

## Relational Gender Strategies in the Division of Household Labour

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### ABSTRACT

The article presents the results of a qualitative inquiry into the gender division of household labour in Croatia, in the wider context of the total work practices of a household (i.e., total paid and unpaid work contributing to the realisation of its goals). The data were gathered through 92 semi-structured interviews (34 with men, 43 with women, and 15 with partners), carried out in all Croatian regions, with a high degree of variation in socio-demographic characteristics. Relational gender analysis was applied, the theoretical framework of which rested primarily on Bourdieu's praxeological approach to the concept of strategy, as well as on Pahl's conceptualisation of total work of the household and Hochschild's analysis of the gender dimension of strategies. Categorisation processes included three levels of coding (referential, open, and selective) while linking processes included the construction of analytical profiles and tables. The individual gender strategies identified relating to the performance of household labour are the strategies of unquestionability, resistance to change, cooperation, and proactive egalitarianism (for men), and the strategies of unquestionability, pressure, acceptance and proactive egalitarianism (for women). Bringing into relation the afore-mentioned male and female individual gender strategies and applying the criterion of gender balance resulted in the following typology of the household strategies related to the division of household labour: unquestioningly traditional, predominantly traditional, partly egalitarian, and proactively egalitarian. The

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component of justification concerning the division of household labour appears partially in both male and female individual strategies. The theoretical contribution of the analysis lies with the application of Bourdieu's praxeological approach to strategies in relational gender research.

**Key words:** division of household labour, relational gender analysis, qualitative research, Bourdieu, gender strategies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many studies of housework have been completed in Western European countries since the publishing of the first pioneering studies on the "sociology of housework" (Oakley, 1974a) and "housewives" (Oakley, 1974b). These studies allow researchers to speak in an empirically grounded way about the similarities and differences in the gender asymmetry of the division of labour in households in different national contexts (see, for example, Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette, 2007). On the contrary, in Croatia, despite the continual international growth in academic interest in researching unpaid household labour, not a single article was published from the middle of the 1970s to the middle of the 1990s on the division of labour between married couples (Topolčić, 2001: 768). This topic gained an empirical grounding only in the post-socialist period, mainly through research in a field that could be called "quantified inequalities" (Topolčić, 2001: 772). From the mid-1990s onwards, empirical data finally existed as concerns who (women or men) completes certain jobs in the household, and on notions of which jobs women should complete, and which jobs men should complete (Vučinić-Palašek, 1995; Leinert-Novosel, 1999; Tomić-Koludrović and Kunac, 2000; Topolčić, 2000, 2003; Čulig, Kuftrin and Landripet, 2007; Bartolac and Kamenov, 2013; Tomić-Koludrović, 2015; Klasnić, 2017; Tomić-Koludrović et al., 2018). Certain published qualitative-research studies were also of relevance here, but these studies were only completed with specific female populations in a rural context (Barada, Čop and Kučera, 2011; Šikić-Mićanović, 2012). Finally, but certainly no less importantly, in the post-socialist period, reviews emerged of previous explanatory concepts pertaining to the division of household labour (Šikić-Mićanović, 2001; Topolčić, 2001, 2003), and the authors drew in a (more or less) comprehensive and complex manner on those concepts in interpreting the results of the aforementioned studies.

However, even though in the post-socialist period, the empirical and theoretical basis for further research into the division of household work was finally established, in Croatia to date there has been a complete lack of qualitative research elaborating on this division from the perspective of (gender) strategies, while also considering the totality of household work practices. This may seem surprising at first, because – as is well-known – economic and other crises bring household use of resources and household survival strategies to the fore. During such crises, women in Croatian society (especially in the wartime period at the beginning of

the transition) played an important role (Tomić-Koludrović and Kunac, 2000). Apart from the obvious lack of a research tradition in this field,<sup>1</sup> a possible reason for such a situation is that in the literature published to date on topics linked to the division of household labour, the emphasis has been primarily on the position of women in the family or among partners, and not on the household as a wider unit of analysis. In addition, qualitative research on this topic, which includes interviewing men, has been entirely lacking to date.

In any case, to date only two articles have been published whose central theme is research into household strategies in Croatia (Bagić et al., 2017; Šikić-Mičanović, 2017), and a further three that analyse data from Croatia in a regional context (Cvetičanin and Lavrič, 2017; Efendić, Cvetičanin and Kumalić, 2017; Krstić et al., 2017). Not one of these articles includes material on or conclusions about strategies relating to housework. On the other hand, not a single article on the division of housework in Croatia makes use of the concept of strategy, which necessarily has a pronounced gender dimension in this field of debate.

It can therefore be concluded that in Croatia to date, there is no adequate empirical basis for a response to this article's key research questions. The questions are as follows:

What types of individual strategies do men and women follow in the division of housework?

What types of household exist with respect to the inter-relation of men and women's individual strategies in doing housework?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The starting point for this article's analysis can be summarised by Morris's (1989: 447–448) statement, according to which the household is a logical unit of analysis,<sup>2</sup> as it is “the location in which men and women most commonly come together” in a partnership<sup>3</sup> with different roles. This kind of perspective is also compatible with a “relational gender analysis” approach, on which this article heavily draws. We can define such an approach concisely – drawing on the already classic works of Con-

<sup>1</sup> Bagić et al. (2017) lists just a few previous articles that have researched “some aspects” of household strategies in Croatia (Karajić, 2002; Puljiz et al., 2008; Dobrotić and Laklija, 2012; Rubić, 2013). A further article, published later (Rubić, 2017), is also worth adding to this list.

<sup>2</sup> We define the household as a community of persons who live together “under the same roof” (in the same flat or house), or who share resources despite some member of their household being occasionally or temporarily absent (e.g. a temporary work contract away from the place of residence). In this article, following Pahl (1984), we regard the household chiefly as the unit within which different kinds of labour and resources are combined between several individuals. We do not imply that a consensus on such arrangements exist. In presenting the results, we focus on the practices and strategies of the adult partner(s), while the household represents the framework for their practices.

<sup>3</sup> This definition obviously does not consider relationships among non-heteronormative partners, which are not dealt with in this text, although they are included in the empirical research through which this research emerged.

nell (1987) and McKay (1997) – as a route to arriving at social-scientific insights that account equally for the existence of masculinities and femininities in the same frame of reference (Dworkin, 2015: 171).

In this case, strategies for the division of housework delineate the frame of reference. Our approach to “strategies” is inspired by that concept as understood in Bourdieu’s (1972, 1980) praxeological theory. We thus see strategies as a mode or logic of “lines of action” that are always aimed at attaining a certain (socially) objective goal, and they are necessarily both conscious and unconscious (Bourdieu, 1972; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 25).<sup>4</sup>

Bourdieu’s understanding of strategies has been chosen because it suits our conceptualisation and analysis of the division of housework as a dynamic, relational, gendered process, based on collaboration and conflict between the man and woman in the same household. Bourdieu places strategies at the heart of his vision of relational sociology, which is important for this type of analysis as it makes it possible to capture the complexity (as well as the partial concealment) of social struggles, inequalities and modes of domination. Ultimately, Bourdieu’s relational sociology enables one to conceptualise how housework is carried out as part of a wider set of social practices and structures, which this study tackles by observing the analysed practices as part of the total work done by a household.

Given that the analysed practices have a pronounced gender dimension, we have also relied on the concept of “gender strategies”, introduced by Arlie Hochschild (1989). In her work, the concept relates to actions through which “a person tries to solve problems at hand, given the cultural notions of gender at play” (Hochschild, 2003<sup>2</sup> [1989]:15). Hochschild’s work is important to our analysis because her understanding and empirical research into gender strategies is based on an analysis of doing housework, and it included both men and women.

As already mentioned, individual gender strategies in the division of housework are regarded here as part of the wider framework of the total household work, i.e. as a set of “practices adopted by members of a household collectively or individually to get work done” (Pahl, 1985: 251). Alongside housework (in the home, around the home, and caring for children and the elderly), practices that contribute to the household’s goals include: formal (paid) work (also including self-employment), informal paid work in various forms, informal unpaid work (the exchange of services and products), production (mainly of food) for one’s own needs, and services for one’s own needs (various repairs, construction work and home maintenance jobs that should otherwise be paid) (cf. e.g. Babović and Cvejić, 2002; Cvetičanin and Lavrič, 2017).

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth emphasizing that Bourdieu – in contrast to rational-choice theoreticians – does not consider a strategy to be “the purposive and pre-planned pursuit of calculated goals”. His understanding of strategy assumes the “active deployment of objectively oriented ‘lines of action’ that obey regularities and form coherent and socially intelligible patterns, even though they do not follow conscious rules or aim at the premediated goals posited by a strategist” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 25).

As the household strategies pertaining to doing housework can be described as an encounter between individual (gender-differentiated) strategies, in evaluating their character we have relied on the criterion of “gender balance”. In public policies and in the discourse of “corporate social responsibility”, this criterion is described as “a situation where both males and females have equal opportunities and access to matters in all the institutions of the society” (Omotoshō, 2013: 43). The contents and intentions of this and similar definitions<sup>5</sup> are here applied to an analysis of household practices and strategies, so as to develop a typology of household strategies, as they emerged in the analysis.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research is part of a wider project on gender identities and relations between men and women in Croatia.<sup>6</sup> The academic institutions involved in the project have ethically evaluated and authorised the research.

#### 3.1. Sampling

Data has been collected from 92 semi-structured interviews (34 individual interviews with men, 43 individual interviews with women, and 15 interviews with couples)<sup>7</sup>, completed with interviewees of various socio-demographic backgrounds and in all Croatian regions. The sampling was guided by the principle of attaining a heterogeneity that would make comparisons possible (Maxwell, 2013: 89–90). The choice of interviewees was guided by a combination of formal and theoretical logic (Flick, 2007: 26) and was therefore both ascertained in advance and emergent (Emmel, 2013: 85). The sample was chosen in advance in line with the principle of choosing a roughly equal number of interviewees from the various regions of Croatia,<sup>8</sup> in accordance with the population variation in features judged as important (type of settlement, education, economic status, employment and age). One subset of the interviewees was identified through a survey questionnaire completed in the

<sup>5</sup> For example, the government of the Netherland’s strategy of gender equality is focused on promoting “equal rights, possibilities and responsibilities for men and women” (Government of the Netherlands, 2020). One of the main goals of this strategy is to enable men and women to share responsibility for tasks both outside the home and in the household more fairly.

<sup>6</sup> The project is called: Relational Gender Identities in Croatia: Modernization and Development Perspectives (GENMOD) (HRZZ-IP-2016-06-6010).

<sup>7</sup> Participants in the couple interviews were not individually interviewed separately. During the couple interviews, interviewees were offered ample space to express differences in opinion and contradict their partners’ claims. In line with previous literature (Nyman, Reinikainen and Eriksson, 2018; Bjørnholt i Farstad, 2012), partner interviews were shown to offer insights unavailable in the individual interviews. In this case, couple interviews enabled on-the-spot observation of how a couple is constituted through verbal and non-verbal interactions (with one another and with the interviewer).

<sup>8</sup> For sampling purposes, the country was divided into six regions: North Croatia; Slavonia; Banija, Kordun and Lika; the Croatian Littoral and Istria; Dalmatia; and the city of Zagreb.

previous phase of the aforementioned project. The remaining interviewees were found through the researchers' personal contacts and carefully chosen mediators (Kristensen and Ravn, 2015). The theoretical logic was especially applied during the later phases of the sequential sampling. Indeed, the field research in each individual case included "thinking [about] why it is [...] important and what kinds of other cases should be interviewed" (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 36), that is, thinking over a search for "conceptually important cases" that are missing (Weiss, 1994: 31–32), and which have been chosen based on theoretical foreknowledge and previous research experience.

### 3.2. Conducting the interviews

The interviews were completed using an interview protocol that encompassed a wide set of topics linked to gender identities and relationships. The topics analysed in this article were among the most important ones addressed. The interviews were conducted by two female researchers and one male researcher,<sup>9</sup> and they lasted between 48 minutes and 200 minutes (the majority were more than 80 minutes). In carrying out the interviews, micro-ethnographic notes were gathered<sup>10</sup> that were later used in the interpretation of the data and in the construction of profiles of those interviewed and the households in which they live. Socio-demographic and other data gained from the survey questionnaire that the interviewees filled in were

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<sup>9</sup> As concerns the interviewer's positioning in relation to the interviewee, it is worth mentioning that the interview process was approached as an encounter between two totalities of different dispositions. This means that gender was approached as an important element in the encounter between the different habitus of the interviewers and the interviewees. However, the importance of age, education, and status-related differences among them was not neglected. Possible gender issues in interviewing (Reinharz and Chase, 2003; Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2003) were minimised because of the female interviewers' symbolic capital and interviewing skills. That is why they were largely successful in neutralising their interviewees' attempts to assume a position of hegemonic masculinity or to apply tactics of narrative closure when they felt their masculinity was under threat. The male interviewer, on the contrary, given that he was a young man, minimised his potential to threaten the hegemonic masculinity of his interviewees by appearing as a "non-threatening" man and through the tactic of non-assertiveness. The same tactic, as well as the foregrounded "listening" and "cooperative" position of the interviewer, minimised the possible distrust of the women towards his (male) gender. It turned out that both approaches (that of the female interviewers and the male interviewer) enabled a dialogue with *different* masculinities and femininities. Moreover, the differences in the encounters between different dispositions and gender identities resulted in additional insights rather than in difficulties with the analysis (i.e. "noise") (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2003, 58–59).

<sup>10</sup> The micro-ethnographic notes included: the physical appearance and the interviewee's body language, the clothes they were wearing during the interview, facial expressions and spoken language, and the set of features of the space in which they live. Apart from regional and micro-locations, the latter also included the kind of space and its size, the exterior and interior fittings, the kind of furnishings, as well as data on decorations, works of art and religious objects. Reactions to the interview question were also recorded (such as changes in body language and tone of voice), as well as the possible mismatch between what the interviewees say and how they behave. In the interviews with couples, special attention was paid to their mutual interactions.

also used in the construction of profiles, and in the following analysis. All interviews were transcribed completely and anonymised.

### 3.3. Coding and the data linking process

The qualitative analysis was conducted by alternating between the analytical processes of categorisation and connecting (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014). Categorisation processes included three levels of coding (referential, open, and selective), and the connecting processes produced analytical profiles and tables. The first level of coding aimed to shape the foundational categories of the material's organisation. Referential coding (Kelle, 2007a: 454) was applied to classify and prepare the material for further analysis.<sup>11</sup> Two researchers constructed the referential codes: one through deductive coding drawing on a conceptual framework, and the second through inductive, descriptive coding, guided by data gathered in the field (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 57–58). Drawing on these codes, the third researcher produced a version of the codes verified in the group data sessions in which all team members participated (including all three interviewers). After referential coding, the first technique used to connect the material gained was the production of analytical profiles of 20 theoretically saturated case studies of different kinds of relationships, with a particular emphasis on the division of housework.<sup>12</sup> By drawing such connections, we sought to better understand the logic behind the different cases (Bazeley, 2013: 189). We tried to do that through “recognising the substantial relations” (Dey, 1993: 161) among the analysed phenomena. In other words, we noted the interactions between the categories, which the coding had broken up in the meantime.

In the next phase, we introduced an analytical perspective focused on the gender dimension to individual strategies of doing housework. This was done to secure a source of theoretical sensitivity for further analyses (Kelle, 2007b). The relevant categorised parts of the transcript – observed in relation to the totality of the material analysed as well as to the constructed analytical profiles – were further researched in a manner inspired by the “open coding” of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory. In other words, after a basic sensitising to the perspective of strategies, the analysed material was viewed with a “fresh pair of eyes” and read in a cyclical manner, alongside a refining of the analytical perspective of the insights gained with each new reading.

In the last phase of coding analysis, selective coding was applied. This analysis was carried out on the theoretically saturated parts of the transcript. The concept of “strategy”, initially applied as an instrument for theoretical sensitising, grew to be

<sup>11</sup> Referential coding, as well as the later open and selective coding, was completed using the computer programme QDA Miner 5. A coding diary was kept, and analytical notes were made during coding. Standard procedures for ensuring reliability in qualitative research were observed.

<sup>12</sup> In the profiles, alongside housework, the other kinds of work that household members carry out was included.



the central category of our analysis. The features and dimensions that enabled the construction of a typology of gender-differentiated individual strategies that related to the division of housework crystallised in this phase of the analysis.

What ensued was the process of linking up the individual strategies. This was achieved by generating an analytical table for comparing case studies (Gibbs, 2007: 80–84). All categories relevant for the analysis of a certain case<sup>13</sup> were considered and then compared across the cases. Finally, the criterion of gender balance was integrated from theory. This resulted in a typology of household strategies related to housework.

## 4. RESULTS

As the analysed materials were comprehensive in scope, the research results have been presented here as a synthesis due to space limitations. We have added a short explanation of the criteria used to classify the results and (shortened) illustrative excerpts from the interview transcripts. First, we present the research results connected with individual gender strategies in doing housework, and then the different features of justifications that appear in several of them. Finally, we present the results of types of household strategies obtained with respect to the division of housework, categorised in terms of the gender-balance criterion. The stated household strategy is made up of a combination of male and female individual strategies and their inter-relations, viewed in relation to the household's total work.

### 4.1. Individual strategies linked with doing housework

When analysing the research results that relate to the interviewees' narratives on how they divide up between them the labour linked with housework, we found that individual strategies turned out to be clearly differentiated along gender lines. A logical way of presenting this is thus to group them into male and female individual strategies. Furthermore, given that the orientations of individual strategies (and of the "lines of action" that they presuppose) are best seen in terms of their aims, this is how we present them here.

#### 4.1.1 Male strategies

Individual male strategies include strategies of not questioning the division of household labour (unquestionability), resistance to change, cooperation and proactive egalitarianism.

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<sup>13</sup> Besides the categories listed so far (which relate to doing housework and other kinds of work), we have also considered data on the gender socialization of the interviewees, the material structural factors of importance for each individual case, and elements of gender ideologies present in the narratives.



The aim of the male **strategy of unquestionability** is to preserve the traditional gender order.<sup>14</sup> When a certain element of this gender order was called into question in the interviews, men following this strategy would defend it as “natural”, and the division of housework between men and women was considered “normal” and “clear” (“*it’s normal that she does what is... what they say is... a female domain*”).

Furthermore, in the interviewees’ discourse, the gender division of housework sometimes seemed so clear that it was obvious the interviewees took it for granted and it did not need explaining. For some interviewees, it was difficult to even articulate opinions about it (“*most of it... she is... a normal thing, she [his spouse] does the work around the house...*”). Just posing questions of this kind was considered as something unusual, potentially disruptive and “unnecessary” (“*well women mostly do that anyway*”). For example, when asked about the division of housework and other work from the time when he and his partner set up home together, one interviewee replied:

*Ante: You can figure it out yourself... from our earlier conversation ... the system we had for dividing up chores. My God, she cooked as is normal in the home ... and all that... [...] My God, preparing the lunch, everyone knows that’s a woman’s job! You know, clean, prepare the lunch and get the kids ready.*  
(Ante, male, 44, village)

Men who follow this strategy view the division of housework as part of tradition, and link it with their own primary socialisation:

*Pave: It was very clear for us, from the very beginning, I wouldn’t interfere in those things! And so, what my father left, you know... to the female household members, as you might say, that’s what I left to my missus.* (Pave, male, 70, village)

It became clear through the interviews that men who follow the strategy of unquestionability consider women to be more capable of housework and caring for children (“*it’s somehow easier for them than for men*”), and some also considered that it was a part of their “nature”.

*Karlo: No, that hasn’t changed in the last five thousand years (laughter) (...) many people make mistakes with this, they try and be what nature says they’re not...* (Karlo, male, 64, small town)

What emerges from the statements of the men who follow the strategy of unquestionability, is that they do not do any kind of housework, except for what they con-

<sup>14</sup> The traditional gender order is based on a gender ideology that “emphasizes the value of distinctive roles for women and men. According to a traditional gender ideology on the family, for example, men fulfil their family roles through instrumental, breadwinning activities and women fulfil their roles through nurturant, homemaker, and parenting activities. Egalitarian ideologies regarding the family, by contrast, endorse and value men’s and women’s equal and shared breadwinning and nurturant family roles.” (Kroska, 2007: 1867).

sider clearly “male” work (repairs, manual and craft work, and other kinds of work linked to technical skills and physical strength).

The aim of the male **strategy of resistance to change** is a defence of the traditional division of housework, and, thus, of retaining the traditional gender roles. By following this strategy in various ways men strived to draw and defend boundaries concerning which chores are “theirs” and which they can do only sometimes.

They strove to draw boundaries around jobs they considered “the most manly” (car, repairs, chopping firewood etc.). Alongside this, they occasionally (rarely) participated in housework such as vacuum-cleaning, cooking and tidying up.

*Goran: So, I would do those outdoors jobs, mainly, [my] wife would deal with cleaning the house... washing, I mean, of course, all these standard, classic household jobs. (...) Now the garage needs cleaning... now there's an argument. I claim it's inside the house, that I don't do that. And she, of course, insists that since the car and the firewood is here, that I am the one who makes that mess (...) In our relationship, interestingly, I adore cooking. Cooking is really a hobby of mine... so that, here, my wife doesn't take on much of the cooking. Anyway, my mother-in-law is a professional chef, so during the week we go to hers for lunch every day. (Goran, male, 41, suburb)*

Ways of performing the male strategy of resistance included: indifference, intentional separation from the sphere of household chores and a lack of willingness to learn about doing housework (“*I wouldn't say I really know how to turn on the washing machine*”,<sup>15</sup> “*He doesn't know how to scrub the bathroom, he's never done it*”). These are followed by doing housework in a neglectful or bad-quality way (“*He always kept to the middle, he never pushed the vacuum cleaner or brush under the bed – oh, no*”) and invoking different perceptions of standards of tidiness (“*We have different perceptions of tidiness somewhat*”, “*It can stay like that for me... I could live in a mountain hut, no problem*”).

Housework was also avoided by leaving the place in which it was to be done (e.g. by moving from the kitchen to the lounge, going into the yard, going to the workshop or garage and leaving the house altogether). These moves boil down to the conclusion that “someone has to [do it]”, and it is clear who that “someone” is (“*she's the one for that housework at home, which I avoid, you know how it goes... and she, whether she wants to or not – has to... someone has to*”).

The aim of the male **strategy of cooperation** is to maintain balance in the relationship by accepting the female's initiative to divide up the household chores in a different (non-traditional) way. This male acceptance includes replying to the female's initiative with practices. The male strategy of cooperation emerges as a response to a female strategy of pressure, but can also emerge because of pressure from structural factors, or because of both these pressures combined. Examples

<sup>15</sup> It is worth mentioning here that the interviewee has a university degree in a technical subject.

of pressure from structural factors include cases of shift work or the man taking early retirement (while the woman continues working). Other cases include those in which the woman in the relationship is more educated, earns more or has longer working hours. At the same time, it is possible to differentiate between cases in which the man takes on only one household chore, such as cooking (and does so primarily when the woman is not at home), from those in which he takes on a larger range of household chores. In these differences in the chosen kind of “cooperation”, one can also see the difference between “help” and “making a concession” (by doing one household chore). “Making concessions” in this way should be differentiated from the “more serious” action of taking on a range of tasks. Namely, the latter leads to a shift in the previously maintained boundaries, while the practice of “making concessions” in effect defends the earlier established boundaries between “male” and “female” chores.

The lowest level of cooperation does not constitute a strategy but rather appears in the form of “moments” in which men respond to significant pressure (“*when [she] gets mad*”) by doing a household chore (“*when we see that ‘all hell has broken loose*”). We can speak of different levels within this strategy, which depend on the form of the man’s cooperation. We can thus differentiate between: (1) occasionally doing household chores when the woman partner requests them (“*he does it when I force him to, when I say to him: ‘vacuum now!’*”); (2) accepting taking on certain regular household chores (“*when we started living here independently, most of the work was left to me alone (...) over time and through discussion we reached a division [of labour] – ‘go on, you wash the pots*”); and (3) the man specialising in certain household chores on his own initiative, such as taking on jobs he considers less “female”, for example vacuum-cleaning or cooking (“*[I] stupidly waited for her to cook (...) and then I started cooking those simple dishes bit by bit, and nowadays I cook everything*”), or taking on “supplementary” household chores, such as cleaning shoes, occasional big tidy ups, arranging clothes in the wardrobe (“*my husband organises and sorts out quite a lot of it, yes, especially when I go away somewhere, then he loves to have a tidy up (...) he loves to look after the shoes, that they are shined...*”).

Replacing the expected completion of housework, e.g. with a paid service by a professional person (with the man taking on at least half the expense, or all of it) can also be understood as one way of performing the male strategy of cooperation. The same goes for a man who “tries to be tidy”, as well as for other kinds of “recompense” that aim to garner the female partner’s approval or invoke a feeling of fairness in the relationship.

The aim of the male **strategy of proactive egalitarianism**, alongside the desire to attain as much fairness as possible in the relationship, also includes a component whereby the worse position of the woman in society is recognised. The desire for broader social changes directed at improving the position of women is also a part of this strategy.

*Bernard: Well, it's definitely easier for men (...) Because society is patriarchal (...) I think that is changing, definitely. But now, how fast – it's difficult to say, but society is certainly still patriarchal. (Bernard, male, 43, city)*

*Dražen: I think it's easier being a man, and that's true worldwide and not just in Croatia. Because women are paid less for the same jobs, chauvinism is present. (Dražen, male, 41, city)*

Interviewees who follow the strategy of proactive egalitarianism do not see a difference between “male” and “female” household tasks. More succinctly put, they proactively deny any kind of gender difference present in such tasks.

*Bernard: Male and female jobs don't exist (...) that kind of division doesn't exist. (Bernard, male, 43, city)*

Besides the principled erasure of the boundaries between “male” and “female” tasks, one way of performing this strategy included attempts to make the practices of doing housework conform to the principle of “*who has time does it*” as closely as possible. In such cases, the individual obligations are agreed on in line with preferences (“*he does more ironing than me because he likes ironing more than I do*”). The same applies to looking after children, that is, the man also participates in the emotional labour.

*Question: What does looking after the child mean to you personally? Jurica: A great deal. (...) Now is that time, in this period you build a connection with the child, which remains for the rest of your life. And if I skip this now, it won't be possible to develop it later to a greater degree. (Jurica, male, 38, city)*

Men who follow the strategy of proactive egalitarianism mentioned their parents' division of labour as having been more egalitarian than others, or having been taught a lesson about the desirability of doing housework so that everything would not be “the burden of the woman”:

*Emil: ...they tried their hardest to push me and teach me so as to shape me into an independent person from when I was young. (Emil, male, 25, city)*

#### 4.1.2. Female strategies

Individual female strategies include strategies of not questioning the division of household labour (unquestionability), applying pressure, compliance and proactive egalitarianism.

The aim of the female **strategy of unquestionability**, in line with the male strategy of the same name, is to maintain the traditional division of housework and the traditional gender order. The difference compared with men lies in the fact that women accommodate rather than initiate this kind of strategy. Just as with men,

the important elements include drawing on tradition, socialisation, the gender order and gender essentialism. The traditional division of chores is understood as “normal” and “clear”, having begun with gender socialisation and persisting up to present-day relationships.

*Question: What do your parents expect of you (...)? Blanka: Of course, [to take care of] the cattle, that I can help my mum cook, that I can wash the dishes for her, that I can clean for her. That I know how to dig... so that as they say, when you go away one of these days, you do not end up not knowing anything, and [your parents are] ashamed. (Blanka, female, 49, village)*

For women who follow the strategy of unquestionability, housework is part of their identity, as is the skill of performing many fine-grained practices that they consider “natural” or deeply “embedded” (“as if something were mechanically ingrained in you”).

Among the interviewed women, the strategy more often appears in the village and among less educated interviewees, although it was also observed in certain older women in the city:

*Lepa: I did loads [of housework], he was... more of a delicate kind... and all that. But there was no special work to be done... (...) he loved to lie down, to have a nice time, read and so on, he found a style of living that suited him, yes. (...) he preferred walking and... you know, with the guys... And I stayed at home... plucking spiders... (...) [my] husband didn't do that [housework], he didn't wash the dishes, iron the children's clothes, get them dressed, sort them out, he just had to take them by the hand when they were already properly dressed and, you know... take them for a walk. (Lepa, female, 81, town)*

Furthermore, the role of the mother-in-law turned out to be important, especially in village households. In such households, the mother-in-law shaped the young woman's life, while the man's job was to work outside the household (“and she [the mother-in-law] would always say: ‘you have small children, you stay at home, keep an eye on the children, cook the lunch, clean the house!’”).

Yet, it is worth adding that women sometimes took on “male” tasks outside the household, for instance, in food production for their own consumption or for sale (agriculture). This also went unquestioned (“sometimes when my husband isn't at home, I have to also do his bit of the work and mine... no choice... that's how it was”).

The lives of women categorised within the strategy of unquestionability are strongly focused on the household, caring for children and life at home, even when they are engaged in paid work outside the household. Despite the presented unquestionability of the division of housework, in some interviews it was possible to

note (on a micro-ethnographic level) the internal regret because of the everyday “tacit compliance” with the gender order imposed by men.

The aim of the female **strategy of applying pressure** is to change the traditional division of household labour by changing traditional gender roles. Ways of performing this strategy include various forms of criticising because of uncompleted household chores, as well as demanding from men that they carry out occasional chores such as tidying up or vacuum-cleaning, or everyday chores such as washing the dishes or putting the dishes in the dishwasher. At the same time, some men need to be told “pretty often”:

*Question: How often do you have to tell him? Anita: Pretty often. Alen: Pretty often.*

*Question: How often is pretty often? Anita: I don't know, how often would we say? Alen: Every morning, ha ha ha. (Alen and Anita, male and female, 47 and 40, village)*

Attempts at increasing the quality of the housework men do were also noted (“*If I ask him to do something then he should do it properly*”, “*I went for him again, he washes the bathroom, but not properly, it's... I criticise a lot, I criticise a lot*”), as well as a shifting of existing gender boundaries through the more permanent allocation of household chores to the man:

*Mara: We had one of us on one shift, the other on the other shift, you know? I would do mornings, he would do afternoons. Because of the little boy, he had to learn, right? And... then he [husband] had to begin cooking... and he is willing to cook. He happily cooks... and he does all the other tasks. Should all that be waiting for me when I come home?! – No way! (Mara, female, 38, village)*

It is important to mention that one subset of women within the strategy of applying pressure viewed lower levels of participation (i.e. occasional participation) as already fulfilling their strategy. They considered it to be an adequate shift when the man learned to “help” in the household (“*if he sees that I'm not available to do it*”), especially in the cases of entirely asymmetrical distribution of chores among the parents' generation.

On the other hand, some women demand and expect a higher level of participation. It is important to mention that in the statements of one subset of women within the strategy of applying pressure, significant support to men in changing their practices was noted.

The female **strategy of compliance** consists of giving up on the aim of attempting to change the traditional division of housework and thus of altering traditional gender roles within the relationship. This strategy therefore has a more passive character. It can be read off, for example, the statements that express complying

with the burden of doing housework, alongside a minimising of their difficulty (*“I find those household chores simple because I can do them quickly”*).

Female interviewees’ minimising of the importance of housework done also features in a comparison with “male” jobs:

*Jagoda: Well, I think household chores would be easier for me, than going into the wood to pull down and saw wood. (...) he does that work outside, which is more... physically demanding, I wouldn't be able to do that part. (Jagoda, female, 39, village)*

Within the female strategy of compliance, even educated women with dominant work roles, i.e. women in households where the man’s career was secondary and in which he agreed to cooperate in doing a significant portion of housework, agreed to do housework that was described as especially “female”:

*Laura: I have the larger income, yes, twice as big (...) In our home of course I wash, I put the clothes in the washing machine, I iron, I change the sheets (...) In our society a man has that role, feels that he must be employed and that he must look after the family and I think that they aren't flexible enough to adapt to some other role. (Laura, female, 47, town)*

The woman’s minimising or passing over the extent of the asymmetry in the gendered division of work is noticeable. Sometimes the female interviewees stated that the division of household labour was not differentiated along gender lines, even when this was contradicted during the interviews:

*Štefica: Who has time does it. Very short and simple... Slavek: Well, it's not really like that... (Štefica and Slavek, female and male, 53 and 57, village)*

Another form of minimising and hiding the non-egalitarian character of a relationship is a pronounced identification with the household sphere, especially through caring for children when they are small.

*Mara: It means a lot to me that I'm with them at home, you know (...) it's really because of them... because of the children, you know? (Mara, female, 38, village)*

It is worth mentioning, finally, that the women who follow the strategy of compliance enter it in two different ways. The first consists of giving up on the previous strategy of applying pressure (which can be accompanied by an emotional component of resignation and dissatisfaction, visible on the micro-ethnographic level):

*Štefica: What, what would I change, what could I change (...) each person is a separate individual and you can't change anything here. (Štefica, female, 53, village)*



Another way of beginning to follow the strategy of compliance is through it forming the foundation of the total work of the household and the relationship. This was recorded, for example, in some of the cases in which the man spends more time than the woman doing paid work, earns significantly more, or both:

*Dunja: He comes home shattered at around 10 p.m. and I don't feel any kind of need to say: 'you could have done this'. (Dunja, female, 43, large town)*

The aim of the female **strategy of proactive egalitarianism** is to attain as much fairness as possible in the relationship, as well as to achieve broader social changes focused on improving the position of women. This aspect could be said to be identical to the stated intentions of the male strategy of the same name. Yet, the difference is that women speak from the position of their own experience of gender discrimination and of belonging to the group discriminated against on gender grounds.

Female interviewees who follow the strategy of proactive egalitarianism sometimes mention their quest for an egalitarian partner (“*some normal person who isn't a mummy's boy, you know... who I would have to serve*”), as well as caring for the position of other women and for gender fairness in general (“*[I'm an] old feminist*”).

One interviewee mentioned gender socialisation in a feminist spirit:

*Greta: [Mum] always tried to bring us up in that feminist spirit...women's rights, women and so on... she tried to teach us that a woman has to be self-aware (...) that she has to know how to fight her ground. (Greta, female, 40, large town)*

The interviewees who follow the strategy of proactive egalitarianism expect equal participation from their partners in doing housework:

*Lorena: We do everything [equally]. Question: How is [housework] divided between you? Lorena: There is no division. (Lorena, female, 39, city)*

*Greta: We all do everything, it's really a nice relationship in our household. (...)*

*Question: How did you reach this division of labour? Greta: Well, I don't know, entirely naturally. (Greta, female, 40, large town)*

The latter statement can be linked up with the searching for (and managing to find) an egalitarian partner, of which the interviewee spoke earlier on in the interview. According to the interviewee, this “naturally” resulted in an egalitarian division of housework. Yet, it is worth emphasising that women who have not managed to find an egalitarian partner or who have not succeeded in their struggle for an egalitarian division of housework, can also proactively seek greater gender equality.

In such cases, there is a “quiet” promotion of egalitarianism “from below”, whose aim is to increase gender equality in the next generation. This type of performing

the strategy of proactive egalitarianism is achieved by directing the gender socialisation of one's own children towards more equal gender practices:

*Klara: I will bring him up [a five-year-old son] so that he knows in future, that's my number one thing – that he can do all the work that a woman does, that he can look after himself – because, wherever life takes him, he will be able to make use of so much of this, and yeah, he will know how to treat a woman, these... these are the two things most important to me. (...) He must treat his wife as if she were equal to him, and not [think] 'you're female, you're inferior'.* (Klara, female, 41, village)

#### 4.1.3. Justifications within the individual strategies

In the individual male strategies of resistance and cooperation, as well as in the individual female strategies of compliance and applying pressure, we encountered statements that attempted to justify a person's own practices, or those of their partner, or both, in the division of housework.<sup>16</sup>

Men used justifications (various excuses) to try to explain their own non-participation or inadequate participation in doing housework. It is important to note that each such excuse, besides demonstrating that the men in question are not satisfying their female partner's demands, also indicates their exposure to the pressure of gender egalitarian norms. This also includes an awareness of not living up to expectations.

Certain male justifications were "very concrete" (*"Me!? Go and buy bread? What about them? What should they do? Lie down? And I should go and bring them bread!?"*). Others used arguments from the cultural repertoire of gender essentialism, "respect for tradition", their own kind of gender socialisation, or some combination of these:

*Bojan: Cooking, it's as if it were an innate skill of hers, isn't it? It isn't so much for men, is it?* (Bojan, male, 55, small town)

We came across comparisons with other men (among relatives and friends, or generally in the neighbourhood) for whom it was asserted that they were "worse" than the interviewees because they do even less in the household. The relationship of these men towards their female partner was also claimed to be generally "worse" than that of the interviewees:

<sup>16</sup> These statements were sometimes so commonplace that they almost seemed like a separate strategy (one grounded in justifications). However, since the concept of strategy presupposes a pattern or a "logic of practice" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), the statements here should just be a component within the various strategies. In other words, we are dealing with examples of justificatory practices that can be inserted into several different strategies.

*Slavek: There are those much worse than me, really... I at least clean the dishes,<sup>17</sup> this is one example, isn't it? (...) but another husband, when did he ever wash one plate instead of his wife or daughters at home... there's no chance, you understand? (...) I'm not like that. (Slavek, male, 57, village)*

A male invoking of supposed gender differences was also reported, wherein the women are allegedly less tired out by housework and more capable of doing it quickly and better than men (*"she is always on her feet, so... (laughter) she is difficult to follow!"*). Male interviewees also invoked their own inadequate capacity to do so much "constantly" (*"she's always doing something, when I get home I have a good meal and then sit down... and watch television, I know how to relax..."*).

One subset of the justifications emphasised the importance of "help" and "concessions" that the man makes by doing "female" work in the household (*"now I have time, so then, ok, you do some female work... I mean female... female-male, you know?"*).

Finally, some interviewees also stated that men do not do housework so that they can focus on paid work:

*Bojan: Men expect these household chores of women. (...) if left without it, then a man cannot carry out their plans (...) if I had to dress the child, drive around and all this... no luck there, you know? After all, we are talking about a group effort here, right? (Bojan, male, 55, small town)*

A subset of the female justifications featured as a mirror image of the male ones. They invoked similar arguments, such as that their partner "is *better (...) than the others*" or that they "*can do the work faster*", because women are more capable of doing housework.

The difference, however, lies in the fact that the focus of the justifications here is once again on the "inactivity" of the man and its causes, and not on their own (female) practices. The latter practices are only mentioned insofar as women try to justify their asymmetric contribution to the household.

The second difference lies in the male narratives less clearly stating to what the alleged differences in men's and women's capabilities for doing housework should be attributed ("nature", "upbringing", "habit" or individual characteristics). The female narratives attempt to specify the causes somewhat more clearly:

*Jelena: It's maybe easier for me to do that part. From when I was young it's been kind of instilled in us, which is why we carry on behaving like that. (Jelena, female, 46, city)*

*Lana: ...because I believe that a man can't do something that a woman can... they aren't precise like a woman (...) they will do it superficially or... how can I*

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<sup>17</sup> It is worth mentioning here that Slavek's wife Štefica practically always cleans the dishes.

*explain it to you... it's like they know, but in fact they don't know how to do it well enough like a woman does. (Lana, female, 33, village)*

*Dunja: Women are more prepared and perhaps they are genetically more capable of doing several things at once... (Dunja, female, 43, large town)*

Just as in the case of the male interviewees, the quoted female interviewees also combine different kinds of justifications. As can be seen from the above statements, the alleged roots of their own behaviour and practices are sometimes quite like those among the men, and in some cases, completely congruent with them.

In some of the female justifications, we noted that neglecting one's career and taking on housework was explained in terms of caring for the children (especially newborns and small children).

*Nikolina: I wish I just had a bit more time, but from when [name of daughter] was born, I haven't had the time (...) if only I had more time to advance in my profession (...) I have some kinds of perhaps feminist views, but as far as [doing housework] is concerned, it isn't a problem for me... (Nikolina, female, 41, suburban village)*

## 4.2 Strategies for the division of household labour

The depicted housework-related male and female individual strategies, viewed in the wider framework of a household's total work practices, were analytically related to one another.<sup>18</sup> Following that, the "gender-balance" criterion (integrated into the analysis from theory) was applied. This resulted in the following four types of strategies for the division of household labour: unquestioningly traditional, predominantly traditional, partly egalitarian and proactively egalitarian.

*The unquestioningly traditional household strategy* is based on the co-existence and compatibility of male and female individual strategies of there being no space to question the division of housework. In this case, no conflict occurs between the male and female individual strategies: they complement one another through cooperation, that is, they reinforce one another.

The premise of the unquestioningly traditional household strategy is that the man does the work that matches up with the "family breadwinner" function, or has a different source of income that supports the "breadwinner" position, such as a pension. This enables the man to invoke his own unquestioned place in the traditionally understood gender order.

<sup>18</sup> A direct encounter between the individual strategies of men and women was visible in the interviews completed with couples. Yet, given the relational character of strategies and how the interview procedures were constructed, the partner's strategy was also visible in the data gathered through each interview conducted with an individual. The theoretical framework applied in the analysis primarily relates to Bourdieu's practice-based approach to strategies, which presupposes that an empirically rich analysis resonates with the social structure of the various fields and reveals the logic of practice unfolding in those fields.

On the other hand, this household strategy presupposes that the woman does practically all housework (also including much of the work done “around the house”). In this strategy, the woman does not earn a wage outside the household or – if she does – her paid work is perceived as “secondary” in relation to that of her partner, as well as to housework (considered to be “her” obligation). Besides housework and (in some cases) paid work outside the home, women who follow this strategy do a large part of the self-provisioning work, e.g. in agriculture and food production:

*Ankica: So then I took on the barn work and I handled it myself... it's like a second job now. (Ankica, female, 50, village)*

To fulfil the role of “main breadwinner” in the literal and symbolic sense of the phrase (i.e. that they earn enough, and also satisfy the other role expectations), a subset of the men following the unquestioningly traditional household strategy increase the intensity and amount of paid work on the formal or informal labour market. This also increases the stress linked with such work, sometimes to the limits of seriously threatening their health:

*Ante: I have survived two heart attacks (...) she sees it differently to me (...) men are more self-contained and carry it inside all the time, that something, that whole burden in life, all the stress, and [the question of] how will we get by tomorrow... (Ante, male, 44, village)*

On the other hand, men who – owing to the compatibility of various structural factors with their work history – manage to fulfil the role of “main breadwinner” without too much effort, live a much more relaxed life (compared with that of their female partners). Even when they increase their participation in self-provisioning work (e.g. after retiring), they have ample space for their own activities. They do not participate in housework, while the woman’s working day does not end insofar as any work remains to be done in the household.

Just as in the earlier described individual male and female strategies of unquestionability, the unquestioningly traditional household strategy also maintains the traditional gender order and the man and woman’s place in it. Women who have an unquestioning attitude to the division of housework support such a household strategy, while passing over or minimising the difficulties they pass through. They sometimes express their reflections on that situation as regret:

*Ankica: And somehow the female gender... somehow, I always feel sorry for it... Question: And why is that? Ankica: Well, I dunno. Housework... it's loads of work that isn't viewed as work. You have loads of work and, in reality... when you do it... no one sees it, that you did it... and the men... what they do outside... well, you see what they've done. (Ankica, female, 50, village)*

*The predominantly traditional household strategy* is based on a conflict between the individual male strategy of resistance to change (i.e. to taking on housework) and two individual female strategies: that of applying pressure, and that of compliance. The assumption behind this household strategy is that the woman wants to change the existing division of housework. However, she largely fails to do that, although the man - at least sometimes – does a little housework, because he is always under some form of pressure to start doing it.

*Tatjana: Well I'd like him to somehow participate more in all that, to do a better quality job (...) Question: Do you have to tell him every time? Tatjana: Yes, I have to. (laughter)* (Tatjana, female, 28, suburban village)

Women in households with the predominantly traditional strategy switch between or mix the individual strategies of applying pressure and compliance. The exact mix of the two depends on the outcome of the conflict with the male individual strategy of resistance to change. However, in this case, there is no chance of a return to the unquestioningly traditional household strategy, nor to the relations that it presupposes. What can happen are only variations in the women's pressure on the men to do housework: this pressure can be somewhat reduced or increased. However, it is always accompanied by the woman's dissatisfaction, expressed to a greater or lesser degree.

Men whose position as the "main breadwinner" has been called into question, because of changes in structural economic factors, attempt to secure their position through additional paid work on the formal or informal market. This is especially true for blue-collar, insecure and poorly paid occupations.

*Juraj: But while the wife will do housework, and be with the kids (...) in that time the husband will perhaps earn some extra cash... you know, extra work, and ability.* (Juraj, male, 56, small town)

A second way for the men to consolidate a shaking up of the former reality of being the "main breadwinner" is to do most of the work in producing food for the household (or for sale), as well as to do DIY jobs linked to the home, which normally demand significant expenditure.

*Martin: I was "holding three corners of the house"<sup>19</sup> for quite a while. Wife, do you agree with that?*

*Mara: Yes, when we were working on the house.* (Mara and Martin, female and male, 38 and 41, village)

<sup>19</sup> In some parts of Croatia, the proverbial expression that the interviewee used here describes the women's role in the household. It connotes the woman doing the lion's share of the work, as well as having a decisive role in how the household is organized.

Such DIY and construction jobs, as well as various repairs and renovations, are sometimes also offered to friends and neighbours, who later return them in different ways.

*Matija: Everything you see here, the building down there and the weekend cottage on the hill, I put all those walls up myself, and made everything myself. (...) I want to help, I do everything for everyone, for this neighbour one day I put in the installations for half the home. (...) And those gardens, all that is very demanding every day (...) you have to be here every day, the same as when we had a vineyard up there, you have to work every day. (Matija, male, 66, town)*

In some cases, additional work that the male interviewees invoked was important for the household to survive, while in other cases they accepted it because it “distanced” them from housework.

In contrast to the households with the unquestioningly traditional strategy, women in households with the predominantly traditional strategy were often employed, but with lower-status jobs than the men. If they did not have steady paid work, they had paid seasonal jobs in agriculture or small formal or informal jobs on a temporary basis (for example cleaning services or assisting in restaurants).

Certain households in which men do not occupy a “breadwinner” position should also be placed within the predominantly traditional strategy. For example, these are the households in which the man is unemployed or retired and the woman has a greater income. However, in such households, even though the man has no income or has a lower income than the woman, he does not perform any work activities in the home, apart from occasional small tasks or one regular chore he “opted for”. In other words, in such cases, the man continues to respond to the female strategy of applying pressure with the strategy of resistance and only with lower levels of cooperation (such as occasional cooking).

*Milena: Well, I go and work, he hasn't earned a penny for years, nothing... (...) Mićo: But to this day, I still do the cooking... and...hmm, it's just that I don't wash the dishes. I hate it... (...) nothing is “a must” (...) <sup>20</sup> Milena: Well good, well yeah... [I do] cleaning, washing the clothes and so on... what women do... (Mićo and Milena, male and female, 59 and 55, town)*

In contrast with the predominantly traditional household strategy, in which the woman's pressure comes up against the man's resistance to change, in the **partly egalitarian**<sup>21</sup> household strategy, the man responds to the woman's pressure with cooperation. In such households, a subset of the female interviewees was already

<sup>20</sup> It is worth mentioning here that the interviewee's partner (Milena) was cooking dinner during the interview.

<sup>21</sup> In linear accounts of modernisation, partly egalitarian households would appear to be at an initial stage of egalitarian division of housework. However, what we have in mind is that households of



satisfied by the man taking on part of the housework without significant resistance, and by the man trying to “help out”:

*Question: Are you satisfied with this division of labour? Lada: I am, I am, because (...) I don't feel like everything is on me (...) now if I don't pick up the glasses from the table, I won't come across those glasses when I arrive home as he will have put them away. (...) If I really had to do those things myself, then it would be an issue. (Lada, female, 33, village)*

In the partly egalitarian households, men take on part of the housework. This is because of the women's pressure and, in some of the cases, structural factors (such as the demands of shift work, women's equally or better paid work, her equal or a higher-status job, and/or longer working hours). The portion of housework taken on by men in such households is significant compared with the predominantly traditional households. However, the boundary mainly does not shift enough to include the regular performance of housework considered by the interviewees to be most “female” (ironing, cleaning the bathroom, washing clothes).

In the households with the partly egalitarian strategy, men strive to retain the role of the “main breadwinner” (in some cases doing the already described extra paid work). However, in these households, the fact that the woman works outside the home for a wage is not questioned, and in terms of job status and salary, the woman's paid work can come close to that of the man or surpass it. Among the interviewees in the households following the partly egalitarian strategy, there were more women who did additional paid work alongside their regular job than in the previous category (i.e. in the predominantly traditional households). In situations where women from the partly egalitarian households were in early retirement or unemployed, they frequently had temporary formal and informal jobs.

*Max: [My wife] helps, she jumps in to help her [best friend]<sup>22</sup>, and so, – she has nursery schools and a wedding centre (...) cleaning, ironing, decorating (...) And she says [to me]: “I would like to go and work” – [and I said:] “well if you want to – go and work! I won't, I've done my bit”. (...) So, I cook now, I don't mind tidying up, cleaning the windows. (...) Božena: While I work, of course, he takes care of [household] chores... goes shopping and vacuums and... I prepare the [washing] machine,<sup>23</sup> he does the rest ... (Max and Božena, male and female, 61 and 58, town)*

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this type “admit equality in certain respects while seeking to resist its expansion in others” (Spicker, 1985: 112). While they can shift towards more egalitarianism, they can also fall back to previous modes of division of housework, although never to “unquestionably traditional” ones.

<sup>22</sup> The term used here was “*kuma*”, which literally means “maid of honour” in Croatian, but in addition to “marriage witness” it also denotes a close friend.

<sup>23</sup> The interviewee used a phrase in Croatian that literally means “to prepare the machine”. In such situations, the man is usually expected to push the button and start the washing machine when the

Nevertheless, in households that follow the partly egalitarian strategy, the man's paid work and career continue to be considered more important, and the woman's role is viewed more as relating to housework (including looking after children and the elderly).

The household strategy of *proactive egalitarianism* brings about a shift in the gender division of housework which comes principally from the gender ideology of the partners. This is in contrast with the previous (partly egalitarian) household strategy, in which the change comes primarily from practice. As concerns the "ideology" of the partners in proactively egalitarian households, it is worth mentioning that here it is no longer part of a field of struggle, because a congruity has been established between the male and female partner. In other words, at the heart of proactive egalitarianism is an agreement between partners about taking on different forms of housework.

If the man occupies a position resembling that of the "main breadwinner" (i.e. brings in significantly more money or has higher-status employment), in proactively egalitarian households he does not emphasise the symbolic side of such a role. Nor does he use it to attain a privileged position in the relationship. The same applies to the woman, when she – conversely – assumes the position of being the "main breadwinner".

Despite the demands of paid work outside the home, the men in proactively egalitarian households have no qualms with doing housework, including caring for the children and emotional work. Housework is done in line with the principle "who has time does it" and the individual preferences of the partners, without asserting boundaries between "male" and "female" chores:

*Bernard: Male and female jobs don't exist (...) that kind of division doesn't exist.*

*Lorena: We don't have discussions on that level at all. (Bernard and Lorena, male and female, 43 and 39, city)*

In contrast to the "partly egalitarian" households, in proactively egalitarian ones the women do not place limits on their career advancement because of taking on a greater burden of housework and caring for the children. In addition, they do not try to "make men feel good about themselves" when they perform some household chore or when they have a lower social status. Egalitarianism is expected of both parties in the relationship and in all kinds of work (also including part-time and other side jobs):

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woman is not at home (e.g. to use cheaper electricity at off-peak times). The laundry is put into the drum by the woman, who also puts the detergent and fabric softener into the correct sections of the detergent drawer, and selects the right programme. The man is (sometimes) expected to take the washing out of the machine and hang it on the washing line.

*Dražen: I think that there is one exclusive factor – time, and time is linked with money, and as she earns more, it's better that we have more money, so I do those jobs that aren't paid. (Dražen, male, 41, city)*

## 5. DISCUSSION

This article is only an initial presentation of our qualitative research on gender-differentiated strategies in the division of housework. However, based on the results presented above, this topic can be discussed in considerably more detail and with richer data than before. This is true for both the individual male and female strategies, as well as for household strategies, viewed in relation to the criterion of gender balance.

As concerns the latter, we can now state that two diametrically opposed types of household (unquestioningly traditional and proactively egalitarian) nevertheless share one characteristic. Namely, in both there is no conflict between the individual strategies of each partner, which generally complement and reinforce one another. In contrast, in the other two types of household (predominantly traditional and partly egalitarian), the connection between gender-differentiated individual strategies can be viewed as the relation between power and counter-power. In these two types of household, the opposition of individual male and female strategies leads to conflict, whose resolution creates a dynamic balance in the couple's relationship. When the conflict leads to changes, the couple's relationship reaches a position of cooperation. Alternatively, at least temporarily, the conflict can lead to shifting the boundaries of the gender asymmetry in doing housework. Yet, the conflicts can also lead to resistance to change, and therefore potentially to new conflicts.

Changes in the division of housework in predominantly traditional and partly egalitarian households are motivated by changes in structural factors accompanied by the woman starting to pressure the man to change. The reverse is also possible: the woman's starting to apply pressure (based on the partly egalitarian gender ideology) is in this case supported by a change in structural factors. In the two types of household under discussion, a certain change in gender relations evidently occurs. However, two different outcomes to the change are possible: on the one hand, a shift towards more egalitarianism (in partly egalitarian households), or on the other, a return to a "predominantly" (but not an "unquestioningly") traditional division of household labour (in predominantly traditional households).

It is important to emphasise that initiatives for change in these two types of household originate with women. Men, meanwhile, rely on elements of the predominantly traditional gender ideology (which they use as a resource in the strategic struggle). They may respond to the women's pressure with a strategy of resistance to change, and in so doing cause a regression into traditional household arrangements. However, it is also worth mentioning that women who pressure the man to change can also display elements of the predominantly traditional gender

ideology. Namely, while their individual strategy of pressure is obviously egalitarian motivated, elements of traditionalism (attributable to traditional gender socialisation) nevertheless surface in some cases. These elements can cause a return to the expectations of the traditional gender order and therefore lead to the individual female strategy of compliance.

The results show that only in proactively egalitarian households are men prepared to move towards greater egalitarianism on their own initiative. In other words, these are the men and the households in which significant earlier changes in the direction of gender egalitarianism have already been achieved.

The results also show that – alongside the conscious and unconscious parts of the strategies – we can differentiate between more active and more passive strategies. When it comes to initiating change, it appears that the female strategies are generally more active than the male strategies. Either way, change (at household level) takes place through a struggle of applying pressure and resistance to it, as well as through responding to pressure by cooperation. In other words, change comes about through “playing a game” and “making moves” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 99). In this game, the partners rely on the resources that they have at their disposal (and they use them in their individual strategies). When playing the game, they draw on specific elements that come from the egalitarian or traditional gender ideologies, as well as on justifications invoking resources they bring to the home and the time they have remaining after paid work.

Justifications encountered in households where the gender balance is undergoing change, i.e. where the conflict between the men and women’s individual strategies hints at a process of transformation, are particularly worthy of further research. However, it goes without saying that the men and women’s types of argumentation need to be explored in more detail in all the types of household presented in this article. Special attention should be paid to the proactively egalitarian households, given that the literature records the practice of “spoken” rather than “lived” egalitarianism (Lyonette and Crompton, 2015: 37).

## 6. CONCLUSION

This article has presented an analysis of the identified individual strategies that men and women follow in doing housework. The strategies of unquestionability, resistance to change, cooperation and proactive egalitarianism were found among men, and the strategies of unquestionability, pressure, compliance and proactive egalitarianism among women.

By relating these male and female individual strategies to one another, and applying the criterion of gender balance, we have obtained a typology of household strategies (with respect to the division of household labour). We have classified these household strategies as: unquestioningly traditional, predominantly tradition-

al, partly egalitarian and proactively egalitarian. The research presented in this article was carried out in accordance with the principles of Bourdieu's "logic of discovery" (Krais, 1991: vi). Besides the construction of two sets of typologies, we believe that the heuristic contribution of this article is in the rich description of the cooperation and conflicts between men and women related to the division of housework.

In a more general sense, the article's theoretical and methodological contribution lies in its having shown that the chosen analytical framework – inspired by the concept of strategy as used in Bourdieu's praxeological theory – suits a complex analysis of gender relations. First and foremost, its application enabled an analysis of the logic of lines of action of men and women within the same household. At the same time, it showed that the chosen approach was able to capture the dynamic of changes in the households, not only in their "internal" (the division of housework) but also in their "external" dimensions (relating to the contribution of different types of work in the total labour of a household). In that sense, the qualitative analysis carried out in this article lays the way for the further inclusion of the gender dimension in a broader analysis of social inequalities.

As concerns the limitations of the chosen (Bourdiesian) approach, they relate chiefly to the need to carry out many complex analyses. We completed a number of analyses that could not be presented in detail here, due to limitations of space. For example, we could not fully present the insights gained by analysing the interviewees' gender socialisation and gender ideology, or by analysing the influence of material structural factors on the division of housework. We have attempted to compensate for this lack by presenting many narratives that include rich data on the elements that have not been directly explained. In other words, we have relied on "reader generalisability", that is, the assumed ability of a "grounded understanding" of the presented empirical material in relation to relevant sociological concepts (Misco, 2007).

In sum, the article's contribution is twofold: on the one hand, it has opened up a new perspective on doing housework. This contributes to better understanding the gender dynamic in households in Croatia. On the other hand, the article's theoretical contribution is that it integrates Bourdieu's approach to strategies in gender analysis. This has previously not been done, not only in Bourdieu's work, but also in later applications of his theoretical framework. Finally, we find it encouraging that the theoretical and methodological approach suggested here can be applied in further research. It could prove useful especially in studies on the connection between gender practices and gender orders, and in that way contribute to a better understanding of the construction of masculinities and femininities in different social contexts.

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## Relacijske rodne strategije u podjeli kućanskih poslova

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### SAŽETAK

U članku se iznose rezultati kvalitativnog istraživanja rodne podjele kućanskih poslova u Hrvatskoj, u širem okviru ukupnih radnih praksi kućanstava (tj. ukupnoga plaćenog i neplaćenog rada koji pridonosi ostvarivanju njihovih ciljeva). Podatci su prikupljeni kroz 92 polustrukturirana intervjua (34 s muškarcima, 43 sa ženama i 15 partnerskih), provedena u svim hrvatskim regijama, uz visok stupanj varijacije po sociodemografskim obilježjima. Primijenjena je relacijska rodna analiza, čiji je teorijski okvir počivao ponajprije na Bourdieuovu prakseološkom pristupu konceptu strategije, kao i na Pahlovoj konceptualizaciji ukupnog rada kućanstva, te analizi rodne dimenzije strategija kod Hochschild. Procesi kategorizacije uključivali su tri razine kodiranja (referentno, otvoreno i selektivno), a procesi povezivanja izradu analitičkih profila i tablica. Identificirane individualne rodne strategije povezane s obavljanjem kućanskih poslova jesu: strategije neupitnosti, otpora promjeni, suradnje, te proaktivne egalitarnosti (kod muškaraca) i strategije neupitnosti, pritiska, pristajanja, te proaktivne egalitarnosti (kod žena). Dovođenjem u odnos navedenih muških i ženskih individualnih strategija, uz primjenu kriterija rodne ravnoteže, dobivena je sljedeća tipologija strategija kućanstava u Hrvatskoj s obzirom na podjelu kućanskih poslova: neupitno tradicionalna, pretežno tradicionalna, početno egalitarna i proaktivno egalitarna. U dijelu muških i ženskih individualnih strategija pojavljuje se i komponenta opravdavanja u podjeli kućanskih poslova. Teorijski je doprinos analize primjena Bourdieuova prakseološkog pristupa strategijama u relacijskom istraživanju roda.

**Ključne riječi:** podjela kućanskih poslova, relacijska analiza roda, kvalitativno istraživanje, Bourdieu, rodne strategije

