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Intra-household Gendered Power Relations in Serbia

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present findings from research on intra-household gender relations. The power relations in the household were measured through two dimensions. One is related to the financial decision-making in the household and includes the level of centralization and distribution of power in making decisions on expenditures for everyday life consumption and in regard to strategic financial decisions in households (approach adjusted from Vogler, 1994 and Pahl, 1995). The second is related to the division of household work and care for children and elderly in the family (based on Crompton, 2001 and Hochschild, 1997). The analysis is based on two waves of surveys on households' socio-economic strategies in Serbia in 2003 and 2007 of the Institute for Sociological Research of the Faculty of Philosophy, and enables longitudinal insights in slow changes that are occurring in this area leaving still a dominant patriarchal model of intra-household gender relations.

Intra-household relations are further explored through division of household responsibilities and management of the money in the household. In addition to these findings, the paper will present findings on different 'power regimes' in the households in relation to the economic power of women based on the assets ownership and employment. As two opposite cases will be presented 'power regimes' of women entrepreneurs which show higher level of intra-

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household power based on higher level of assets ownership and independent economic activity and rural women in the status of family helpers who are significantly deprived from assets ownership and who perform 'dependent' forms of work on family farms which is reflected on their marginal position within the household (but also reinforced by it). Two cases will be analyzed based on the research conducted by SeConS - Development Initiative Group: baseline research on women's entrepreneurship (Babovic, 2011) and research on rural women in the status of family helpers (Babovic, Vukovic, 2008).

Key words: power relations, household, gender relations, access to money, division of work.

I. Introduction

1. Gender relations within the household are grounded in the specific distribution of power which is shaped by the broader, macro-level gender regimes, but also by micro factors, such as specific composition of the household, value orientation and attitudes of couples or other household members, specific ideologies which define desirable or acceptable roles and behaviours of household members based on their gender, age, kinship or other characteristics.
2. There are different definitions of gender regimes in the literature, and for analysis presented here, two are important. According to Sylvia Walby (2004), gender regimes are complex social constructs occurring at four different levels of abstraction. They are constructed at the level of general social system, at the level of differentiation between private and public sphere, on the third level they emerge in different domains (economic, political, civil society), while at fourth level they appear as series of social practices (Walby, 2004). Blagojevic describes gender regimes as 'relatively structured relationships between men and women, masculinity and femininity, in an institutional and non-institutional environment, at level of discourse and at level of practice'. This structure is defined through gender roles, identities and gender representation, including gender performance (Blagojevic, 2002: 311). It is important to note that gender regimes can be observed at macro, mezzo or micro-level, and that they are grounded in the specific power relations. By observing everyday practices we can learn about deeper power relations and gender regimes at household level.
3. The objective in this paper is to reconstruct some elements of power relations and gender regimes at household level, through the research of practices related to decision-making on distribution of money in the household and division of household work and care. As Agarwal emphasized (1997: 2), complexity of intra-household gender relations cannot be reduced to division of labour and resources between men and women, but has to include the ideas and representations that are ascribing to men and women different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behaviour patterns. However, in the quantitative research these two aspects of gender relations are good indicators of distribution of power and markers of types of relations and gendered practices that are providing main framework for social reproduction of the household. Gender relations are 'both constituted by and help constitute these practices and ideologies in interaction with other structures of social hierarchy such as class, caste and race' (Agarwal, 1997:2).
4. Findings presented in this paper are based on several surveys: survey on socio-economic strategies of households conducted by Institute for Sociological Research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in 2003 and 2007 (Babovic, 2009), and three surveys conducted by SeConS: on rural women in the status of family helpers in Serbia in 2008 (Babovic, Vukovic, 2008), on women entrepreneurs in 2011 (Babovic, 2012) and on domestic violence against women in Central Serbia in 2010 (Babovic, Ginic, Vukovic, 2010).

II. Theoretical Approaches

5. The research on intra-household gender power relation was based on the two important theoretical and research streams. The research on household work division was based on household political-economy approach (Gershuny et al, 1994, Horell et al, 1994), while the research on decision-making on household budgets was developed based on approach developed by Vogler and Pahl (Vogler, 1994, 1998, Vogler and Pahl, 1993, 1994).

A. Theory of lagged adaptation

6. The division of household work is significant not only from the point of view of the intra-household organization and gender relations within the household, but also from the point of view of trends in the labour market. Individuals not only have to adjust their working hours with their household responsibilities, and vice versa, but must also harmonize them with working time patterns of other members of the household. This organization is strongly gendered and shaped by the gender power relations within the household.
7. During early 1990s study of interaction between labour force participation and social organization of work and care within the household became important. Post-Fordist social changes which include decrease of single, male breadwinner model of employment in the family and increased participation of women in the labour force opened the question of transformation of intra-household relations and obligations with changed employment patterns of men and women. Issues of work-life balance became very important as well as issues of gender inequalities in the sphere of household work and care for family members. The political economy of household approach was developed with the aim to explore whether changes in employment patterns of men and women are followed by changes in the intra-household responsibilities. Has been adapting to changes in the patterns of employment of women and men, Gershuny and associates pointed to two dominant approaches. First is the adaptive partnership approach which emphasizes that the division of household work reflects changes in employment patterns of men and women - if a woman is employed, her husband increases his participation in housework to compensate for the reduced engagement of women. Second is the dependent labour approach which considers that even when employed, women keep main burden of household work, while employment is considered as of secondary importance. In other words, social structures define the role of women in reproduction and the provision of support to male labour force as primary, so that women's engagement in home affairs remains insensitive to changes in their participation in the labour market (Gershuny et al, 1994: 151).
8. Gershuny and associates represent a third approach. They emphasize that the process of adjustment to changed work roles is long-lasting and even requires more than one generation. They described it as 'lagged adaptation'. The findings of these surveys pointed out that although in general there is a steady increase in male involvement in home affairs, it is still insufficient to compensate for the greater involvement of women in paid work, so married employed women carry a disproportionately larger, double burden of paid and unpaid labour (Gershuny et al, 1994: 152).
9. Arli Hochschild also came to similar findings, pointing out that most couples can be placed somewhere between a traditional and completely egalitarian type of household obligations sharing (Hochschild, 1997). She devoted particular attention to the different value systems that affect the behaviour of the household and that can be so powerful that people often describe their engagement in household work more in line with culturally-adopted stereotypes than real life practices. The perceptions of "gender-appropriate" activities are so strong that respondents are often more willing to counterfeit reality than to change their own stereotypes.

B. Money management in the household

10. In the research on the interaction between the power relations, decision-making related to money, and inequality within marriage, there are two dominant approaches: the resource theory of power and the sociology of gender (Vogler, 1998). The resources theory defines marriage as a set of exchange relations in which the balance of power reflects the contribution to the household resources, so the person who contributes the most has the most power (Feree, 1990, cf. From Vogler, 1998). In a pioneering study on the relationship of power in marriage, Blad and Wolff have suggested that a person with higher income has a greater decision-making power, that women have more power than the unemployed and that women's power grows with their length of service (Blood, Wolf, 1960, cf. form Vogler, 1998). Although a series of later studies confirmed that with the increased employment of women, their power increased, more careful analysis pointed to a series of problems in this simplified correlation. First, the resource theory was limited only to the issue of household money and ignored the ways in which household economies can override the impact of resource inputs on the household. Another problem was that the household was regarded as a unit isolated from society and a wider system of gender inequalities (especially in the area of access to paid work and wages, which systematically impacted the amount of resources individuals bring into the household). Finally, the resource theory has overlooked the importance of ideological and cultural factors that can override the effects of resource inputs.
11. Contrary to the resource theory approach, the approach developed by Vogler and Pahl (Vogler 1994, Vogler and Pahl 1993, 1994), focuses directly on the intra-household economy, showing that the way in which couples organize money within the household has independent effect on power, over and above the resources each person contributes (Vogler, 1994, Vogler, Pahl, 1993, 1994). They identified five basic types of home budget: (1) 'female whole wage system' in which wives managed all the money except the husband's personal money; (2) 'male whole wage system', in which husbands managed all the money and wives could remain without any personal money if not employed; (3) 'housekeeping allowance system' in which husbands managed most of the money, except for the wife's housekeeping allowance, (4) 'joint pooling system' in which couples pooled all or most of the money and managed it jointly, and (5) 'independent management system' in which both partners had independent incomes and neither had access to all the household money (Vogler, 1994: 227-228).
12. The research has shown that the most common type of budget in the UK was the joint pooling system which was found in about half of households. However, a more careful analysis revealed that three different sub-types occur within this type, depending on how strategic control over finances is organized and who takes care of everyday expenditures. In one type men retain strategic control in another woman, and only the third type represents a genuine common money disposal and it was present in about a fifth of households in the UK. This research was significant in many aspects but the finding that strategic and executive money management can be placed in responsibility of different persons and hide where real power is, was among most crucial contributions.
13. The authors noted that financial allocation systems were associated with a number of variables: the position of household members on the labour market, the household life cycle, the social class, education, division household work, normative attitudes towards gender roles and gender socialization patterns. Also, the amount of income has emerged as a significant variable, since in the categories of the lowest income women mostly managed money independently, while in the categories of high income this role was more often attributed to men. The pooling budget and the equal management of money were more common in households where both partners were employed full-time (Vogler, 1994: 241-243).

14. A more recent study on the management of household money, based on data from a 2002 survey in the UK, aimed to examine the extent to which changes occurred in the described household money management types (Vogler, Lyonete, Wiggins, 2008). New findings suggested that, despite the increased access to money in the household by women and decline of share of more traditional types of money management, but also despite the changes in marital forms (increased share of cohabitations), gender inequalities in the money management have not disappeared. However, the authors found that power was exercised in somewhat different ways. They suggest that new forms of money management resemble more to the business relationships in which rewards are proportional to inputs. These forms are regulated by market models of exchange, based on 'equity' (rewards proportional to inputs) rather than equality (equal rewards regardless of inputs). In this system, higher earner has more control over money and better access to money for personal spending and saving. This is, in their opinion, less result of women's increasing 'individualisation' in the labour market, and more result of tendency that couples define equality in a classically liberal way in terms of inputs (going half and half) and to ignore pre-existing differences in income. This tendency can strengthen traditional gender roles due to the existing gender pay gaps and they assume this can explain partly why cohabiting couples with unequal individual incomes are more likely to break up than those with similar incomes (Vogler, Lyonete, Wiggins, 2008: 139).

III. Intra-household division of work and care in Serbia: empirical findings

15. The gender regimes in Serbia were marked by essential inconsistency during socialist period – in the public sphere, primarily in the domains of employment and education women achieved high participation, while in the sphere of private relations inequalities were maintained. These inequalities were the consequence of persistent patriarchal culture, imbalanced power relations and reproduction of traditional division of responsibilities by which women were carrying almost all tasks related to the housekeeping and care for family members (Milic, 1994, Blagojevic, 2002). Postsocialist transformation which was postponed and difficult in this Region brought during 1990s expulsion of large number of women from labour market and their focus on everyday coping strategies within the hostile socio-economic environment marked by destruction of key social institutions and strong impoverishment of population. Women took the key roles of providing survival for the household and this phenomena was depicted as 'self-sacrificing matriarchy' (Blagojevic, 2002). After 2000, with political changes, intensive reforms and unblocked processes of transformation, women never reached the level of participation they had during socialism. Their employment and activity are much lower than among men and economic inequalities are marked by low access to property, business, etc. (more in Babovic, 2010).
16. Data on the gender division of household work during 2003-2007 indicate still strong presence of a patriarchal model in which most of household work is performed by female members of the household. Comparative data for 2003-2007 indicate relatively minor changes that are manifested by the increased involvement of men in household work.

Table 1: Share of household chores and childcare in households in Serbia, 2003-2007 (% of persons who have main responsibility for the task)

Chores	2003.			2007.		
	Women	Men	Together	Women	Men	Together
Cooking	90.3	3.0	6.7	85.4	9.0	5.6
Laundry	89.1	3.1	7.8	82.8	8.5	8.7
Cleaning	85.3	3.8	10.9	79.0	8.8	12.2
Ironing	90.6	2.9	6.5	84.6	8.5	6.9
Care for little children	75.7	2.7	21.6	75.0	9.2	15.7
Care for school tasks of children	75.5	9.7	14.8	74.4	15.3	10.3

Source: Babovic 2009

17. The analysis indicated that employment of women in division of household responsibilities is not so important factor. As more important factor appeared employment status of men and attitudes towards gender roles. Only in households in which women are employed and men unemployed, there was significantly higher engagement of men in household chores.

Table 2: Households made of couples without children, by employment status of man and woman and division of main responsibility for household chores, Serbia 2007

Household chores	Couples with employe woman and unemployed man			Couples with both partners employed		
	Women	Men	Together	Women	Men	Together
Cooking	75.5	11.5	12.9	86.8	7.6	5.7
Laundry	72.1	11.0	16.9	84.4	6.7	8.9
Cleaning	69.8	10.9	19.4	76.4	7.0	16.6
Ironing	77.5	9.3	13.2	86.9	6.1	6.9

Source: Babovic 2009

18. The analysis indicated strong influence of gender roles attitudes on patterns of division of household responsibilities within different employment arrangements of couples. The patriarchal value system is generally associated with greater engagement of women in household work compared to a non-patriarchal value system and employment status of man and woman do not make significant difference. Among liberal partners, women still bear much bigger responsibilities than men, but there is more variation between couples depending on employment patterns. The most active are unemployed men with employed women and followed by couples with both employed partners.
19. Research among different groups of women indicate presence of significant differences in the division of household labour. For example, these differences can be observed between women that are most underprivileged group in the labour market, unpaid family labour force working on farms and women that are in the much better position, being the entrepreneurs. While first group is in marginal position, without wage, excluded from decision making on economic activity on the farm, often lacking social insurances, assets and facing obstacles in accessing money in the household, second group is the example of the opposite – as entrepreneurs women carry main decision making power, they possess resources (often not only business, but others as well), they have economic autonomy and more control over their lives in whole.

Table 3: Who mainly conducts various household chores and care for children in households of rural women in the status of family helpers, in %, Serbia 2008

Household chores	Women	Men	Together/other
Cooking	98	1	1
Laundry	97	1	2
Cleaning	96	2	2
Ironing	97	1	2
Childcare	93	4	3
Care for school tasks of children	89	8	3

Source: Babović, Vukovic, 2008

20. However, despite observable differences it can be noticed that responsibilities are highly placed on women even in case of entrepreneurs. Research in other countries in the region provide similar picture and this division of labour indicates strong cultural practices that are deeply rooted and reproduced even among women with different socio-economic position.

Table 4: Who mainly conducts various household chores and care for children in households of women entrepreneurs, in %, Serbia 2010

Household chores	Women	Men	Together	Other
Cooking	79.3	10.6	5.6	4.5
Laundry	88.5	5.4	3.0	3.1
Ironing	86.8	5.0	3.2	5.0
Cleaning	79.6	5.1	8.0	7.3
Care for small children (0-6)	61.6	7.4	21.3	9.7
Care for school tasks of children	61.2	3.5	27.2	8.1

Source: Babovic, 2012

IV. Decision-making on household budgets in Serbia: empirical findings

21. Within the research on decision-making related to distribution of money in the household three types of household budgets were identified: fully centralized (all money earned by household members were pooled together), partially joint pooling system budget (all money except personal ‘pocket money’ was pooled together), independent budgets (each person would keep its own money but there is agreement ‘who pays what’).
22. Comparative data for 2003 and 2007 show a slight decrease in the share of completely centralized budgets and the corresponding increase in partially joint pooling and independent household budgets.

Table 5: Households by type of household budget, comparative data for Serbia 2003, 2007

Type of household budget	% of households	
	2003	2007
Centralized	79.8	70.8
Partly joint pooling system	10.8	14.9
Independent	9.5	14.3
Total	100	100

Source: Babovic, 2009

23. In both observed periods, there was higher share of households in which executive role in allocating money for daily consumption was in the hands of women. On the other hand, strategic power in money management was more frequently in the hands of men.

Table 6: Executive role in allocating household budget, Serbia, 2003-2007

Who distributes money for everyday consumption	% households	
	2003	2007
Women	46.2	50.0
Men	35.8	34.1
Other	18.0	15.9
Total	100	100

Source: Babovic, 2009

Table 7: Strategic role in allocating household budget, Serbia, 2003-2007

Who makes strategic decisions on household budget	% households	
	2003	2007
Women	26.9	32.7
Men	49.6	44.8
Other	23.5	22.5
Total	100	100

Source: Babovic, 2009

24. The regression analysis indicated that important factors influencing type of money management system in the household are employment of women and men, presence of patriarchal values and patterns of household work division. When only men is employed in the household and when men and women are affiliated with patriarchal attitudes in regard to gender roles, there are higher chances that strategic decisions on household budgets will be in hands of men (Babovic, 2010).
25. A survey on the socio-economic position of rural women in the status of family helping members on farms pointed to the particularly disadvantaged position of these women in terms of access to household money. In only 17.7% households women have strategic power in allocating household money, while men have strategic power in 64.4% of households. This data indicates a significantly higher gender gap in decision-making on money in rural agricultural and mixed households. Only 33% of these women have some money for personal consumption (Babovic, Vukovic, 2008).
26. The baseline study on women entrepreneurs in Serbia indicated different decision-making system. In the households of women entrepreneurs, strategic decisions on finances are in almost half of cases

(46%) jointly made by women and their partners. Among households of women entrepreneurs were only one person has main strategic decision-making role, more frequently women have main strategic role than their partners (25% vs. 17%) (Babovic, 2011).

27. Finally, it is important to emphasize that deprivation related to the access to money in the household represents economic violence. A survey on women's living conditions in Central Serbia has shown that 30% of women do not have access to the money in the household, nor do they have personal money, and when they need money for some personal consumption, they have to ask others. In 80% of cases, they ask their husbands or partners, and in 70% of cases they receive money when asked. Among these women there are 8% of employed women, who have personal earnings. This financial dependence on the partner is strongly linked to various forms of economic abuse and neglect but also to other forms of domestic violence against women (more on Babović, Ginić, Vuković, 2010).

V. Conclusions

28. Comparative data from the research on economic strategies of households show that in the period 2003-2007 there were slight changes in the division of household work and the management of household finances. Changes have been noted in the increased inclusion of men in certain types of household maintenance activities, as well as greater representation of households in which women manage family finances. Value patterns have emerged as key determinants of different forms of work sharing and power relationships recorded through decision-making on household finances, while employment patterns for men and women have proved less important. Nevertheless, despite the changes observed, it is important to point out that in both aspects gender relations in the household remain marked by unequal division of labour and budgeting. Housework responsibilities were predominantly within the competence of women, while the management of household financial resources was predominantly in the hands of men.

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