

Social roles of farmwomen: The case of Croatia

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Abstract: The article is based on a field research on family farms in Croatia. On a sample of 350 farmwomen their social roles were analysed. The keys of the gender division of typical feminine tasks such as household tasks, family care tasks and the position in the family and on farm was analysed. Through statistical data processing in multivariate matrixes the latent matrix of independent variables: family, professional position and farm economic status showed significant effects on matrix of dependent variables traditional feminine work, family care tasks and expectations of women hindering farmwoman's possibilities for off farm employment.

Key words: family farms, farmwoman, Croatia

Rural areas of Croatia experienced decades of marginalization through the State policy that had put priority to the city development and industrialization. According to statistical data, the agricultural population of Croatia decreased between 1971 and 2001 from 1 211 999 to 245 987 persons (State Statistical Office), or from 40.8 percent to 5.5 percent of the total population. With specific reference to Istra, the corresponding statistics were also dramatic featuring a decreased number from 36 967 to 5 355 persons or 21.1 to 2.5 percent of the total population. Some authors (Nejašmić 1991) stated that this was a demographic 'collapse' of agricultural population with irreversible consequences on rural spaces and agriculture. Also this author stated that rural 'exodus' affected 90% of Croatian villages.

Agriculture and villages were influenced through decades by the population migration that has slowed down in 90ties of the 20th century and at present, Croatian villages show similar features as in other European countries. The rural areas and villages show slower migration tendencies but they still have a low population density, a diminished total and work active population, an aged population, non-agricultural income sources, a diminished number of farms etc.

In agricultural policy, family farms had a second role, living in the shade of state cooperatives for which most agricultural policy measures were created. The mass depopulation of rural areas was forced by the policy with open job markets, off farm employment possibilities, the opportunities of city housing (Puljiz and Štambuk 1992). Full deagrarization meant leaving agriculture as an income source and leaving villages as a place of residence (Župančić 2002). From the farm income perspective, agricultural income became of marginal importance, these days producing less

than 9% GDP. Since young men were the first to leave farms in seeking off farm jobs in cities, women became active farmers. In some areas, the feminization of agricultural activities occurred; the greater the deagrarization was, the greater the involvement of women (Brkić and Žutinić 1998).

Croatia passed through political and societal changes in the last two decades from the socialist to democratic system. State and agricultural policies nowadays have the aims to restore the devastated villages and farms affected by the war, to restart agricultural production, to rebuild homes and infrastructure, to support the prominent farms and companies. It was estimated that 10% farms were abandoned because of the war effects (Stipetić et al. 1992). New trends of globalization and economical changes toward the market liberalization left many farmers in the gap between wishes and possibilities. The Istra county became in our focus because it was not affected by the war directly and therefore it had a better starting point for the economic recovery and possibility to adapt to the market economy. Also the county policy is aimed at agriculture and tourism as the main income sources. What was interesting for Istria is that in the last decade, it had an increase of population (partly by migration from the war affected areas, partly by the population that inhabited the villages – new population – in majority from abroad). Some authors refer to such changes (Puljiz 1992; Štambuk 1991) saying that foreign inhabitants invaded the rural spaces by their ownership causing the decrease of farmers plots in turning agricultural land to the housing ground and in changing the relations between the native inhabitants opposing to the new ones.

Due to the wide political and societal changes and scarce literature information and field research re-

sults, in this paper, we started with a general question that would explain the position of Croatian women on farms. The first research question was what are the frames of the social roles of farmwomen. From the family obligations – care responsibilities, the expectations to women are that care for older family members was shifted as their obligation (because of no place in hospitals and care institutions close to villages), care for children (un flexible working ours and small capacities) (Ilak Peršurić 2005a). In rural communities, social infrastructure is insufficient or lacking (Štambuk 2002), and the shortage and inflexibility of the care facilities makes it more difficult to resist the social roles of care-givers (Ilak Peršurić 2005a). This situation is not significant only for Croatia, but it reflects in the so-called “developed” European countries such as Finland, UK (Stone 1990; Halliday and Little 2001; Kneafsey et al. 2001; Henderson and Hogart 2003; Silvasti 2003), where the lack of essential features as shops, schools and public transport are great obstacles for farm woman’s livelihoods.

The second question was the household labour division. In research about family farms in Croatia, we refer usually to the farm owner or the household head – a man that cannot give a closer perspective of the everyday household life and regards that as the concern of women. While the complex family relations affect the work division especially in the extended families, this aspect is rarely mentioned in literature (Sachs 1996). In literature, the inequitable position of women and the gender division of labour within nuclear families showed unequal relations between husbands and wives in terms of property, ownership, power and decision making on farms (James 1982; Delphy and Leonard 1986; Smith 1987, Whatmore 1991; Gasson and Errington 1993; Alston 1995). Despite the excessive literature (Whatmore 1991; Shortall 1994, 1999; Young 1994; Teather 1996), still some questions demand more answers, like the meaning of domestic tasks in social roles.

The third question referred to the opinions and views about the farmwoman’s possibilities in the job market. Farmwomen among other woman experienced a time during the 60ties till late 80ties of 20th century of the open and large job market possibilities. In the 90ties, the circumstances changed by wider economic changes in Croatia and the war effects. Since in the last decade, many companies were privatized and some of them collapsed in the open market, many women (and a lot of farmwomen) lost their jobs and were pushed back to their traditional roles in the family and household. The jobs in tourism were affected by the war so women could not

get hired or were underpaid and therefore left their jobs. In such circumstances in Istria, a number of them resigned from their jobs, went to pension or revised their importance for the family farms (Ilak Peršurić 2005b). In 2001, in Croatia 52.6% of women were employed, respectively, 43% of Istrian woman. The rate of unemployment was 21,3%, in Istria 17.8, in rural areas of Istria the unemployment rate was 15%, while by the income source, 34.1% women had no income (Ilak Peršurić 2005b: 42–44).

Woman in general did not expect much from the democratic transition, especially the Istrian population and farmers (Ilišin 1998). These two groups were the most suspicious about the democratic transition as Croatia was at the time still influenced by the war and economic pressures that forced woman first out of the work force. Political parties had in their programs measures for increasing the population and the rise of the traditional behaviour (women have to stay at home with children, men have to work etc.). Therefore, the e State demographic policy introduced the traditional roles of women as a solution to the increased unemployment and the diminished natality rates. As Leinert Novosel stated (1999), women often work in the “black” economy to cover the rising financial needs, while at the same time the women’s social obligations revert to the traditional roles (childcare, elderly care). She argued that throughout the human history, the periods of economic decline are accompanied by changes in the women’s position and role in the society. Findings of Štulhofer and Rimac (2002) showed that the Croatian economy had high costs of the “transition” to market economy that “created enormous disappointment and cynic” along with the distrust in institutions and the dramatic fall of the living standard. Therefore, e “black” economy was a way of economic survival, especially utilised by the persons from small societies (under 2000 inhabitants), that refers actually to rural areas and small cities in them.

The fourth research question was if the fact stands that rural communities generally hold more conservative moral codes than urban communities like Little showed (1997), and if the members of agricultural households are more conservative regarding the feminine roles. To a certain degree, farmwomen are influenced by the reactions of people in their surrounding and by the structural and social conditions (Smith and Wallerstein 1992). Case studies in Croatia show that the ideal farm woman is the image of a housekeeper-care taker-mother who is hard working, modest, efficient, devoted to her family and children (Šikić Mićanović 2003). Socio-economic roles of farm women are shaped through many roles in the family,

household and the farm (Radinović et al. 2006). In comparison, in the UK Little (1997) found that women were expected to be there for their children, caring and nurturing. In America, Blood and Wolf (1967) stated that the tradition is the basis of the family power, the most traditional being the families with low education. Patriarchy is the organizing principle in the farming, Catholic and immigrant families (Lupri 1969) and gender roles are viewed as natural and unchangeable (Little 1997). In relation to farming, the following characteristics highlight the "traditional" family: the farm is passed from father to son; due to the inheritance customs reflecting the perception of men as farmers: the reproduction of women's subordination is generated by the property ownership and the control by men (Haugen et al. 1998; Shortall 1999; Silvasti 2003); men are the managers of the farm and women assist on the farm (O'Hara 1998). In Croatia, we had the same situation; farm ownership is in the male hands, also in the near future we cannot expect major changes because the female family members are considered as successors in less than 8 percent of farms (Ilak Peršurić 2001).

In order to answer these four questions, the case study was carried out, the results of which will give the perspective of the Croatian farmwoman.

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on data from the field research in which the women's socioeconomic position is analysed. The basic group from which we have chosen our sample were agricultural households in Istra. An average family farm in Croatia has 2.9 hectares of land and one person employed on-farm, with these features on the edge of economic vitality. Therefore, we chose family farms with: a) more than 3 hectares of agricultural land; b) at least one family member full time on-farm; c) women's involvement in farming over 2 hours daily. These features are the lowest necessary features for the social and economic vitality for farm. According to the Croatian Statistic Census in 2001, there were 5200 units which confirmed the met criteria a and b. As the data is not gender-segregated, we took the total number of persons working for more than two hours daily on farm; in 2001. Istra had 6 541 such persons. The number of units for the sample calculated by the standard statistic procedures (normal distribution based on 95 percent reliability ($z = 1.96$), with the standard deviation ($\sigma = 3.9$) and grading interval ($G = 39.39\%$). Based on these parameters, the representative sample contained 350 family farms (6.7%

of the basic group). We took into consideration the space distribution (by communities and cities) and used the random order procedure for selection. Also we knew from the previous field research that the response rate will not be 100%, although we called the farmwomen in advance to set our meeting, and that some farmwomen will change their mind during the questioning, therefore, we left open the option to change one farm with the other from the basic group. Since only few cases were problematic, we switched them and gained all 350 sample questionnaires.

The main sociodemographic features analysed were age, education, professional status, origin (family and birth place) and residential status. The age of the questioned farmwomen rated from 20 to 70 years of age, so we had a quite equal representation from all age groups (3.4 percent of women under 20 years; 22 percent aged 21–30; 20.9 percent women age 31–40; 21.4 percent 41–50 age; 22.3 percent with 51–60 age and 10.0 percent of women over 61). Their educational level was in 2/3 of cases basic education (four year basic school that nowadays relates to eight year basic education). By employment status, 74.9 percent women were involved in farm work with no salary; 5.1 percent were housewives; 5.4 percent involved in off farm jobs, 4.3 percent unemployed and 0.3 percent were farm managers receiving salary from the farm work. Similar situations were shown in the research by Bryant (1999), Oldrup (1999), Silvasti (2003), where women on family farms were farmers, entrepreneurs, farmers spouses, pluriactive in various ways and employed off-farm.

In our sample, the farm family had one person in 7.15 percent cases; 27.5 percent two members; 21.4 percent three members; 24.0 percent four members 14.6 percent five members; 5.4 percent six members and 5.4 percent households had more than 6 family members. Every eight household had a multi generation family and one third of all had family members older than 60 years. The sample illustrates that the extended families need to be bound into the concept of "farm family" in Croatia. In our sample we had inter-generational and intra-generational structured families. Inter-generational families were presented by parents farming with their sons, husbands farming with the wife's father, while the intra-generation families were presented by brothers and sisters farming together.

Most women (86%) were born in farming families in villages and now remain in village (88%) as the place of residence. Other lived in the nearby settlements.

The basic method used for the data collection was a questionnaire, which contained questions of open and closed types. Questions were grouped in the

following way: socio-demographic and professional characteristics; participation in work and decision making, domestic work, free time and activities in the local community. Statistical data processing was done through the univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis. By the univariate analysis, we determined the frequencies of variables that describe the determinants of farmwomen as a social group. From the coefficients of independent and dependent variables, we had determined their variables which create the farmwomen's social roles. The multivariate analysis condensed the variables through correlation matrices. From the rotated factor matrices, latent structures of the independent and dependent variables were extracted in order to determine the importance of effects, and the hypothesis confirmation. Our hypothesis started with the presumption that farmwomen are a social group which has specific characteristics as a whole. In this group, the sociodemographic features and professional status of farmwomen differ resulting from different opinions and views about their social roles. We presumed that younger and higher educated farmwomen would have less traditional views about the traditional feminine tasks in households and care roles. On the opposite side, older and less educated farmwomen would have more traditional opinions about their roles. Further, we presumed that farmwomen born and raised in villages and in farm families would hold to the traditional feminine roles and traditional expectations. Also these farmwomen will have their own traditional expectations creating restrictions for the off farm employment and it will determine them as the care- givers and housewives in the family. We supposed that larger families would affect a higher engagement in feminine tasks and that the more our farmwomen participate in the farm work, the more they would be directed to the family care and traditional feminine tasks. Economic dependency on

the farm (or husbands') income directs their social roles toward the household and family. This dependency is deepened by the expectations of farmwomen to leave their off- farm jobs after marriage and the restrictions for employment (lack of jobs in rural areas, poor infrastructure in the villages for child and elderly care and a low participation of family members in the traditional feminine tasks).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Based upon the univariate analysis, women participated in this research form a heterogeneous group regarding the socio-demographic features and had different views and attitudes toward their social roles. In general, we noticed a uniform gendered division of the traditional feminine tasks in households. From questioning, we found out that 97 percent are cooking, cleaning and washing clothes and dishes always or very often, while 90 percent of them were caring about children or grandchildren. Family expectations imply the traditional feminine roles as the family members are unwilling to take part in them.

Knowledge about the household chores was carried through generations, from mother to daughter; one third of the questioned women gained this knowledge from their mothers and one half from family members. In Table 1 and 2, the gender division of household chores is evident. The majority of work was undertaken by women who had no option of transferring their work to someone else; men did not help with the household tasks in 95 percent of cases (Table 2). In our case, the family structure significantly influences the women's social identity through the traditional expectations and feminine tasks. In 41.3 percent cases, it was not feasible for women to pay a person to undertake the household chores, 31.8 percent women said their husband was

Table 1. Share of women's work in household chores

Type of work	Always		Most of cases		Often		Sometimes		Never		Total
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
Cooking	77.8	272	14.3	50	5.7	20	1.1	4	1.1	4	350
House cleaning	77.5	271	14.3	50	5.4	19	1.7	6	1.1	4	350
Clothes washing	78.1	273	14.3	50	5.4	19	1.1	4	1.1	4	350
Washing dishes	74.6	258	13.9	48	7.5	26	1.2	4	2.9	10	346
Childcare	42.3	127	4.8	14	5.3	16	5.3	16	42.3	127	300
Elderly care	24.4	67	0.7	2	3.3	9	5.1	14	66.5	183	275
Paying household bills	56.2	173	9.7	30	13.3	41	9.4	29	11.4	35	308

Source: authors research

Table 2. Family members participation in household chores

	Always		Most of cases		Often		Sometimes		Never		Total
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	N
<i>Female family members</i>											
Cooking	4.2	12	3.5	10	19.5	56	24.1	72	47.7	137	287
House cleaning	4.9	14	4.9	14	23.7	68	28.9	83	37.6	108	287
Clothes washing	4.9	14	6.3	18	16.0	46	31.4	90	41.5	119	287
Washing dishes	4.9	14	7.3	21	22.6	65	27.5	79	37.6	108	287
Childcare	0.7	2	2.7	8	5.3	15	3.5	10	87.8	252	287
Elderly care	–	–	–	–	–	–	2.1	6	97.9	281	287
Paying household bills	–	–	0.7	2	8.0	23	16.4	47	74.9	215	287
<i>Male family members</i>											
Cooking	–	–	0.3	2	2.4	17	1.1	8	96.2	676	703
House cleaning	–	–	0.3	2	2.1	15	2.1	15	95.5	671	703
Clothes washing	–	–	0.3	2	2.4	17	1.4	10	95.9	674	703
Washing dishes	–	–	0.3	2	2.7	19	1.8	13	95.2	669	703
Childcare	–	–	0.3	2	2.0	14	2.2	16	95.5	671	703
Elderlycare	–	–	–	–	0.4	3	0.6	4	99.0	696	703
Paying household bills	–	–	0.3	2	5.7	40	6.4	45	87.6	616	703

Note: data for females do not include questioned farmwomen

Source: authors research

incapable of doing household chores, while another 12.1 percent women said they wanted to use their skills and knowledge, 7.5 percent experienced personal satisfaction in doing the household chores, while 7.2 percent had other reasons.

Our findings show that tradition is the key to the division of the household chores; men help only in the household repairs and the maintenance of the household machines. When we asked the women whether it is possible to involve their husbands more actively in the household chores, they said that it is impossible in 77.2 percent cases, 8.6 percent partly agreed with this statement, while 14.2 disagreed. The local social moral affects the husband's involvement in the household chores, it is inappropriate for men to do them. We asked how the village society looks upon men performing the household chores and about 70 percent women answered that such behaviour would not meet with approval, while 12.8 percent of women partly agreed and 17.3 percent disagreed.

One of the main factors influencing the women's feminine roles is the attitude to childcare, should it be in institutions or at home with their mother. Age had a significant influence on this attitude. Women aged over 40 support the view that women should stay at home, while the youngest (under 20) disagree

($\chi^2 = 79.4$, $df = 24$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.431$). Women on farms seem not to face the same pressure to give grounds for being "only at home" with children and not doing something "more useful". In this context, the role of farmwomen seems to provide the legitimate opportunity to take care of their own children and to gain the social acceptability (since there are no childcare facilities in villages).

In order to enlight our fourth question about the traditional power relations, we selected from the bi-variate analysis some dependent variables. We asked the women how they perceive the position of women today relative to their position 30 years ago: has it improved, is it easier for women today? The answers showed that the women who did not live in the village found that the position was improving ($\chi^2 = 161.7$, $df = 12$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.635$), the women with the lowest education considered the major improvement in women's life ($\chi^2 = 16.5$, $df = 12$, $p = 0.017$, $Cc = 0.250$). On the contrary, the women from 4-member families considered that the women's position worsened ($\chi^2 = 101.1$, $df = 28$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.344$), the women born in non-agricultural families stated that women today have more responsibilities and less support in the household chores and family care ($\chi^2 = 18.2$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.659$).

Table 3. Basic determinants of the socio-professional status on family farms – latent structure of independent variables

Correlation coefficients	Content of variables (62.7% of variance)	Total variance	Factor variance
Factor 1	Family structure	30.7	26.5
0.954	Residential status of parent's family		
0.730	Actual residential family status		
0.594	Parent's were farmers		
0.441	Size of parent's family		
Factor 2	Actual professional status	17.3	14.4
0.910	Employment		
0.811	Ours working on farm		
0.533	Education		
Factor 3	Economic status	14.7	10.8
0.523	Family size		
0.508	Land size		
0.392	Age		

Eigenvalue for F1 = 3.1; F2 = 1.7; F3 = 1.5

The volume of the household chores was decreased by age, with the smallest amount for the oldest women ($\chi^2 = 46.0$, $df = 24$, $p = 0.024$, $Cc = 0.371$). Age was important also to the attitudes regarding the paid help; it would be most desirable in the 30–50 age group ($\chi^2 = 62.9$, $df = 24$, $p = 0.048$, $Cc = 0.392$). The oldest group of women stated that the household appliances help women significantly with household chores ($\chi^2 = 41.3$, $df = 25$, $p = 0.026$, $Cc = 0.420$). Family members rarely helped in the household chores, rarely although the most often they helped with childcare ($\chi^2 = 7.9$, $df = 28$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.273$). Family members with the university education helped the most with children ($\chi^2 = 10.4$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.311$). Buying food was done more often by the family members ($\chi^2 = 22.4$, $df = 28$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.57$), especially among those with the least formal education ($\chi^2 = 9.9$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.303$). Family origin affected the attitude that women should take care of the elderly family members, the ones born in agricultural families had the most intensive positive attitude towards this matter ($\chi^2 = 45.2$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.009$, $Cc = 0.366$), they also stated that the village environment is not supportive of husbands doing the household tasks ($\chi^2 = 40.6$, $df = 9$, $p = 0.002$, $Cc = 0.384$). Women with more than 5 family members ($\chi^2 = 61.60$, $df = 28$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.419$) and with the lowest level of formal education stated the same ($\chi^2 = 39.0$, $df = 12$, $p = 0.000$, $Cc = 0.346$).

In further explanation of the farmwomen's social roles, we used factor analysis to determine a mi-

nor number of significant variables. Relations of the family structure, professional status and economic status were significant as the independent latent variables.

Basic determinants of the farmwomen's socio-professional status – the content of independent latent variables

The matrix of independent latent variables had three latent dimensions (Table 3). By content it was named *Family structure* and it contained four variables (variables of residential status of the present family, and the parent's family were the most significant ones). This dimension confirms the bivariate analysis that proved that the social status is determined by the residential status.

The second latent dimension called *Actual professional status* contained three variables: professional status on farm, working hours on farm and education level. Most women had a low education, were not employed off farm, and worked several hours daily on farm.

The third latent dimension was *Economic status* which contained three variables: number of family members, land property and women's age. Economic status was most significantly attached to the number of family members. Also land as an asset and the value for agriculture had a great impact on the economic status; bigger farms are usually better off.

Table 4. Basic determinants of social identity – latent structure of dependent variables

Correlation coefficients	Content of variables (71.3% variance)	Total variance	Factor variance
Factor 1	Traditional feminine work in households	25.9	24.7
0.987	House cleaning		
0.985	Cooking		
0.857	Washing dishes		
0.742	Washing clothes		
0.618	Paying household bills		
Factor 2	Restrictions for employment	15.4	13.6
0.911	Costs of childcare		
0.732	Left job because of children		
0.485	Household help would increase possibilities for employment		
Factor 3	Traditional family care	11.5	9.5
0.496	Women are responsible for the household		
0.335	Women are responsible for childcare		
0.318	Women are responsible for sick children		
Factor 4	Traditional expectations for women	9.9	8.6
0.910	Women are responsible for elderly care		
0.910	Local society disapproves men's help in domestic tasks		
0.769	Women cannot expect men's help in domestic tasks		
Factor 5	Household help	8.3	5.6
0.897	Children are better off at home		
0.417	Kitchen appliances eased women's domestic work		
0.378	Women lack family help in domestic tasks		

Eigenvalue F1 = 3.8; F2 = 2.3; F3 = 1.7; F4 = 1.4; F5 = 1.2

Basic determinants of the farmwomen's social roles – the content of dependent latent variables

The latent structure matrix of dependent variables explained in Table 4, *Traditional feminine work in household,s* contained five variables. All variables highly saturated this factor (from 0.987 to 0.618). We expected such high impact of this factor and a high loading of each variable – as the traditional feminine work is still feminine work today in agricultural households with low possibilities of involving husbands or paid labour.

Factor 2. *Restrictions for employment* contained the variables which explain why women left their jobs. Factor 3. *Traditional family care* considers the care for children and the responsibility for the household, while factor 4. *Traditional expectations* explains the responsibility for elderly care. All these three factors were explained in relation to the social infrastructure

in the village (the lack of childcare institutions), social constraints (local society disapproves men helping in household chores and childcare), and the women's own attitudes (it is their duty to stay at home with children, and ask no help from other family members). As the infrastructure diminishes the possibilities for the off-farm employment, it directly affects the social position of women. Furthermore, the costs of childcare, either in institutions or by a paid carer, is too high and not available in villages. Therefore, most women who had an off-farm job had left it soon after they had their first child. Normative expectations regarding family create add an additional pressure, so women were expected to leave their jobs and to perform the traditional roles in the household and family. Finally, factor 5 demonstrates that in the absence of family help, women subjectively see their role in domestic and childcare with no expectations for sharing these tasks more democratically among the family members. Their only help from this burden was the household appliances help.

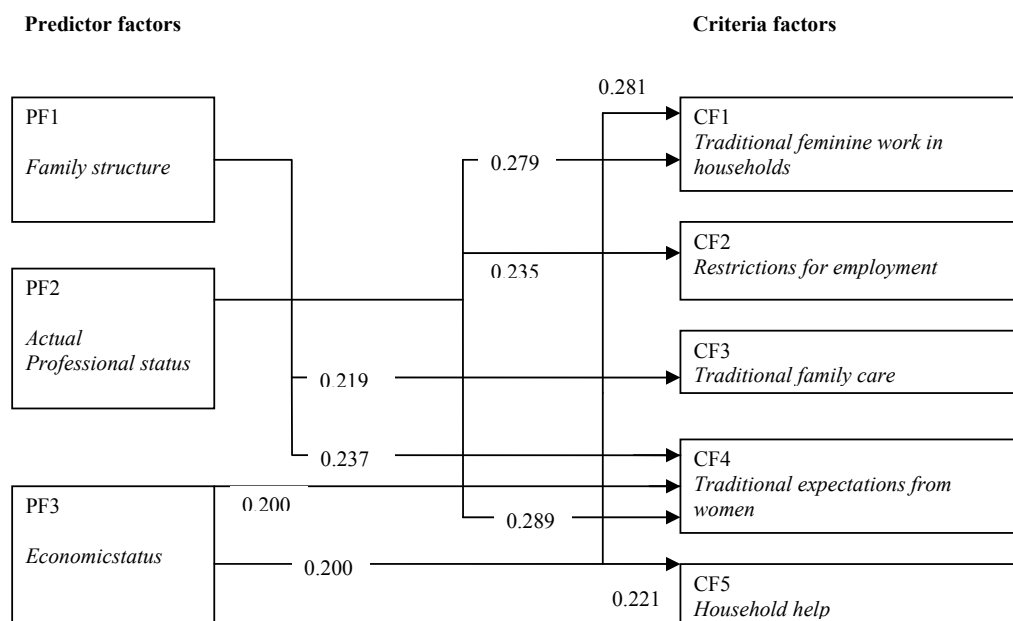


Figure 1. Predictor factors and criteria factors relations

Effects of independent matrix on the dependent matrix of the women's social identity

The first set of independent variables – factor *Family structure* – influenced significantly the set of dependent variables of factor 4, *Traditional expectations from women* (Figure 1). This relation explains that if women were born in the village in bigger and agricultural families, they are more traditional toward their traditional expectations. These women take for granted the fact that they cannot expect help from their husbands and that such help is not approved by the local society. The socio-cultural inheritance in big families of farmers socialised women in a sense of the feminine and masculine jobs, by which the traditional feminine tasks were seen as taking care of the family and household.

The first set of independent variables – factor *Family structure* – influenced significantly the set of dependent variables of factor 3, *Traditional family care*. This relation was significantly strong and explains the “childcare” role of women in the family. Women take all childcare upon them, from feeding, baby-sitting, etc. We confirmed that the family background of women had a great influence on their acceptance of the role, and that socialization in bigger families, with members employed on farm in agriculture, hindered such behaviour.

The second set of independent variables, *Actual professional status*, was significantly related to factor 1, *Traditional feminine work in households*. Although women were putting in hours of work on the farm,

they had to do most of the traditional household tasks. Regardless of education, all women were expected to do so in addition to undertaking the role of “housewife”. The second set of independent variables, *Actual professional status*, was significantly related to the factor *Restrictions for employment*, which is very indicative; no childcare facilities in villages and having children forced women out of the labour force. This resulted in women gradually accepting an increased work load on the farm and this in turn led to diminishing the possibilities of the future off-farm employment. The second set of independent variables, *Actual professional status*, was significantly related to factor 4, *Traditional expectations from women*. The majority of women considered themselves as farmers, because they had no off-farm job, so their professional position was a consequence of the on-farm work. Involvement in farm activities was accepted as normal and ever increasing. The third predictor *Economic status* was significantly correlated to the criteria factor 1, *Traditional feminine work in households*. Regardless of their economic status, all women are obliged to carry out “feminine work”. On small and big farms, regardless of age and the number of family members, the questioned women undertook their role of “housewife” and did all the cleaning, cooking and washing.

The predictor 3, *Economic status*, was significantly correlated to the criteria factor 4, *Traditional expectations from women*, where age had the most significant impact, because older women had more traditional views regarding their expectations, while the younger ones had more modern views (expecting men to help

them and transferring elderly care to institutions). *Economic status* was also significantly correlated to the criteria factor 5, *Household help*. Household help was unavailable for all women, but regarding age differences, the oldest felt that children should stay at home and that kitchen appliances helped them the most in putting less pressure on performing their social roles. On the contrary, younger women stated that children should attend kindergarten and wished for more family help. It was interesting to notice that the economic “power” like income of the farm had no influence with regard to the household help. Even in the “better off” families, farmwomen were not hiring any help for the domestic tasks, while in case of farm tasks, it was expected to obtain help from family members, friends or the occasional seasonal employees (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, we tackled the problem of social position and roles of farmwomen on the case of the Istra county which lies in the North-West part of Croatia at the Adriatic sea. This county was chosen as it was not directly affected by the war and therefore it had a better starting point in the democratic and economic transition. These “positive” aspects had, however, a very negative impact on the position of farmwomen. Our findings showed that the totality of the farmwomen’s social position is a reflexion of their own expectations and attitudes which oblige them to take on the roles of family nurturers and traditional housewives. In general, the social identity of farm women in Croatia is very traditional, tightly stringed and deeply oriented toward the family and local society, what was showed by several Croatian researchers (Štambuk 1991; Šikić Mićanović 2003), they are following the socially and culturally expected roles to be accepted in the rural community. The orders of the rural community showed that socialization in an agricultural family impacts the expectations to accept the care roles and the traditional feminine household tasks. Family and community expectations socialized farmwoman to accept the traditional feminine roles and obligations in the care and household obligations as normal. An exception were the youngest farmwomen (under 25) who had less traditional views about their roles and expected in future more democracy in the family. The care role for them was less attractive and seen in the negative light. They would transfer these obligations to the social care institutions. For older farmwomen, this behaviour would be outrageous.

In the case of Croatia, the division of the household chores showed a clear gender division: women perform all household tasks. Farmwoman stated that there is no possibility to engage men more in household chores. The traditional feminine roles of housewife and care consume most of the daytime. A triple day of unpaid work (household, care and farm) contributes to the reproduction of the subordinate roles and keeps them traditional. As Mc Mahon (1995) stated that the obligation of involving so much time and energy in care is moral and powerful, it is also the case in our sample and as a traditional role, it is accepted and supported by the family members and the local community. The performance of domestic labour as an expression of love and affection represents the power or weakness in family relations (Feree 1990; De Vault 1991). The same is true for the childcare (Dressel and Clark 1990). Similar finding were noticed by Van Deenen and Kossen-Knorim (1981); these authors stated that less than two percent of men in farm households help in the domestic chores. Housework and care work is uniformly the work of farmwomen (Blasche and Inhetveen 1983; Whatmore 1991). Therefore, we point out that farmwoman deserve recognition for their work and respect for it at least, since they do not receive financial means.

The education level of farmwomen – basic school – was not appropriate for the job markets demands. In the research area, as well in the whole Croatia, the offer of jobs in rural areas is scarce. Service sector that offers most jobs for unskilled workers in the area demands a seasonal work, long hours, weekend work and irregular hours, therefore, with the lack of care facilities, this sector is not a viable option for farmwomen. The professional status of women influenced their social status significantly because they were “employed” only on the farm. Their low levels of educational attainment and the absence of jobs with flexible hours in the rural areas diminishes any possibilities for the women’s economic autonomy; their actual professional position is affecting their economic status significantly. In Croatia, through the frame of family farming, women accepted their economic status as economically dependent persons; the women’s attitudes were traditional, accepting the unpaid farm work, as a part of marrying into the family and a moral obligation not to ask for independent finances. A small number of them had jobs off farm, but due to the economic recession in the 90ties of the 20th century, many of them left their jobs through early retirement and layoffs that pushed them deeper into the dependence upon their husbands and family. Family expectations push women to leave their off-farm employment which in turn

undermines not only their economic status, but their social status too.

In conclusion, from our survey, we found that the social roles of farmwoman were affected by the family structure that affected women to perform the family care activities. Nuclear families and the traditional family (and husbands) pushed women to their traditional feminine roles in the household. Their economic status was reflected through the necessity of performing the household work. Insufficient farm income does not enable a paid help.

It is unlikely in the near future to expect that the traditional behaviour in farm families will change. Still, we find that farms are hiding a large social capital – farmwomen who are giving their work, skills and knowledge in the shade of household and farm work. Although the village society is also changing very slowly in spite of the outside changes (decline in agriculture's economic importance) and the traditional values and attitudes of farmwoman still persist, we expect from the younger and better educated farmwomen future changes and more power in family relations. Therefore, social policy should address the social position of farm women assuring them of at least a state pension and health care as it is the case with most other unemployment persons, while the state agricultural policy should support programs for small businesses in rural areas and women as a disadvantaged group on farm in order to enhance and value their position.

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