous folklore and personal relations within a family. Even generic forms of humour (e.g., canned jokes and memes) are never impersonal in family communication: they are endowed with additional meanings that reflect the family's experience. In some cases, this involves changing the wording of a folklore item (e.g., incorporating family members' own names). In many other cases, however, it is instead the accompanying commentary and communicative practices that are used to tailor a generic folklore expression to a particular family's experience.

5.1. Forms

Family humour is not always easy to categorise with the help of conventional folklore genre classifications. Some items do fit into existing categories quite naturally: canned jokes, humorous nicknames, funny gestures or personal narratives. These genres are reasonably clearly defined and have a distinct set of characteristic features, meaning that attributing some of the folklore items I have collected to these genres offers a fairly accurate description of what they are. However, the emic understanding of humorous genres is much more varied than academic classifications (Astapova forthcoming). Much of family humour follows the general pattern described by Rod Martin (2007: 12): it is predominantly conversational. Jokes, witticisms and funny remarks often arise spontaneously in the flow of conversation and daily interactions. Most of them are told once, never to be repeated, and are soon forgotten (cf. with Oring's [1984] discussion of dyadic traditions). Makiko Takekuro defines this category of conversational jokes as 'impulsive speech behaviours in which participants spontaneously create something humorous, ironic and witty in order to provoke amused laughter' (Takekuro 2006: 86). While this definition captures the main features of conversational jokes, it also leaves room for a lot of variation within its boundaries. Genre attribution, then, does not tell us all that much about these humorous items. To analyse them thoroughly, one has to approach them on an individual basis and take into consideration the context from which they arise. This makes these humorous items difficult to capture using the method of interview – unless, that is, they are

uttered *in the course* of an interview (as was the case for several of my interviews).

In my interviews, canned jokes were much less frequent than conversational humour or other more personalised forms of humorous communication. This was especially evident with younger interviewees: some of them claimed to have not heard canned jokes for a long time, even as they did recall that such jokes used to be popular when they were children. Older respondents reported telling more canned jokes but could not always remember them during the interview itself. Indeed, the decontextualised setting of an interview does not lend itself well to recalling and telling canned jokes, since doing so is, more often than not, triggered by specific contextual clues (Norrick 1993: 36). For example, one of my interviewees (male, 59 years old), upon being asked to tell a canned joke, responded: "I'm an artist! I cannot do it on demand". Sometimes the interview situation did prompt my interviewees to remember and share topically relevant canned jokes, but in most cases, canned jokes were told outside of their 'natural' context of use in the family communication. This context often had to be explained by my interviewees alongside telling the joke itself:

Female (25 years old): *We have a canned joke, Igor's [husband's] canned joke about Lelik. It is a joke that he used to tell in every company for a long time. And the companies were the same, and we had this joke. He started: 'Have I already told you the joke about Lelik?' And nine out of ten people would reply: 'We are tired of you, Igor! We already know this joke!' ... And now he jokes at himself, when we go and I ask him: 'Well, tell me something!' And he says: 'The joke about Lelik?' And sometimes, in new company, he asks me: 'May I tell the joke about Lelik?' and it turns out that nobody knows it and he is so happy to tell it, this joke is about a husband and a wife... [a long sexual joke follows]*

There are two layers to the humorous nature of this excerpt. The first one is the canned joke itself and the second one is the communicative situation surrounding it. While a canned joke itself usually is funny only when you hear it for the first time, the practice of its telling (or memories relating to its telling) can create further opportunities for humour. Thus, an important part of humorous family folklore is metacommunication revolving around generic humorous items.

As my research findings have demonstrated, people generally tend to adapt canned jokes to a specific context in their daily interactions (see also Zajdman 1991). As one of my interviewees (female, 49 years old) put it, 'we tell jokes and then turn them into our own'. This is true not only of jokes but also of many other folklore forms, which can be extended or altered in order to fit the specific context of a given family in a particular moment of time. Humorous quotes from comedy shows, books, etc. can also be appropriated and used in certain (not always humorous) situations. For example, one of my interviewees (female, 55 years old)

recalled a KVN⁹ performance from the mid-1980s that featured an interaction between hussars.¹⁰ One of the hussars suggested, in reference to the aristocratic image of hussars in the Russian Empire: ‘Gentlemen, let’s bathe a horse in champagne!’ In the mid-1980s, an anti-alcohol campaign was underway in the USSR, making the suggestion sound incongruous to the show’s audience. After seemingly realising that, the hussar added: ‘Alright, if we can’t bathe a horse in champagne, let’s just pour some beer on a cat’. My interviewee noted that her family still used the expression ‘Let’s just pour some beer on a cat’ to describe situations in which, even if they could not do anything significant, they would still try to do something. As this example illustrates, not only can humorous texts be adapted to specific contexts, they may also serve as metaphors rather than humorous items as such.

Other narrative genres of oral family folklore, however, do not require contextual adaptation to the family background, as they are inherently rooted in it. A prominent example is personal narratives, which can also be referred to as family anecdotes: ‘accounts of events that have taken place within living memory and within one’s own family circle’ (Holbek 1990: 103). These events might not initially be humorous – indeed, they are often unpleasant or even scary. However, as time passes, they begin to be retroactively perceived as funny. These narratives may refer to any episode of family life: daily routines such as cooking or walking, interesting events (travelling, going to a concert, etc.), or turning points in life (acquaintance, marriage). The presentation of these narratives in an interview rarely reflects the way they function in daily communication. When I asked my interviewees about their shared humorous memories, they would typically try to tell me a coherent story with the necessary background information. Such stories can be attributed to the genre of comic tales, as they usually lack a punchline (in contrast to narrative jokes¹¹, see Oring 2016: 147–164). In actual family communication, by contrast, the story and the context behind it are well known to all participants, making it unnecessary to retell every detail. Instead, they rely on a ‘kernel story’ to evoke this shared memory (cf. Goffman’s ‘referential afterlife’ of gaffes [1981: 46]).

The following example shows how such a story can be used and performed:

Interviewer: *Do you have any shared humorous memories?*

Husband (40 years old): *Yes, recently the one about the soup.*

Wife (40 years old): *It was long ago, I do not remember if we were already married or not, we were having lunch and he somehow decided to test me and said that I wouldn’t pour soup on him.*

Husband: *It was you who told me: ‘I’ll pour soup on you now!’*

⁹ A popular Russian comedy TV show.

¹⁰ Hussars were members of one of the types of cavalry in early modern Central and Eastern Europe.

¹¹ According to Elliott Oring, a true narrative joke embeds a hidden narrative that is only revealed in the punchline (2016: 157).

Wife: *Well, I was just joking, but he said: 'So, will you pour it on me?'. If it were on myself, surely I wouldn't have poured it, but why not pour the soup on him? What does it matter, I poured just a little on him, but now he constantly recalls it.*

Husband: *It's you who recalls it.*

Wife: *No, the reason we remembered it [during the interview], is because you have recalled it quite recently.*

Husband: *That's because you poured something else on me!*

Both of them laugh.

Here, the narrative may not be remembered accurately as a whole (the husband and the wife have slightly different variants of it; on the variability of family humorous anecdotes, see Dushechkina 1989: 159–160), but the pivotal elements and the resolution are kept in memory and recalled. In the interview, the husband also mentioned the label used by the family to refer to this narrative: 'the one about the soup'. Interestingly, this label does not even reflect the essence of the story – the soup being poured over the husband – but just contains a keyword. This example also offers a glimpse into how a narrative can be recalled in a particular family context. In this case, the relationship is iconic: a memory is revitalised by similar events. This is also true of many other personal experience narratives: some of my interviewees, for example, told me that they would recall funny stories about their wedding while looking at the wedding photos. Sometimes the chain of associations is less direct, but in any case, the process of remembering such narratives is inevitably triggered by some communicative impulse.

Even though these personal stories are rarely reproduced in full in the process of family communication, there can be situations in which they have to be retold. It happens when the memory is evoked in front of people who are not yet familiar with it: children, other family members, friends, etc. After a humorous narrative is shared with them, they may in turn appropriate it and integrate it into their own family folklore: some of my informants, for example, shared humorous stories that happened to their relatives or friends but that they often recall in their own families (cf. with Morgan's derivative memorates [1973: 595]).

Several interviewees also recalled playing practical jokes on their partners. Here is one of the examples:

Female (26 years old): *I mostly do the cooking ... But on Saturdays he [my husband] must cook breakfast for me. Once he refused to cook it on a Saturday, he said: 'Cook it yourself'. I said: 'Okay' and put two eggs in the microwave oven [where they exploded]. He then had to wash it. Now he cooks [every Saturday], sure thing.*

Some practical jokes, such as the one above, have a clear didactic purpose, while others may be performed just for entertainment (e.g., one of my interviewees described buying a chocolate bar for his wife, hiding it and making her find it). What unites the practical jokes in my sample and what makes them more difficult to research is that they are also mostly one-off activities that might be easily forgotten and not recalled during an interview. However, as Moira Marsh points out, practical jokes tend not to be spontaneous and require a certain degree of

planning (Marsh 2015: 12). This perhaps accounts for why they were recalled more often in my interviews than instances of conversational humour.

Another form of family humour that is increasingly popular, especially among younger interviewees (whose age places them in the category of ‘digital natives’, see Prensky 2001) is humour that is shared digitally via messaging apps and social networks (and, less commonly, via text messages). This may be a combination of verbal, visual and audio-visual humour: some interviewees prefer to share videos and animated pictures, others share textual canned jokes, while the majority mostly send and receive memes and image macros in which verbal text plays a central role (see Article IV). Sharing humorous (and non-humorous) items digitally can occur when family members are away from each other, for example, at work or on a trip, but many of my interviewees also reported sharing humorous items digitally while both they and their partner are at home or even ‘on the same sofa’ (a similar trend has been identified in other contexts; see, e.g., an example from Estonia in Tamme and Siibak 2012: 10). The asymmetrical nature of online communication is a crucial factor in the digital sharing of humour: the timing of sharing is no longer determined by the immediate availability of the recipient, but it instead depends on when the sender comes across humorous content they deem worth sharing. Such sharing is regarded as an important form of communication and often (but not always) reflects the family’s personal circumstances: humorous items that are shared may refer to a particular situation in the family’s life, a recurrent topic in their conversations, their hobbies, etc. For example, one of my interviewees, a 25-year-old woman who wanted to get a dog, would often send her partner funny videos featuring dogs, commenting that the dog featured in each video is her future pet. Digital transmission is thus a (relatively) new way to produce and share humour on the same topics that also feature in the oral humorous folklore of the family.

This brief account of the forms of family humour illustrates that they vary according to the context of their use and are embedded into the specific family’s conversations. Along with spontaneous forms of humour, which are difficult to capture and replicate during interviews and surveys, family members also use canned and practical jokes, personal anecdotes, online humour and (humorous) quotes from the media to entertain their audience, but also sometimes to make serious statements. The choice and the adaptation of the forms of humour clearly illustrate the emphasis on the private nature of family folklore.

5.2. Topics

When responding to a question about the topics of their family humour, some of my interviewees also brought up personal relationships in their family as they are reflected in humorous communication. One of the interviewees put it this way:

Male (30 years old): *We laugh at ourselves, at the jokes, at the TV, at something that we have in common.*

This generalisation of the topics of family humour is atypical, as other interviewees pointed out that they tended to joke at the differences between themselves and their partners, rather than at the similarities, particularly if these differences are very pronounced: for example, extreme squeamishness of one and the other's indifference to hygiene. These differences are often perceived as abnormalities and incongruities that trigger a certain reaction: whether this reaction is aggressive, humorous, or a mixture of both depends on the context of the performance.

The topics of family humour are thus highly context-dependent, idiosyncratic and rooted in families' own experiences. However, it is still possible to pinpoint certain general categories of targets that tend to provoke humour in family communication. Among my interviewees, humour is mostly directed at other family members, although outsiders (e.g., friends and colleagues) can also be targeted in jokes on the same topics.

One of the topics that frequently came up in my interviews was labelled by some participants as 'character traits'. Others referred to similar targets as 'habits'. The latter is perhaps a more accurate term, as the examples indicate that my interviewees tend to laugh mostly at recurrent patterns of behaviour rather than more general character traits. These patterns are usually related to daily activities and household chores. For example, one of the popular targets is one partner's tendency to take a long time when getting ready to go out; this particularly applies to husbands' jokes about their wives:

Female (26 years old): *He [my partner] laughs all the time that I take forever to get ready ... This has been ridiculed 155 times.*

Another popular category of targets is tidiness and a lack thereof:

Female (25 years old): *I have a frenetic passion for cleanliness. He [my partner] can ask me: 'Lena¹², may I make some salad?' [because he will make a mess in doing so].*

Male (58 years old): *I always tell her [my wife]: 'It is so obvious when a person used to live in a dormitory in her student years'. I say: 'Even if you have ten wardrobes, you'll still hang your clothes on the back of the chair'.*

Some hobbies also become habits or even obsessions and are consequently ridiculed:

Male (32 years old): *I [joke] at Yulya [his wife] spending a lot of time on Vkontakte [popular Russian-language social network, similar to Facebook].*

Female (33 years old): *I [laugh] sometimes at my husband, when he is taking care of his plants, when he is grafting the plants, I can call him Michurin¹³.*

¹² All the interviewees' names have been changed.

¹³ Ivan Michurin was a Russian horticulturist who widely practiced selection.

The fact that habits and behavioural patterns play an important role in family humour is jokingly referred to by one of the couples:

Husband (45 years old): *I do not have any bad habits anymore.*

Wife (44 years old): *We feel sad* [because we don't have any joke targets anymore].

Another popular topic of family humour revolves around family members' ineptitude and ignorance. While the former is usually constant (for jokes on inability to cook, see Article II), the latter manifests from time to time. The difference is evident in the following examples:

Female (25 years old): *I constantly get lost, he [her partner] laughs at it.*

Female (26 years old): *Ignat [her husband] was 30–35 years old, he had grown up without any children, he had probably already forgotten [what] animals [look like] since his childhood. We went to a zoo ... in Grodno¹⁴. ... At first, we went to see the deer and there were both male and female deer there, and he asks me: 'Why do some of them have antlers while others don't?' I think: 'Okay, he has forgotten that'. I explain to him: 'There are males and females'. He [says]: 'No, probably they were cut down because they were butting each other'. He doesn't believe me, do you understand? Okay, another joke. We come to a cage where there is a lion and a lioness; the lion has a mane and the lioness doesn't. He [says]: 'Look, they shaved the lion so that he wouldn't be hot'. I already understand that he isn't joking, I ask: 'Are you serious? It is a lioness, she is a female!'. He [says]: 'Oh no, look, it is hot, 30 degrees above zero, look how hard he is breathing'. And the happy ending was when we approached the flamingos. And they are standing on one leg, and I knew it, but he didn't know it, and he is walking around the cage and says: 'Poor birds, why did God punish them so hard?' And so he was walking and pitying them and then one of them changed the leg. He turned to me: 'Do they have two legs?' I say: 'Ignat! That's enough!' And for some reason, he hasn't visited the zoo often since then.*

Perceived ignorance often relates to language use.¹⁵ Many interviewees cited incorrect words or expressions that are ridiculed in their family. Some also testified that they laughed at each other's filler words. Language-related humour also frequently features in family conversations when multiple languages are used (Chiaro 2009). As in my research, all of the couples shared a mother tongue, linguistic issues were not in the forefront of their family communication. Still, there were some instances when this topic was articulated. This was the case when one of the partners in the couple was fluent in a foreign language while the other did not speak it well and made mistakes in pronunciation or grammar, or when a couple had recently moved to another country where a language other than their mother

¹⁴ A city in western Belarus.

¹⁵ Cf. ethnic jokes whose targets are often ridiculed because they do not speak the language of the dominant group of joke-tellers well enough (Davies 1998: 30; Davies 2011: 259–260; Laineste 2005: 13).

tongue was commonly spoken. However, Belarus's own linguistic landscape also leaves room for such humour. Both Belarusian and Russian are official languages in the country, but their use in everyday communication is not proportional. According to the population census of 2009, only 26% of Belarusians reported speaking Belarusian at home, while almost 70% responded that they spoke Russian (more census data can be found in Belstat 2009a; on Russification in Belarus, see also Astapova 2017: 19). Curiously, some of my Russian-speaking interviewees used Belarusian (or a mixture of Russian and Belarusian, called *trasyanka*) primarily as a means to make their communication funnier. A particularly noteworthy case was shared by a family of two 32-year-olds who invented their own language during a trip to Armenia. It is, as the wife put it, a mixture of Russian, Belarusian and Polish. The initial aim of creating the language was serious: to distinguish themselves (presumably from other Russian speakers) during the trip; however, after their return to Belarus, they continued using this language (which they called *nevyadomka*¹⁶) for fun.

The most frequently cited target for language-related jokes was small children. Their idiosyncratic words and expressions are often picked up by the whole family and continue to be used even after the children grow up and master the use of standard, 'correct' language (Dushechkina 1989). Sometimes, the target of humour may be just a mispronounced word or a child's neologism; in other cases, children's utterances may be grammatically correct but semantically incongruent:

Female (29 years old): *Most of our jokes and reasons to laugh are connected with children. Yana [younger daughter] recently said: "Mommy, thank you for giving birth to Varya [older daughter] for me", and we were laughing hard.*

Sometimes, professional identity can also become a target for jokes and ridicule. There are two possible scenarios for using professional humour in family interactions. If both of the partners share the same profession, they may tell, read and share jokes that refer to this profession. In other cases, one of the partners may ridicule certain job-related routines and practices of the other one:

Female (25 years old): *I have a lot of jokes related to Kolya's [partner's] work [he is a dentist and a lecturer at a medical school]. Once I came home and saw this picture: there are paper towels, a chicken breast, legs and so on, on the table. And there is a scalpel and a skull there. And I think: 'Oh my God, where am I?'*

Female (34 years old): *We had a corporate party at work, and he [husband] is self-employed, he doesn't have corporate parties, and I was joking how much fun he would have, a corporate party of an individual entrepreneur.¹⁷*

¹⁶ The name is a noun that derives from the Belarusian adjective *nevyadomy* (unknown).

¹⁷ The interviewee is referring to a popular series of image macros and textual jokes under the title 'A corporate party of an individual entrepreneur [a form of legal entity in many post-Soviet nations, which involves one individual conducting business]'/ 'A freelancer's corporate party'. These usually depict a person, dressed in an office outfit, enjoying his (or rarely her) drinks alone (See Pikabu).

Such job-related jokes mostly refer to specific situations rather than common practices. Unlike laughing at habits or linguistic imperfections, laughing at work-related matters tends to only happen occasionally and thus was not recalled as often during the interviews.

Another notable topic of family humour is physical appearance and clothing. This topic probably produced the most diverse responses. Some families claimed that they did have jokes about each other's appearance, but such replies were relatively infrequent. Much more often, humour worked in only one direction: a wife can laugh at her husband's appearance, but he does not joke back. As one of my male interviewees (31 years old) put it: 'You wouldn't laugh at a woman's appearance, there can be [psychological] complexes' (cf. Cash's [1995, 2012] findings about the correlation between appearance-related teasing and body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, etc.). However, sometimes the women I interviewed would ridicule their appearance themselves. The most recurrent target in joking about appearance was hair and hairstyle. This could be explained by the fact that hairstyle is one of the most ephemeral elements of appearance: it can be easily altered (and also improved, as some of the jokers would suggest), and the fact that the hairstyle of one of the family members has changed – often unnoticed by the other family members – can become a joke in itself.

While almost every family I interviewed named many topics they used to laugh at each other's expense (some even claimed that they have a limitless amount of such topics), there are also certain taboo topics widely considered to be improper for joking. I did not explicitly ask my interviewees about them, but sometimes they transpired in their responses. As already mentioned, appearance can be one of these topics. Some interviewees also considered it improper to laugh at health-related matters. However, none of the taboo topics appeared to be universal for all of my interviewees. For example, one of them mentioned joking on her mother's deathbed:

Female (66 years old): *While it is not very pleasant to recall it because it is connected to my mother's death, but in this case, as far the sense of humour is concerned – when [my] mother had already been lying [bedridden] for the past three months and she was always worried about how and what [would be arranged for her burial]... And we always told her, there was always this joke: 'Mother, don't worry, the deceased are not lying around in the streets yet'.*

My interviewee's account of her interaction with her late mother does not only touch upon the topic of death, but also reflects the clash between different generations' perceptions of how traditions should be treated. It is important, however, that it is framed in a playful, humorous way. This example of gallows humour shows that joking at someone may be not only a didactic tool or a form of entertainment, but also a mechanism of consolation (Zolten 1988: 350). Family humour and taboos may be very flexible when the context demands it.

The focus on certain topics and the exclusion (or at least underrepresentation) of others were conditioned to a large degree by my questionnaire, but also by my

interviewees' preferences and interests. Their reservations with regard to discussing more sensitive topics with an outsider during a recorded interview were also an important factor. Similarly, even if a family enjoys humour related to topics conventionally considered to be inappropriate for ridiculing (e.g., health, death) or not politically correct (e.g., ethnic jokes), they may be reluctant to share it with an outsider for fear of creating an unfavourable image of themselves. At any rate, the idea behind this section is not to provide a comprehensive overview of all the possible topics of family folklore, but rather to illustrate how certain topics are negotiated in family folklore and what aspects of these topics make them suitable for humorous communication.

5.3. Sources

In addition to examples of and reflections on humour in their family, some of my interviewees also discussed the origins of their family humour. Apart from the two sources mentioned above (personal experiences in their own family and their friends' or relatives' stories), there were several more sources worth mentioning. For people who had an on-site (as opposed to remote) job – a significant majority of my interviewees belonged to this group – their workplace was an important source of humour. Such humour can consist of funny incidents that happened at their workplace during the day and that were retold at home in the evening. Some of my interviewees also mentioned that they 'took back home' canned jokes that they heard at work. One of my interviewees even described how she and her colleagues enjoyed a canned joke at her workplace, then she told it to her husband at home, and he afterwards retold it to his own colleagues – who did not find it that funny.

Another important source of humour in modern families is mass and social media. There appears to be a certain demographic difference with regard to preferences towards specific media. Newspapers and television were mostly mentioned by older people (40+ years), while younger couples relied more on the Internet: forums, news portals, online humour collections and especially social media. As mentioned above, young people tend to digitally share the humorous content they encounter online. Older couples also share jokes they have come across online, but in a different manner: by reading canned jokes out loud or retelling them orally, or by showing jokes, images, and other content on the screen of their device (for a more extensive discussion, see Article IV).

This brief analysis of forms, topics, sources and features of family humour offers some insights on how and what humour is used in families' everyday communication. It underscores the importance of personal context and of an individualised approach to humorous items. However, studying individual families and their humour may also help us to better understand humour creation and distribution in society at large.

6. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTICLES AND THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THEM

The present thesis consists of four interrelated articles. All of them draw on my fieldwork and explore humorous family folklore in the context of the social environment in which it spreads, but each of the articles approaches the topic from a different angle:

- Article I shows that humour and aggression in family communication are closely intertwined according to emic perspectives;
- Article II outlines the fundamental differences between canned jokes (which revolve around societal values) and personal family humour (which is based on families' own experiences);
- Article III stresses the importance of the personal dimension of joke-telling in the interpretation of jokes on family topics;
- Article IV explores how the digital sharing of humour integrates into humorous family communication.

Article I, *“If We Don’t Quarrel, We Joke”: Emic Perspectives on Belarusian Families’ Humorous Folklore*, provides a general introduction to the ways in which people reflect on their family humour and humour in general. More specifically, in this article, I explore the peculiar position of humour on the boundary between benevolence and aggressiveness and analyse how this position influences the self-presentation of humorous family folklore. The article also outlines the main functions of humour in family communication, based both on explicit statements by my interviewees and indirect references that they made while discussing specific examples of their folklore. The most prominent functions included establishing in- and out-group boundaries by referring to specific topics and experiences from a shared past, managing and avoiding conflicts, conveying criticism and correcting behaviour, and expressing ideas and feelings that would otherwise be difficult to communicate. The article also discusses the various ways in which humour interacts with aggression: for example, the same utterance might be considered humorous by one family member but may seem aggressive to another; a situation may be humorous only up to a certain point and become aggressive once it escalates beyond that point, etc. In other cases, humour is sometimes treated as a synonym for aggression, especially when genres such as teasing and jokes at another’s expense are involved. I argue that the mixed attitudes towards such forms of humour displayed by my respondents stem from the tension between the value of the sense of humour as a desirable personality trait and the idea that one should be benevolent towards family members (which rules out any aggressive forms of behaviour towards them, even those made in jest). The article concludes with a discussion of emic perceptions of these ambiguities and the specific features of humorous folklore in a family environment.

Articles II and III discuss two specific topics of humorous family folklore. Article II, *Cooking with Humour: A Study of Belarusian Humorous Folklore about Family Cooking Traditions*, compares humorous anecdotes, teasing and jokes about cooking that exist in the families of my interviewees to jokes on this topic that circulate on the Internet, as well as some jokes from printed collections to provide historical background. The main criteria for the comparison are the values and attitudes towards cooking (and broader family and gender issues) that manifest themselves in these two sets of data. In the article, I also explore the different ways in which these humorous genres function and are performed, as well as the various means that performers of these two sets of jokes employ to interact with their audiences. The analysis shows that contemporary canned jokes on the Internet have inherited many of their plots and underlying ideas from the folklore of past centuries and often display the same patriarchal values, depicting cooking as a woman's duty (and one she must perform well enough to keep her husband happy). The husband (or any man) only occasionally engages in cooking in these joke texts. While the same idea (that men rarely cook) is also present in some humorous family folklore about cooking, that is one of the few commonalities between these two sets of data. Family humour about cooking tends to be much more personal and reflects specific situations in specific families rather than general gender stereotypes associated with cooking. Much enduring family humour is based on stories of cooking accidents. The very practice of joking about cooking skills (or the lack of this practice) is also closely connected to family relationships and the ways in which cooking is practiced in a family. The article concludes with methodological observations on the challenges of comparing such diverse sets of data.

Article III, *Where the Structural Meets the Personal: Mother-in-law Humor Between a Joke Cycle and Joking Relationships in Belarus*, discusses one of the most popular topics of family humour in Belarus and in many other nations: mother-in-law jokes and other forms of humour that arise from the interactions between a mother-in-law and her son-in-law. Like the previous paper, this article also adopts a comparative perspective, but the comparison is of a slightly different sort. Building upon Christie Davies's sociological approach to the interpretation of mother-in-law jokes, I compare their structural implications to the personal meanings with which they are endowed in the process of family joke-telling. I argue that the image of the generic mother-in-law in Belarusian jokes to some extent correlates with the archetypal image of the mother-in-law in the imagination of my interviewees, but it also often contrasts with their actual family relationships, making their responses towards mother-in-law jokes ambiguous. This resulted in certain reservations with regards to performing mother-in-law jokes, especially by the sons-in-law. Other forms of humour (i.e., teasing, humorous banter, etc.) that exist between a mother-in-law and her son-in-law in the family setting are also not clearly separable from the canned jokes on this topic. Contemporary mother-in-law humour adds an interesting dimension to the anthropological concept of joking relationships: while telling canned jokes aimed at the mother-in-law often serves a different set of functions from those usually

associated with joking relationships, joking with one's actual mother-in-law (mainly in the form of conversational humour) can indeed help to strengthen family bonds, as would be expected in a joking relationship. The article also explores the gendered aspect of mother-in-law jokes and their performances, and it concludes with a discussion about the discrepancy between telling jokes and sharing the values expressed in them.

Article IV, *Sharing Humour Digitally in Family Communication*, introduces and interprets the second set of data obtained during my fieldwork while supplementing it with ideas and examples from my interviews. In this article, I outline the features and dynamics of digital communication within the family. The mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis allows me to approach the subject from different angles. As sharing humour through digital media has become increasingly popular, especially among younger families, certain norms and patterns of digital humorous communication have emerged. In terms of the content, I argue that visual forms of humour (many of which are specific to Internet communication) dominate over textual ones and generic content prevails over that which is personally created. The practices of sharing, however, indicate that private communication channels are used more often than publicly accessible ones; the sharers and recipients are more likely to be members of the nuclear family rather than of the extended family. Many of the sharing practices thus parallel the oral sharing of humour, and some of the methods of engagement with digital content even incorporate oral communication. However, digital sharing also has its own specific features, such as the asynchronous nature of transmission and reception and much lower reliance on the performative aspect of sharing humour. The article also highlights the specificity of the digital sharing of humour in the family setting, and it discusses the multidimensional adaptations of generic digital humour to the family context, as well as the adaptation of family communicative practices to this new form of humorous folklore.

While the combination of these papers does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of humorous family folklore, it does offer a holistic view of it, drawing on various aspects of its performance, reception, topics and forms, as well as on emic reflections on the role of humorous folklore in family life. By offering a critical overview of these topics, the present thesis seeks to map the territory of humorous family folklore and lay the groundwork for further research into it.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

7.1. Key conclusions

The study of humorous family folklore based on self-reports and emic interpretations reveals several important insights.

Firstly, *humorous family folklore covers an abundance of topics and forms, the popularity of which is distributed unevenly*. Generic forms of humour, such as canned jokes, popular humorous stories, etc., account for a relatively minor part of humorous family folklore, which is mostly based on conversational joking and humorous recollections of past personal experiences. The ‘funniness’ of humorous family folklore often derives from unique circumstances in family history, relationships between family members, and their personalities and emotional states. While some topics may lie outside of the family’s everyday life, most of the targets and themes revolve around the family members, their habits, behaviour, appearance and relations between them.

Secondly, *humorous folklore is never impersonal in a family setting*. Family folklore undergoes a complex process of adaptation to the family context. This adaptation is easier to trace in conversational jokes, humorous banter and inside jokes, but even widespread humorous plots cease to be impersonal and acquire new layers of personal meaning when they are shared in a family context. The intimacy of the family setting demands an adjustment of humorous folklore items, achieved either by changing their texts and formats or by adding metatextual elements, such as comments, during their performance or sharing.

Thirdly, *a strong connection between family humour and personal feelings makes it a very demanding and potentially fraught, but also useful, endeavour*. If used skilfully and in the right context, family humour can perform a variety of functions, not only entertaining the performers and their audiences, but also creating opportunities for conflict reconciliation and corrective feedback, as well as for establishing and maintaining in- and out-group boundaries (see Article I; see also Fine and De Soucey 2005). Indeed, several interviewees reflected on how the use of humour allowed them to express ideas that might be difficult to express in serious settings.

It is important to emphasise that *vernacular accounts of humour usage in family communication acknowledge and emphasise these positive aspects*. Humour is generally regarded as a desirable factor in family interactions. The benevolence of family humour in emic accounts is closely connected to the idea of caring about one’s family members and generally fits into the paradigm of a good family.

At the same time, *some forms of humour can be conflated with outward aggression*, thus shifting the frame of communication from playful to serious. Such shifts are often subtle, and they can be perceived differently by different family members. In some cases, humour was considered aggressive by certain family members but not others; in other situations, the aggressiveness or benevolence of the same joke was perceived differently in different contexts. The forms of

humour that, in generic terms, come close to aggression (e.g., teasing and making jokes at another's expense) are more difficult to expressly acknowledge as a prominent part of family humorous communication. The focus on benevolence towards one's family thus conditions which parts of humorous family folklore are brought to the forefront and which parts are pushed to the periphery of one's mental image of family folklore. People thus tend to use terms with positive connotations to describe their family humour while downplaying instances of aggressive humour and representing them within the wider framework of benevolence.

It is not just the content of family humour that is deeply symbolic and meaningful (Fiese 2006: 8) but also the practices of its use and attitudes towards it. The evaluation of one's own sense of humour has a strong impact on self-esteem, as possessing a good sense of humour is considered to be a highly desirable character trait, including in the eyes of one's partner. This aspect adds another layer to the complicated relationship between humour and aggression. Moreover, playfulness and seriousness in aggressive humour often overlap up to the point where the participants of the interaction themselves cannot distinguish between them. Thus, the boundary between humour and aggression proves to be an analytical construct that is rarely clear-cut in vernacular expression.

7.2. Broader implications and future directions

Studying the constellation of factors that determine how humour is practiced, articulated and received in the family setting requires a consideration of context on three different levels: micro- (immediate conversational context), meso- (family background and family members' personalities) and macro-level (social, economic, political and cultural processes within the society where the family lives). In my thesis, I have attempted to take all of them into account in my discussion of the perceptions of, attitudes towards and forms of engagement with folk humour in Belarusian middle-class urban families. The ostensible narrowness of this context raises the question of whether, and to what extent, my findings can be extrapolated to other contexts.

Two reasons to believe the findings can indeed have value beyond their immediate context are the ongoing process of globalisation (including of humour) and the idea that humour possesses a number of universal features across various human societies. To what extent do these two factors apply to the forms, topics, production, performance and appreciation of family humour, as well as the ways in which people position themselves in relation to it? The universality of some forms of humour is reflected in the universality of humour theories (Kruger 1996) and is supported by small-scale, cross-cultural comparative studies of humour appreciation (see, for example, Ruch and Hehl 1998: 117). Moreover, the social circumstances that give birth to jokes and provide an appropriate milieu for their spread are also not unique to Belarus. An analysis of mother-in-law jokes by Davies (2012) illustrated that they are popular across different countries that have, on a structural level, faced similar demographic challenges. Some of the gender-specific tendencies of humour production and appreciation can also be observed

across different cultures: for example, the idea that men tell more canned jokes than women was also discussed in Anglo-American (Martin 2014: 129) and Dutch (Kuipers 2006: 44) contexts.

Nevertheless, the sense of humour is still subject to socio-cultural differences, as personality research indicates (Ruch 1998: 4). However, there is reason to believe that some of these differences are being eroded (or at least reconfigured) by globalisation and transnationalism. The consumption of mass media in particular has had a profound impact not only on the specific examples, genres and topics of humorous folklore, but also on the ways in which people engage with and reflect on them. This is especially true of digital media, which have evolved standardised ways of sharing and appreciating humorous content.

With that in mind, it stands to reason that results obtained from a study of Belarusian families can, to a certain degree, be extrapolated to the broader domain of humorous family folklore in today's society. In order to test this hypothesis, however, a cross-cultural analysis would be needed (cf. Kuipers 2006). An initial step in this direction was a pilot study of British comedians' family folklore, which I conducted in 2019. Its preliminary results indicate that many of the trends that I have observed among Belarusian families are also evident in humorous communication in British comedians' families.

It would also be interesting to test whether (and which) conclusions that I have reached also apply outside of the domain of family communication. The value of the sense of humour and the ambiguous boundary between humour and aggression can be observed in different settings, and the tension that stems from these two aspects of interpersonal relations may find different resolutions depending on the situation. The emphasis on benevolence, which is characteristic of the family context, may be not as pronounced in intimate settings. The tendencies to personalise humorous folklore, to connect it to one's own experience and to choose private modes of humorous communication over public ones might also be present in other private settings (for example, among close friends), but perhaps less so in public communication. However, certain ideas about the idiosyncrasy of personal humour and its incompatibility with canned genres and formulaic modes of humorous self-expression can also be traced in the public context, for example, among stand-up comedians whose humorous remarks cannot simply be cherry-picked from their routines and retain their funniness (Brodie 2014: 25–26).

The conclusions of the present thesis, therefore, should not be viewed as absolutist claims: they were collected from particular people belonging to a certain social, educational and demographic milieu that impacted their ideas about family, humour and the ways these two important notions (should) come together. However, neither should they be regarded as limited to the families of my interviewees and respondents. My conclusions, rather, should be considered to be a foundation on which future hypotheses can be built and tested. While seemingly trivial and omnipresent, family humour and reflections on it still encompass important (and sometimes overlooked) insights into the ways in which one's interpersonal relations, social background and self-positioning blend together to create an intriguing, productive, and multifaceted form of communication.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Tänapäeva valgevene perehuumor: väljendusvormid, tavad ja rahvapärased vaated

Doktoritöös uurin valgevene perehuumori ja selle teemade ja žanrite mitmekesisust ning analüüsin valgevenelaste eemilisi mõtisklusi huumori rollist igapäevases suhtluses. Doktoritöö keskne uurimisküsimus on, kuidas pered kasutavad igapäevases suhtlemises huumorit, mille kaudu väljendatakse isiklike kogemuste ja eelistuste vastuolulisi suhteid sotsiaalsete konventsioonidega. Töö eesmärgid on:

- analüüsida humoorikate väljendite sisu ja vormi peresisese suhtluse ja laiemas ühiskondlikus kontekstis;
- uurida, kuidas inimesed huumorit loovad, jagavad, tajuvad ja sellele reageerivad, tuginedes nende enda sellesisulistele mõtisklustele ja tähelepanekutele;
- vaadelda huumori ja agressiooni vastastikust seost eemilisest vaatenurgast;
- mõista, kuidas mõjutab pere-elu (st lähisuhete) kontekst huumori loomist ja väärtustamist.

Sissejuhatuseks toon välja keskseid perekonnauuringute alaseid ja huumoriteoreetilisi kontseptsioone ning teen kokkuvõtte peamistest arutelu suundadest antud valdkondades. Nende mõistete vernakulaarne tähendus on enamasti ebamäärane ja võib hõlmata mitmesuguseid nähtusi, mis akadeemilistes käsitlustes jäävad sageli tähelepanuta. Samuti väidan, et perehuumor on eriline nähtus pereliikmete vahelise tiheda suhtluse tõttu. Perekonnaliikmed kogevad omavahelises suhtluses sageli keerukaid ja vastuolulisi emotsioone. Seetõttu on neil võimalus kasutada nalju väga erinevates situatsioonides ning arendada pikaajalisi huumoritraditsioone, luua siseringinalju jms.

Minu uurimuse teoreetiline taust tõukub folkloristika ja huumoriuuringute ristumispunktist. See võimaldab arvestada nii konkreetsete näidete sisu ja vormi kui ka vernakulaarset traditsiooni, mis nende kasutamist reguleerib. Huumoriuuringud pakuvad analüüsiks kahte erinevat vaatenurka: huumor kui protsess (huumoripraktikad ja esitus) ja huumor kui tulemus (naljatekstid ja -žanrid). Mõlemad suunad mõjutasid minu uurimistööd, kuna humoorika folkloori sisu ja esitus peresuhtluses on alati teineteisest sõltuvad ja lahutamatud. Interdistsiplinaarsed huumoriuuringud erinevatest akadeemilistest valdkondadest täiendavad folkloristlikku lähenemisviisi, mis eeldab induktiivset arutlemist ja vernakulaarsete tavade täpset uurimist. Folkloori analüüs hõlmab mitte ainult konkreetse teksti läbilugemist, vaid selle teksti konkreetse, samuti üldisema levikukonteksti mõistmist, identiteetide (sageli esitajate ja vaatajaskonna vastuoluliste mitmik-identiteetide) ja muude omavahel tihedalt seotud teguritega arvestamist. Doktoritöö teoreetiliseks taustaks olevad uurimused käsitlevad huumori ja folkloori ristumiskohti, aga ka otseselt perefolkloori. Töös kirjeldan üldjoontes, kuidas

avalduvad naljades soolised erinevused ja millised sugudevaheliste suhete aspektid on perehuumori uurimisel üliolulised.

Üldistavates järeldustes võtan arvesse ka oma välitööde tähelepanekuid: konkreetseid demograafilisi, sotsiaalseid ja soolisi asjaolusid, mis mõjutavad kogutud naljade teemasid ja vormi. Selline lähenemine aitab jälgida mitmeid huumori loomise ja väärtustamise kihte Valgevene kontekstis ning annab panuse huumoritraditsiooni sügavamasse mõistmisesse konkreetsetes sotsiaal-kultuurilises keskkonnas. Valgevene pereelu kujundavate tegurite spetsiifiline konfiguratsioon mõjutab perehuumorit ja suhtumist sellesse. Eriti rõhutan, et tuumperekondadel on Valgevenes suhteliselt lühike ajalugu, järelikult on laiendatud pere liikmetel üsna oluline roll nii valgevenelaste pereelus kui ka nende humoorikas suhtluses. Seoses lahutuste arvu suurenemise ja laste arvu vähenemisega toimub populaarse arusaama kohaselt perekonna kuvandi teatav muutumine. Perekonda peetakse endiselt üheks põhiväärtuseks, kuid peretraditsioonid ja -praktikad on muutumas. Samuti võtab antud uurimus arvesse soolist aspekti: Valgevenes on 20. ja 21. sajandi vahetusel tugevnenud soolise võrdõiguslikkuse diskursus ja naiste emantsipatsioon nii töös kui pereelus. Patriarhaalsed vaated on Valgevenes tänapäeval siiani laialt levinud ning sooline võrdõiguslikkus on harva avaliku arutelu objektiks. Paljud naised omavad siiski liberaalset ja feministlikku maailmavaadet ning perekonna kontekstis on suhtumine naistesse järk-järgult muutumas.

Andmete kogumise ja interpreteerimise meetodid vormisid olulisel määral käesoleva doktoritöö tulemusi ja järeldusi. Suurema osa uuringu andmetest sain välitööde käigus, mis viidi läbi kahes etapis. Esimene etapp toimus aastatel 2016–2017 ja koosnes 60 suulisest poolstruktureeritud intervjuust 24–66-aastaste Valgevene paaridega. Intervjuud hõlmasid paljusid perefolklooriga seotud küsimusi, näiteks naljategemise, tõgamise, humoorikate hüüdnimede kasutamise ja naljakate peretraditsioonide kohta. Ehkki ma ei kavatsenud oma uurimistöös algselt käsitleda huumori digitaalset jagamist, mainisid mitmed intervjuueeritavad seda kõnelustes, rõhutades selle olulisust nende perekondlikes suhetes, ja seetõttu hakkasin sellegi kohta intervjuudes küsimusi esitama. Kuna suurem osa digitaalselt jagatavast huumorist oli meediumispetsiifiline, oli minu intervjuueeritaval mõnikord keeruline suulise intervjuu ajal näiteid tuua. Seetõttu viisin 2019. aasta kevadel läbi välitööde teise etapi. Lõin veebipõhise küsimustiku, kus palusin andmeid huumori digitaalse jagamise tavade kohta perekonnas, samuti näiteid ja kommentaare, miks need juhtumid on vastajate jaoks asjakohased ja naljakad. Veebiküsitlus oli anonüümne. Uuringus osales kokku 175 vastajat, kes jagasid üle 260 humoorika näite. Ehkki sellised meetodid ei võimaldanud juurdepääsu huumori esitustele nende loomulikus keskkonnas, aitasid intervjuude vastused mõista uuritavate suhtumist huumorisse ja selle kasutamisse perekonnas.

Välitööde käigus sain hulgaliselt vastajate kommentaaridega rikastatud näiteid suulisest ja digitaalsest huumorist. Minu uurimistöö olulisima tulemusena selgus, kui olulised on humoorika folkloori ja peresiseste suhete tihedad seosed. Isegi laialt levinud huumorivormid (nt anekdoodid, meemid) pole perekondlikus suhtluses kunagi neutraalsed, neile on antud tähendused, mis peegeldavad konkreetse

pere kogemusi. Mõnel juhul hõlmab see sõnastuse muutmist (nt kohanime lisa-mine). Kuid paljudel muudel juhtudel kohandavad folkloori konkreetse pere kogemusega sobivaks pigem selle esitusega kaasnevad kommentaarid ja kasutus-praktikad.

Perekondlikku huumorit pole tavapärase folkloorižanrite klassifikatsiooni abil alati kerge liigitada. Mõned tekstid sobituvad klassifikatsioonisüsteemi üsna loomulikult, näiteks anekdoodid, hüüdnimed, naljakad žestid või isiklikud narra-tiivid, samas kui teised võib paigutada üsna ebamäärasesse vestlusliku huumori kategooriasse. Naljad, vaimukused ja naljakad märkused tekivad igapäevase suhtluse käigus sageli spontaanselt. Enamikku neist kasutatakse üks kord, neid ei korrata kunagi ja need unustatakse kiiresti, aga teised muutuvad sagedasti kasu-tatavateks paroolideks või jäävad märksõnadena igapäevasuhtlusse. Perehuumori vormid varieeruvad sõltuvalt nende kasutamise kontekstist. Huumori valik ja kohandamine osutavad selgelt perefolkloori privaatsuspüüdlusele.

Nagu perehuumori vormid, sõltuvad ka selle teemad kontekstist. Siiski on võimalik nimetada mõned üldised sihtmärkide kategooriad, mis tekitavad pere-kondlikus suhtluses nalju. Minu intervjuueeritavate seas on huumor suunatud enamasti pereliikmete pihta, ehkki ka pereväliseid inimesi (nt sõpru ja kolleege) saab samadel teemadel pilada. Populaarsete teemade hulgas, millega ma välitöö käigus kokku puutusin, olid naljad iseloomuomaduste ja harjumuste, oskamatus ja teadmatuse, ametite ja hobide kohta jne. Mõned teemad osutusid teatavates peredes vastuoluliseks või isegi tabuks (näiteks tervis või välimus). Tuleb mainida, et keskendumise ühtedele teemadele ja teiste välistamise (või neile väiksema tähelepanu osutamise) tingis suures osas minu küsimustiku ülesehitus, aga ka intervjuueeritavate endi eelistused ja huvid. Samuti on oluline nende tahe arutada võõra inimesega tundlikke teemasid intervjuu käigus.

Minu vestluskaaslased mõtisklesid intervjuudes ka perehuumori päritolu üle. Kui naljade kõige viljakamad allikad on oma pere ja nende sõprade või sugulaste jutustused, on ka töökoht ja meedia olulised huumori allikad.

Eneserefleksioonil ja eemilistel tõlgendustel põhineva humoorika perefolk-loori uurimine osutab mitmele olulisele faktile:

Esiteks *hõlmab perekonna humoorikas folkloor hulgaliselt teemasid ja vorme, mille populaarsus jaotub ebahühtlaselt*. Üldtuntud žanrid, näiteks anekdoodid, laialt levinud naljalood jms, moodustavad suhteliselt väikese osa perekondlikust folkloorist, mis põhineb enamasti vestluslikul naljal ja humoorikatel meenutustel varasematest kogemustest. Perekonnanfolkloori nalja-kvaliteedi tingivad selles sisalduvad vihjed ühistele kogemustele, pereliikmete suhted, nende isiksused ja emotsionaalne seisund.

Teiseks, *humoorikas folkloor ei ole perekondlikus keskkonnas kunagi imperso-naalne*. See kohandatakse perekonteksti keerukas protsessis, mida on võimalik jälgida juttude ja siseringinaljade põhjal, kuid isegi laialt levinud naljasüžeed lakkavad olemast isikupäratud ja omandavad uusi isiklikke tähenduskihte, kui neid perekondlikus kontekstis jagatakse.

Kolmandaks, *tugev seos perehuumori ja emotsioonide vahel muudab huumori riskantseks ja oskuslikkust nõudvaks ettevõtmiseks*. Ühelt poolt suudab huumor

oskuslikult ja õiges kontekstis kasutamisel täita mitmesuguseid funktsioone: mitte ainult lõbustada esinejaid ja publikut, vaid modereerida konflikte, pakkuda neile alternatiivset viisi kritiseerimiseks ning kehtestada (või säilitada) gruppiseseid ja gruppidevahelisi piire. Mõnedes olukordades aitab huumor intervjuueeritavatel ja nende pereliikmetel väljendada ideid, mida võiks muidu sobimatuteks pidada.

Oluline on rõhutada, et *eneserefleksioon huumori kasutamise kohta perekondlikus suhtluses kinnitab ja rõhutab selle positiivseid külgi*. Üldiselt peetakse huumorit perekonna koostöömist soodustavaks teguriks. Perehuumori rõhutatud positiivsus eemilistes kontekstides on tihedalt seotud sooviga pereliikmete eest hoolitseda ja see sobitub ideaalse perekonna paradigmasse.

Teisest küljest võivad mõned huumori ilmingud olla seostatud agressiivsusega, nihutades sellega suhtlemiskonteksti mängulisest tõsiseks või potentsiaalselt ründavaks. Sellised nihked on sageli vaevu ja erinevalt tajutavad. Mõnel juhul pidasid ühed huumorit agressiivseks, kuid teised mitte; huumori agressiivse või heatahtlikuna tõlgendamine sõltus selle kasutamise kontekstist.

Ehkki suurt osa minu uuringu tulemustest tuleb vaadelda Valgevene kontekstis, on neil paralleele teiste kultuuridega, minu tulemused kajastavad suundumusi, mis on populaarsed maailma eri paigus. Seetõttu võib käesolevas doktoritöös esitatud juhtumianalüüs olla mudeliks, mida saab testida teistes sotsiaalkultuurilistes oludes. Olles nii triviaalne ja kõikjal esinev, hõlmab perehuumor ja selle üle mõtisklemine siiski olulisi (ja mõnikord tähelepanuta jäetud) teadmisi sellest, kuidas inimestevahelised suhted, sotsiaalne taust ja identiteet segunevad.

Doktoritöö koosneb neljast artiklist, mille kokkuvõtted on esitatud allpool:

Artikkel I

Fiadotava, Anastasiya. “‘If We Don’t Quarrel, We Joke’: Emic Perspectives on Belarusian Families’ Humorous Folklore.” [„Kui me ei tülitse, siis teeme nalja”: Eemilisi vaatepunkte valgevene perehuumorile] *Humor–International Journal of Humor Research* (ilmumas)

Artikkel annab üldise sissejuhatuse (pere)huumorisse ja selle üle arutlemise viisidesse. Uurin lähemalt huumorit kui heatahtlikkuse ja agressiivsuse piiril balansseerivat nähtust ning analüüsin, kuidas selline positsioon mõjutab reflektsoone perekondliku naljafolkloori üle. Samuti tuuakse artiklis välja huumori peamised funktsioonid peresuhtluses – nii rühmasiseste kui ka gruppidevaheliste piiride kehtestamine, konfliktiolukordade juhtimine ja vältimine, kriitika edastamine ja vigade parandamine ning riskantsete ideede ja raskesti väljendatavate tunnete väljendamine. Artiklis osutatakse ka erinevatele viisidele, kuidas huumor põimub agressiooniga: näiteks võib üks pereliige sama lauset pidada humoorikaks, teise aga agressiivseks, pealegi võib iga olukord olla naljakas ainult teatud piirini. Vahel nähakse huumorit agressiooni sünonüümina, eriti kui tegemist on kiusamisega ja naljadega kellegi teise kulul. Väidan, et vastuoluline suhtumine sellistesse huumorivormidesse põhineb asjaolul, et huumorit kaldutakse nägema

kui positiivset nähtust ning usul, et inimene peaks olema heatahtlik oma pereliikmete suhtes (mis välistab igasugused agressiivsed käitumisvormid teiste poolt, isegi humoorikas vormis). Artikkel kirjeldab eemilisi arusaamu nende vastuolude kohta ja perekondliku konteksti tähtsust humoorika folkloori kasutamisel.

Artikkel II

Fiadotava, Anastasiya. “Cooking with Humour: A Study of Belarusian Humorous Folklore about Family Cooking Traditions.” [“Kokkame huumoriga: Valgevene humoorikas perefolkloor söögitegemisest”]. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 71 (2018): 89–112.

Artiklis võrreldakse intervjuueritud pere kokandustraditsioone pilavat huumorit internetis levivate ja trüki ilmunud selleteemaliste naljadega. Võrdluse peamiseks kriteeriumiks on väärtused ja hoiakud toiduvalmistamise suhtes (ning laiemad pere- ja soolised aspektid), mis avalduvad neis kahes andmekogumis. Artiklis kirjeldatakse ka nende humoorikate žanrite esinemis- ja toimimisviise ning erinevaid võimalusi, kuidas nalja esitajad suhestuvad oma publikuga. Analüüs näitab, et internetis leiduvad tänapäevased anekdoodid põhinevad peamiselt patriarhaalsetel väärtustel, st vihjavad, et naine peaks (piisavalt hästi) süüa tegema, et abikaasa oleks õnnelik. Abikaasa (või mees üldiselt) tegeleb kokandusega vaid erandjuhtumil. Kuigi viimane teema on esindatud ka kokandusteemalises perefolklooris, on see üks väheseid kattuvusi nende kahe andmekogumi vahel. Perekondlik huumor toiduvalmistamise kohta tõukub pigem konkreetse pere traditsioonidest ja peegeldab konkreetseid olukordi, mitte kokandusega seotud üldisi soostereotüüpe. Suur osa pikaajalisest perehuumorist põhineb episoodidel, kui toiduvalmistamise ajal läks midagi valesti. Kokkamisoskuste üle naljatamise tava (või selle puudumine) on seotud ka peresuhetega ja sellega, kuidas perekonnas toiduvalmistamist harrastatakse. Artikkel lõpeb üldiste tähelepanekutega selliste mitmekesiste andmekogumite võrdlemise kohta.

Artikkel III

Fiadotava, Anastasiya. “Where the Structural Meets the Personal: Mother-in-law Humor Between a Joke Cycle and Joking Relationships in Belarus.” [Kui üldine kohtub isiklikuga: Valgevene ämmanaljad kui naljatsükkel või naljasuhe] *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* (ilmumas)

Artiklis käsitletakse ühte populaarsemat perehuumori teemat Valgevenes ja paljudes teistes riikides – ämmanalju ja muid naljavorme, mis osutavad ämma ja väimehe suhetele. Tuginedes Christie Daviese sotsioloogilisele lähenemisele sama teema tõlgendamisel, võrdlen naljade üldist rolli ja isiklike tähendusi, mida neile peres jutustamise käigus omistatakse. Väidan, et valgevene naljades korreleerub ämma kuvand minu intervjuueritavate kujutluses laias laastus ämma arhe-

tüüpse kuvandiga; samas – kuna see vastandub sageli kellegi perekonna tegelikele peresuhtele – oli suhtumine ämmanaljadesse kahemõtteline. Selle tulemusel suhtuti neisse teatud reservatsioonidega, seda eriti väimeeste poolt. Muud huumorivormid (nt kiusamine), mida võidakse kasutada perekonnas ämma-äia ja väimehe vahel, ei ole samateemalistest anekdootidest funktsioonilt selgelt eristatavad. Kaasaegne ämma-huumor lisab peresisestele naljasuhtele huvitava mõõtme: kuigi ämmanaljade esinemine peresuhtluses pole huumorisuhte võrdkujuks algtähenduses ja ämmale suunatud anekdootide jutustamine täidab sageli erinevaid ülesandeid, siis huumorisuhet tegeliku ämmaga (peamiselt vestlusliku huumori vormis) kasutatakse siiski eelkõige perekonnasiseste suhete hõlbustamiseks. Artiklis uuritakse ka ämmanaljade ja nende esituse soolist aspekti ning lõpetatakse tõdemusega, et naljade rääkimise ja nendes väljendatud väärtustega nõustumise vahel võib olla lahknevusi.

Artikkel IV

Fiadotava, Anastasiya. “Sharing Humour Digitally in Family Communication.” [Huumori digitaalne jagamine peresuhtluses] *European Journal of Humour Research* 8, no. 1 (2020): 95–111.

Artikkel tutvustab ja interpreteerib autori poolt sooritatud välitööde teise etapi andmekogumit. Selle põhjal tehtud sissevaateid täiendavad varasemate intervjuude käigus kogutud ideed ja näited. Töös kirjeldatakse digitaalse suhtluse funktsioone ja dünaamikat perekonnas. Andmeanalüüsis kombineeritud kvantitatiivsed ja kvalitatiivsed meetodid võimaldavad sellele probleemile läheneda erinevate nurkade alt. Kuna huumori jagamine digitaalse meedia kaudu on muutunud üha populaarsemaks, seda eriti nooremate perede seas, on välja kujunenud teatavad digitaalse huumorika suhtluse mustrid. Analüüsi tulemusel selgub, et huumori visuaalsed vormid (millest paljud on internetikeskkonna-spetsiifilised) domineerivad tekstiliste üle; laialt levinud sisu on sagedasem kui isiklikult loodud tekstid ja pildid. Jagamispraktikad näitavad siiski, et privaatseid suhtluskanaleid kasutatakse sagedamini kui üldiselt juurdepääsetavaid; jagajad ja saajad on pigem tuumperekonna liikmed kui laiendatud peresse kuuluvad inimesed. Paralleelselt kasutatakse suulisi huumori jagamise praktikaid ja internetipõhiseid viise; mõned digitaalsed jagamispraktikad hõlmavad ka suulist suhtlust. Digitaalse jagamise spetsiifikaks on näiteks asünkroonsus ja esituse tähtsuse vähenemine. Samuti kirjeldatakse artiklis huumori digitaalse jagamise iseärasusi perekeskkonnas ning käsitletakse geneerilise digitaalse huumori paindlikku kohanemist spetsiifilise perekontekstiga, samuti perekondlike kommunikatiivsete tavade kohandamist selle huumorika folkloori uue vormiga.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

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01.08.2019–present Estonian Literary Museum, Junior Researcher (1,00)
01.04.2019–31.07.2019 Estonian Literary Museum, Junior Researcher (0,20)
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List of selected publications

- Fiadotava, Anastasiya. “If we don’t quarrel, we joke”: emic perspectives on Belarusian families’ humorous folklore. *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research* [forthcoming].
- Fiadotava, Anastasiya. Where the structural meets the personal: mother-in-law humor between a joke cycle and joking relationships in Belarus. *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore*, 78 [forthcoming].
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2009–2014 BA, Tänapäeva kunsti teooria ja praktika, Euroopa Humanitaarülikool

Teenistuskäik:

01.08.2019–praegu Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, nooremteadur (1,00)
01.04.2019–31.07.2019 Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, nooremteadur (0,20)
01.09.2014–30.06.2017 Valgevene Riikliku Ülikooli Lütseum, ajalooõpetaja

Olulisemad publikatsioonid:

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DISSERTATIONES FOLKLORISTICAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

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