

Repatriarchalization of Young Mothers in Serbia Today – Presence of the Multiple Layers of Oppression that Create “Female Destiny”

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Introduction

Based on the findings of the survey² conducted among 1560 women (mothers) in Serbia (including the North of Kosovo), this paper shows the multiple and overlapping layers of patriarchy and marginalization that mark social position of a significant number of young mothers (age between 18 and 30) in Serbia today. Their life is profoundly shaped by high level of unemployment, participation at the labor market characterized by the weakening of workers' rights, affecting particularly low income sector (sector that employs primarily women), socially invisible and unrecognized poverty, private patriarchy and social pressure on young women to assume traditional gender roles at home, followed by their low level of resistance to oppression. The governmental politics of gender equality in Serbia today marginalizes and makes obscure structural intersectional influence of several factors affecting weakening of young mothers' life opportunities and living standard, propagating at the same time policy that women are responsible for low level of national fertility.

The data presented in this paper are based on the results of the survey conducted by the researches of the Institute of Sociology and Social Research, Faculty of

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Philosophy, University of Belgrade, on a sample of 1,560 women mothers in Serbia (including North of Kosovo), during 2017. The aim of the research was to make visible living standard of women who are mothers, since the official governmental politics is currently focused on the issue of low birth rate in Serbia, parenthood and improvement of women's right, putting women and their reproductive rights in the focus of the public opinion scrutiny. The research provide the grass root data, that can be used to improve gender policies and approach to the main issues that need to be addressed strategically more than in sensationalist way marked by a "witch-hunt" against "insufficient" birth rate.

Since the survey partly consist of questions related to very intimate aspects of female life, and cover experience of domestic violence too, standard statistical procedures of random sampling did not seem appropriate. The field research was based on combined sampling: snow ball, quota, and voluntary sampling, while the improved reliability of the results was obtained by increasing the sample size.

However, the sample was selected carefully, according to predetermined quotas from each of the districts in Serbia, taking into account the size of the district and the share of rural and urban population. The sample represents approximately equally women of three generation: the youngest one, I group, include women 18 and 29 years old (31.4%), the second 30 to 45 (37.5%) and the oldest, third group encompassed women 46 to 60 years old (31.1%). Women over 60 were not included in the sample, due to large time gap between present moment and the experience of childbirth and early parenthood, which were the issues that have been in the focus of the research.

The snow ball network of respondents in local communities was made in such a way to exclude selection of close relatives (kinship of the first and second level), with additional restrictions on the permitted number of respondents in the same streets, residential buildings and blocks.



Our sample include 35.2% women from the Belgrade region, 22.7% from Šumadija and Western Serbia, and 22.2% from Southern and Eastern Serbia. 17% respondents were from Vojvodina (17%) and 2.9% from North Kosovo. Other characteristics of the sample were not pre-planned.

The theoretical approach in this paper is based on intersectional theory. The term intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) has become the key concept through which feminist scholars frame the issue of the disparities among women related to structural influence of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Though the notion of the intersectionality was coined to explain mostly the interplay between gender and race (Hooks, 1982) and, according to some authors, implies that black women deserves paradigmatic importance in defining the term (Cooper, 2015) , over time other identities and forms of oppressions were added to the theory and now there is a wide range of its applicability. Intersectionality helps us to understand that women are not simple and homogeneous social group of people who share the same life experiences, but highly stratified and diverse social category related to people who do not share necessarily same values, political attitudes or existential opportunities. This concept put forwards the issue of social disparities among women. Intersectionality relates to those aspects of social life where there is a visible simultaneous, interwoven and growing impact of the multiple factors on deterioration of women social position, suppressing their upward mobility and pushing them down, making each of these factors much stronger and more influential than if they operated independently. It implies not only that women are socially stratified into different social layers, but also that those who are disadvantaged have more chances to become cumulatively more disadvantaged, and those privileged have tendency to become cumulatively more privileged. As social category, women are exposed to different vectors of social forces that shape their social position. It means that gender is not necessarily uni-



fying principle. Even the opposite, since the “forms of gendered oppression imply the devaluation of the subjectivity of the oppressed” (Collins, 1986), women often themselves naturalize their disadvantaged position as “female destiny” or even “female nature”. Women of lower status naturalize their femininity as “bad fate”, while women with better status articulate femininity as privileged social position and subtle form of human existence, underestimating gender inequality. In this paper we will discuss several domains in which we see the impact of intersectionality on women’s social weakening: education, wages, domestic labor and values.

Education

4.7% of our respondents completed only primary level of education. 8.4% finished three years secondary school, while most of them completed four years secondary education (48.2%). 32.6% of respondents graduated from faculties or colleges, and 6.2% has master or doctorate degree. It was interesting to notice that most of those who completed elementary school and least of those who completed college were among the youngest generation (5.1% among youngest respondents completed only primary school compared to 4.3% of respondents from the second group /30-45 years old/ and 4.8% among the oldest, III group /46-60/); 27.8% among the youngest graduated from faculties or colleges compared to 39.3% of those in the II second group and 29.5% among the oldest ones /46-60/) ($\chi^2=30.77$, Sig..000, Cont. Coefficient=0.14).

If we look into the further characteristics of those with the lowest level of education, we notice that most of them (31.5%) are housewives. (Among those who completed secondary school there are only 7.5% housewives, and less than 2% among respondents with higher education). Low level of education is distinctly associated with taking traditional and patriarchal female roles in the family. ($\chi^2=201.69$, Sig=.000, Cramer’s V=0.18)



As it was expected, education is also strongly related to the *income* ($\chi^2=328,002$, Cramer's $V= 0,26$, Sig=.000). The lower the level of education, the lower the income. Not less than 50% of those with only primary education have salary below 150 € monthly, while additional 45.8% of them receive only between 150-300 € monthly. The highest income relate to the group of the most educated respondents.

Education frames the job opportunities, and consequently, women with the lowest education level can apply only for unsecure, poorly paid and unskilled jobs. The least of them, compared to other women, are permanent employees (24.7%). (63.6% respondents with college degree have permanent jobs). In our sample, women with primary education work mostly as cleaning-ladies (9.6%), and unskilled workers in stores, super markets (13.7%) or in restaurants (2.7%). Women with secondary degree can afford a little better job – but most of them still work in stores and super markets (16.4%), 6.3% as nurses, and 5.2% in administration. It is noticeable that 3.1% of them still can't afford better job than cleaning. Women who graduated from colleges or faculties work mostly as educators (11.8%), in trade sector (7.5%) or in administration (4.5%).

Education relates to *marital status* too ($\chi^2=42.08$, Sig=.012, Cramer's $V=.08$). Among those respondents with the lowest level of education are the highest percentage of those in unregistered marriages (12.3%), and the lowest percentage of those married (64.4%) which indicates that unregistered marriage is not “alternative” form of partnership in Serbia today, postmodern phenomenon, a kind of “free relationship”, but represents unstable form of traditional partnership which expose women to higher risks of poverty and uncertainty.

The number of children is growing with a decrease in education ($\chi^2=66.93$, Sig=.000, Cramer's $V= .104$). Women with only elementary education have the highest number of children (8,4% among them have 4 or more children, compared to 0% of them with master or doctor-



al degree). Women with master and doctoral degree have mostly only one children (53.1%), compared to 25% of those with elementary education. The following table (table 1.) illustrates the link between level of education and the number of children.

Table 1. χ^2 between the level of education and the number of children

education/ numb. of children	one	two	three	more than 3
elementary	25	52.8	13.9	8.4
secondary	36.3	52.2	10.3	1.2
college and faculty	43.5	47.6	7.9	1
MA and PhD	53.1	42.7	4.2	0

$\chi^2=66.93$, Sig=.000, Cramer's V= .104

These data clearly show that the population policy focused simply on producing more births doesn't address the issue of the improvement of the quality of the parenthood and leads to the weakening of the social position of women. Unfortunately, Serbia doesn't belong to the category of those countries where the growing number of children relates to improvement of living standards (Bobic, 2013).

In addition, there is a strong connection between level of education and presence of planned and rationally chosen parenthood. Almost half of women with the lowest level of education had experience of abortion (49.3%), while this number significantly decreases with the improvement of education. (Table 2).

Table 2. χ^2 between the level of education and the experience of abortion

education/abortion	
elementary education	49.3
secondary	34.8
college and faculty	26.3
MA and PhD	18.8

$\chi^2=28.90$, Sig=.000, Cramer's V=1.14



Wages

The material standard of the respondents is extremely low. The average wages are far lower than the official average. In our sample, 14.7% of the respondents have personal monthly income below 150€, and additional 46.9% have a salary between 150 to 300€, which is still considerably below the official governmental estimation. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the average wages (net) in Serbia in September 2017 was 48.2 thousand. RSD, and gross salary was 66.4 thousand. RSD (around 400€ net /560€ gross). Actually, only 37.9% of respondents have salaries that fit this amount (300-500€). 5.9% who have salaries between 500 to 700€ and only 3.4% respondents who earn over 700€ per month.

It is disappointing to see that the youngest generation have the lowest monthly incomes and that they are least represented among those who have the highest wage. While 19.9% among them have monthly income below 150 €, only 11.3% from the middle generation and 14.4% among the oldest one have have such a low income. ($\chi^2=34.15$, $Sig.=.000$, $Cont.Coeff. 0.164$). (Table 3) When we look into these data, we should take into consideration that we talk about young people who don't work for pocket money, but provide with their income sustenance of their family and children.

Table 3. χ^2 between age/income

age/income	-150	150-300	300-500	500-700	+700
gen I (18-29)	19.9	52.9	21.7	3.8	1.8
gen II (40-45)	11.3	44.1	33.5	7.6	3.4
gn III (46-60)	14.4	45	30.1	5.9	6.4

$\chi^2=34.15$, $Sig.=.000$, Cramer's $V=0.12$

The husbands (partners) of our respondents have significantly higher monthly income than them. Only 4.7% of husbands earn less than 150 € per month. There are 31% whose salary is between 150 and 300€, and 37.9%,



between 300 and 500. 16% of them have salary between 500 and 700 euros. The salary over 700 euros has 10.4%.

Table 4. *Monthly income of husbands/partners. Difference between three generations*

age/income in €	-150	150-300	300-500	500-700	+700
gen I (18-29)	3	28.5	40.2	16.6	11.6
gen II (40-45)	4.9	27.8	40	17	10.4
gn III (46-60)	6.7	38.1	32	14	9.2

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$\chi^2=22.27$, Sig.012, Cramer's V=0.1

Such a gap maintains, restore and perpetuate the image of men as breadwinners and lead to the reproduction of patriarchy, regardless of the fact that women equally as men participate at labor market today and families need incomes of both of them.

In this case too, the youngest generation of women are the most burdened with the gap. The income gap between them and their male partners is significantly higher than the gender gap in the second and the third generation.

A single-factor analysis of variance, using the Bonferroni correction, proves the statistical significance of this difference. The difference in income between the youngest and oldest men (husbands) is inversely proportional to the difference in wages of the youngest and the oldest generations of women. While the youngest men have higher wages than the oldest one, the situation with woman is just the opposite. Since Levene's test didn't confirm the homogeneity of the variance inside the three generations of women (Sig.=000), we applied the robust test of equality of means (Welch, F=15.03; Brown-Forsythe=13.52; Sig=.000) on analyses of women respondents themselves, and ANOVA (F=5.58, Sig=.004) (Levene's test: Sig.=.498) on the analyses of respondents' husbands.

Concerning the wages of women themselves, Post hoc test (Tukey) shows that there is a significant difference between I and II group and II and III group, while I and III



group are similar (table 5). The youngest women has the lowest salary. (I /the youngest group/M =2.16; II=2.49; III=2.44),

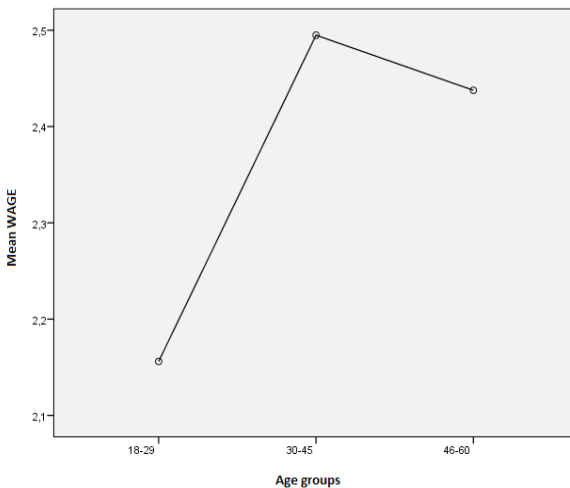
Table 5. One-factor analyses of variance measuring the generational difference in wage between respondents and between their husbands

a) Generational difference in income between women respondents

Generation	Generations I, II, III	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.
I (18-29)	II	-.339*	.068	.000
	III	-.282*	.071	.000
II (30-45)	I	.339*	.068	.000
	III	.057	.065	1.000
III (46-60)	I	.282*	.071	.000
	II	-.57	.065	1.000

Confidence Interval 99%

Means Plots



If we compare their husbands, we see that there is a significant difference only between the youngest generations of husbands and the oldest one, but in this case, the youngest generation has the highest wage (I M= 3.13, II=3.06, III=2.85).

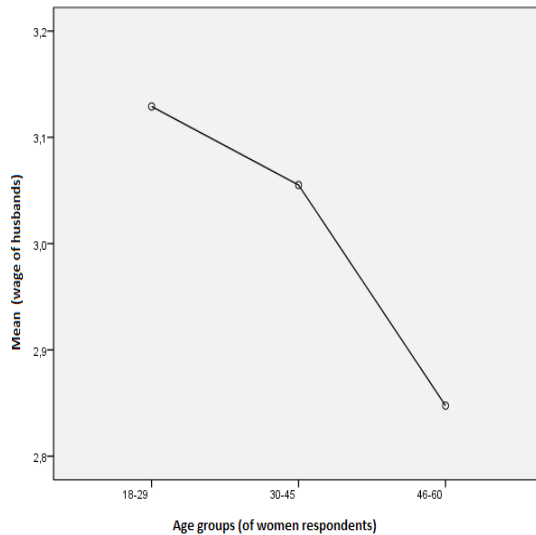


b) Generational difference in income between respondents' husbands (age refers only to women)

Generation	Generations I, II, III	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.
I (18-29)	II	.074	.080	1.000
	III	.281*	.086	.003
II (30-45)	I	-.074	.080	1.000
	III	.208	.084	.042
III (46-60)	I	-.281*	.080	.003
	II	-.208	.084	.042

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Confidence Interval 99%



These findings serve as strong markers of the ongoing process of repatriarchalization, particularly if we take into consideration that the educational level of the youngest generation of women and their husbands is higher than in the other two generations, which cumulatively contribute to the increase of gender inequality.

Housework and Care for Children

Private patriarchy is strong generator of gender inequality (Walby, 1990). It's persistence during the epoch of modernization is long lasting and based on bourgeois



division between public and private spheres, focused on protection of privacy/private property as the main principle of democracy. This division is one of the most important cause of the contemporary prevailing double burden of women, who take responsibility for most of the duties in household including the care for children and sick and elderly, while on the other side, they work for wages outside their homes and constitute the labor force without which contemporary market is unimaginable. It is obvious that it is necessary to develop broader political mechanisms for improvement of women's rights in order to change this condition which represent structural anomaly of modern society. However, it is also obvious that changes in attitudes and awareness of people are necessary too, and that it is not easy to change them, since nobody entitled for privilege gives up easily benefits of such position. This pertains to women themselves, since they often consider family sphere the protected realm of their feminine micro-social power, on which they build their self-esteem and their best social representations (Sekulić, 2017). If they pursue affirmation in public life, they face many constraints, based on gender regimes and prejudices, and consequently, many of them get out of public life and find retreat in familiar and intimate surroundings, usually making compromises with the traditional patriarchal requirements related to gender roles. (Milic, 1994)

Here we compare three generation of women to show the difference in distribution of domestic labor and care for children. Hypothetically we expected to see a drop of gender gap in the youngest group of women. We measured distribution of housework and parenting in two periods: 1) When first child was born. We considered this period of parenting formative. Couples' relationship before that formative moment was optional and without serious duties, but from that moment it had to be transformed. This phase is transitional. 2) The second period relates to present distribution of housework. In the framework of the research, we considered present mo-



ment “mature” and stable phase in which distribution of gender roles have become permanent.

Concerning the first, formative phase of parenthood, data confirmed our presumptions. The youngest generation shared their parenting duties with their partners more than the older ones. While 45.7% respondents from the youngest generation (18-29) did baby bathing together with their husbands/partners, 35.7% those from the second generation (30-45) used to share that task with their partners and even less, 28.4% did the same in the oldest generation (46-60). ($\chi^2=60.39$, Sig.000, Cramer’s $V= .14$).

The same relates to tasks of putting baby to sleep, changing diapers, calming baby when it cries, going for a walk or to doctor with baby, making photo album... However, it should be noticed that, after all, in all cases predominantly women perform these duties. There isn’t even one activity relating to parenting where men would take most of the burden. “There are only two activities – taking baby to walk (51.3%) and going to doctor (60.5%) - which are considered predominantly joint activity. All other tasks are predominantly female jobs. According to these indicators, formative period is a milestone that legitimate excessive use of women’s resources, exposing it openly as socially accepted custom, and for women a binding norm. (Radovic, Markovic, 2017). In addition, difference between generations concerning housework is not distinct and significant. While parenting include higher engagement of men, this doesn’t relate to “housewives’ job”. For example, only 11.9% respondents of the youngest generation shared cooking with their husbands, and roughly the same situation is with the other two generations (11.9% shared this duty with their husbands in the second generations, and only 6.6% in the oldest one). It seems that housework (cleaning, cooking, ironing) functions as a primary symbol of femininity, even more than parenting.



One of the questions posed to the respondents was: Have they ever been criticized for being bad mothers? (Radovic, Markovic, 2017: 144) The crossing-data (Hi-Square) indicates that the slightest criticism for being “bad mother” received women who in the formative period of their parenting shared their housework tasks with their partners equally. The most criticized as bad mothers are precisely women who in the same formative period (immediately after the arrival of baby), took all responsibilities for the housework. This information (the more women work, the more criticism) is interesting because it indicates that at least some of young women become a “good” mother by strong patriarchal social pressure and guilt mechanisms. In addition, those women criticized for being “bad mothers” are statistically more exposed to domestic violence than those who were not criticized ($\chi^2=35.082$; Cramers’s $V=0.15$; Sig=.000)

The following table shows the level of the respondents’ housework burden.

Table 6. *The percentage of women who perform their household tasks without the help of husbands*

	I	II	III
cooking	71.1	77.2	86.6
laundry	85.5	88.2	92.8
dishes	71	71.6	81.5
cleaning	67.1	70.9	79.6
shopping	27.7	35.4	50.1
care of children	51.6	55.8	67.2

Despite the fact that the youngest generation is less burden with housework than the older ones, the overall picture shows that private patriarchy is widespread in Serbia.

This alone does not indicate increase in patriarchalism, but it indicates that the traditional division of roles in households in Serbia is not even questioned by most of our respondents. However, the clear mark of repatriarchalization is the fact that 80% women of the young-



est generation state that they are mostly or completely satisfied with the present division of housework in their homes. The same applies to the older generations, but in a lesser degree. 63.2% women of the second generation (30 and 45) are satisfied too, and 55.8% of those who belong to the oldest generation (46-60).

We can explain this unusual generational distribution of answers concerning housework and equality only hypothetically. Probably because high percentage of housewives and unemployed women is noticed exactly among the youngest generation, they took housework and care for children as just and rightful distribution of domestic labor. If this is the case, repatriarchalization is obviously generated by the reduction of employment opportunities and life chances for the youth in general, affecting particularly young mothers.

Social change, including changing of patriarchal conditions, comes from social dynamic. Whenever there is a stalemate, social reforms will be slowed down or even reversed. Pushing women out of public life, even if this isn't declaratively promoted, actually lead to repatriarchalization, simply by making the patriarchal division of labor at home socially functional.

Patriarchal Values

In order to estimate the level of patriarchalism, we used standard (shorten) scale of patriarchalism. Factor analyses shows that the items have normal distribution, Keiser-Meyer-Okin's index is = 0.730, Bartlett spherical test, 000, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.766, the correlation matrix between the items has satisfactory coefficients above 0.3 (Min., 323, Max., 550). Analysis of the main components revealed the existence of only one component, which explains together 58,889 percent of the variance, and all unrotated factorial saturation were over 0.6. ("If only one spouse is employed, it is better if the employed one is husband." (,544) "Most household jobs are



by their nature more suited to women.” (,641) “It is good if man and woman are equal in marriage, but it is better if husband has the last word.” (,530) “Men are closer to the public and women to private jobs.” (,640))

Having confirmed that the scale is valid, we applied one-factor analysis of variance in order to define connections between the age (three different generations of respondents) and their level of patriarchy.

The outcomes clearly confirm significant similarities between the youngest and the oldest generation, while the middle one seems to be the less patriarchal. Robust test of equality means confirmed significant difference in variance between the three generations of women (Welch, $F=7.6$; Brown-Forsythe= $7,29$; Sig= $.001$) (I /the youngest group/ $M =11.24$; II, $M=10.31$;III $M=11.21$), while the multiple comparison (Tukey) shows that there is a significant difference between I and II group and II and III group, while I and III group are similar (table 7)

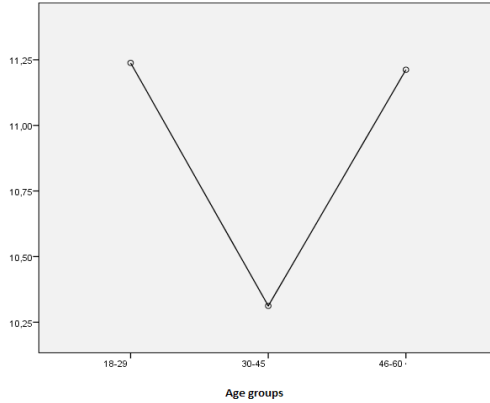
Table 7. *One-factor analyses of variance measuring the difference in the level of patriarchy between three generations of respondents*

Generation	Generations I, II, III	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.
I (18-29)	II	.926*	.279	.003
	III	.026	.292	.996
II (30-45)	I	-.926*	.279	.003
	III	-.900*	.280	.004
III (46-60)	I	-.026	.292	.996
	II	.900*	.280	.004

Confidence Interval 95%



Means Plots



The analysis points to repatriarchalisation, since the youngest generation of women, which would be expected to be the least patriarchal, has a higher level of patriarchy than the middle generation, and there is no difference in the level of patriarchy between them and the oldest generation.

Conclusion

The outcomes of the research do not indicate improvement of the equality of women in Serbian society today. In general, women's salaries are significantly lower than those of their partners, and the balance of life between private and public life is still undermined by the high burden on women with the responsibilities at home, in circumstances where family's budget depends on the paid work of both partners. Care for the elderly and sick stays exclusively female task. The outcomes of this research makes clear that the improvement of gender equality is not possible in conditions of a general decline in living standards. Several indicators point out that the values of women are marked by repatriarchalization. The retrograde direction becomes obvious when we compare three generations of respondents. The material standard of the youngest generation is the most uncertain, their average



wage the lowest, the difference in income between them and their husbands/partners the biggest and therefore the dependence on the partner and the immediate social support is obvious. At the same time, the traditional division of gender roles, the burden of women with household tasks and care strongly persist among the youngest mothers. Concerning their attitudes and values, the generation of the youngest has values and attitudes that are more similar to the generation of the oldest generation, than to the middle aged respondents, who are the most emancipated.



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