

**GENDER INEQUALITY AND THE DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR IN  
THE ROMA FAMILIES IN ALBANIA**

By

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Critical*

*Gender Studies*

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*Budapest, Hungary*

2019

## **ABSTRACT**

The idea of this research emerged from a discussion with my Roma friends related to the fair division of household labor within the Roma couples in Albania. Inspired by the outcome, I looked at the exciting literature, and surprisingly, I did not find any research or study which examines the division of labor through the lenses of Roma ethnicity in Albania. Therefore, triggered by this gap in the literature, this research explores the division of labor within Roma household in Albania and sheds light on how Roma couples negotiate the division of household labor and childrearing. This study analyzes how gender inequalities are produced and reproduced from the performance of household labor within a family. In addition, the research challenged the conceptualization that children do not participate in household labor. The methodology used is based on the narrative approach and focuses on three theoretical perspectives: gender ideology, time availability, and relative resources. The data for this thesis are collected from ten interviews conducted with Roma women in Tirana and found out that gender ideology played the most important role in the division of labor. The research concludes that relative resources and time availability do not have a significant impact on sharing the domestic work equally between partners. I suggest that gender inclusive research should be taken into consideration in order to better understand the gender ideologies within the Roma community. In the end, I consider my research as the first stage toward analyzing domestic work as activities which confine Roma women potential and suppresses them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis advisor Dr. Prof. Eva Fodor for giving me the opportunity to work with her. I have always wished to be supervised by her since I was enrolled in the Romani Studies Program. Prof. Eva was always welcoming, patience, and motivated to work with me throughout my research. I thank her for the continuous support with ideas, comments, and critics, which improved my research project significantly.

Secondly, I would like to show appreciation to the Romani Studies Program team for supporting me during my studies in the Roma Graduate Preparation Program. A special thank goes to my English teacher who improved my English academic skills and my tutor Petra Bakos who was the first to introduce me the importance and the depth of gender studies discipline.

Thirdly, I would also like to thank all my friends which I have made during my stay in Budapest especially, Fridon Lala and Klea Ibrahimi for their support and advice, inspiring discussions and all the fun we had during these years. Your presence made my staying at the dorm easier and enjoyable. You have substituted the absence of my family. Also, I thank my cousin Ina Majko for her special support on discussing my fears and concerns related to my thesis and the sleepless nights before its submission. In particular, I want to thank all my Roma friends in Albania for giving me the first thought of my research.

Fourthly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family, who gave me unconditional support throughout my academic career. Without their dedication, education, love, and emotional support, I would not have achieved to complete my studies. I hope that I have made you proud of me.

Last but not least, I must express my very profound gratitude to my partner in life for believing in my academic and professional dreams and for the continuous encouragement to follow them throughout the years. Xhekson Cela, you have shown me the best example to be followed. Thank you.

Author

Irena Majko.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Chapter 1 Historical Background.....	3
1.1. Introduction.....	3
1.2. Roma community during Communism.....	3
1.3. Roma women after the collapse of communism.....	5
1.4. Why did I choose to study Roma community? .....	6
1.5. Conclusions.....	8
Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework .....	9
2.1. Introduction.....	9
2.2. Defining household labor.....	10
2.3. General overview of domestic labor .....	11
2.4. Factors of division of labor .....	13
2.4.1. Gender Ideology.....	13
2.4.2. Relative resources .....	15
2.4.3. Time availability .....	17
2.5. Conclusion .....	18
Chapter 3 Methodology .....	18

3.1. Introduction.....	18
3.2. Research question .....	18
3.3. Research design .....	19
3.4. Methods and Data collection .....	20
3.4.1. Profile of the informants .....	20
3.4.2. Interview questions: .....	21
3.5. Ethics.....	22
3.6. Limitations .....	23
3.7. Positionality .....	23
3.8. Data Analysis .....	24
3.9. Conclusion .....	24
Chapter 4 Gender socialization within the family .....	25
4.1. Introduction.....	25
4.2. Gender socialization within Roma family .....	25
4.2.1. Parents modeling the division of domestic work .....	26
4.3. Conclusions.....	36
Chapter 5 “Doing gender”, time availability and relative sources theories .....	37
5.1. Introduction.....	37
5.2. Gender ideology.....	37
5.2.1. Gender ideology related to childcare .....	40

5.2.2. Gender Ideology, women and paid work .....	40
5.3. “Doing gender” .....	42
5.3.1. Women “experts” of the household .....	44
5.4. Time Availability .....	45
5.5. Relative sources .....	48
5.6. Conclusions.....	51
Chapter 6 Findings .....	52
6.1. Introduction.....	52
6.2. Findings.....	53
6.3. Conclusions.....	55
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	56

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the progress that women have made during the last years aiming to achieve gender equality in domestic and public spheres (“How far have women’s rights advanced in a century?,” n.d.), domestic work even nowadays is still deemed as their responsibility (“In 2019, women still bear the brunt of domestic chores,” n.d.). Studies show that the division of labor within the household is not shared equally among men and women (Taei, 2019). Women tend to contribute more on household chores and childcare as their primary duty, while men are usually avoiding the engagement in domestic work. This research has shown that basically in all the countries that the study was conducted women perform the biggest portion of domestic chores and have less leisure time than the men (Taei, 2019). In Albania, for instance, UNDP (Dauti & Zhllima, 2016) research revealed that women conduct more than 80% of the domestic chores. Tasks such as laundry, cooking, taking care of the children are assigned to women. However, there are not sufficient academic studies which explore the factors of this allocation of domestic labor in Albania. A lack of research is noticeable also related to domestic work, and Roma women, which makes their experiences within the household totally unheard. I got inspired to research about domestic labor within the Roma household from a discussion with my Roma friends in Albania related to how domestic chores should be divided between the couples. In total impossibility to convince my friends that domestic work should be equally shared, I decided looking myself of the theories which would explain the reasons why women tend to engage more on housework. Triggered from this gap in the Albanian literature, in my thesis, I will explore the division of labor within Roma household based on three theoretical perspectives: gender ideology, time availability, and relative resources. I am trying to address how the division of household labor, paid work, money management and childrearing are negotiated among Roma couples and to shed new theoretical light on broader issues related to gender interactions, power, and hierarchy within familial relationships. Moreover, the research



tries to challenge the conceptualization of children as passive and dependent, and the general assumption that children do not undertake productive labor. Based on their mother's narratives, the research makes visible the experiences of the Roma kids and their contribution to the domestic labor within their homes. The methodology of this study is qualitative methods, based on ten open-ended interviews conducted with Roma women in Tirana. The main finding of my research is that gender ideology is theoretical perspectives which explain the best the division of labor in the Roma couples. The two other perspectives, relative resources, and time availability do not have any significant impact on boosting couples to contribute equally to housework.

This research is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter gives a historical background of the Roma people, and especially the Roma women in Albania analyzed before and after the collapse of communism. Furthermore, chapter two describes the theoretical framework and literature review related to the factors which influence the domestic work. Chapter three explained the methodology used for this research and justified the reasons why it was chosen this specific approach. Chapter four and five are the analytical chapters which I state the results of the interviews conducted. The finding these chapters are concentrated in the applicability of the prominent theories explaining the division of labor, namely gender ideology, time availability, and relative resources. Chapter six, I state my interpretations over the results drawn from the two previous chapters. Lastly, I explain discussion and conclusions which connect my finding with the literature review.

## **Chapter 1 Historical Background**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Among Albanians are living different ethnic groups such as the Greeks, Macedonians, Montenegrin, Vlachs, Roma, and Egyptians (“Minority Rights Group,” n.d.). There is not yet an exact number of the Roma in Albania, but unofficial sources estimate around 120,000 Roma people (“Basic Facts on Roma - Albania,” n.d.). Being in the Albanian territory for more 600 years, the Roma population has been affected by the political and economic changes which happened in Albania over time (De Soto & Gedeshi, 2002). There are two important turning points in the lives of Roma minority in Albania - the end of the Second World War and the fall of communism in 1991, which influenced the family structure, lifestyle, and traditions considerably.

### **1.2. Roma community during Communism**

Roma community in Albania is living for more than six centuries, and they have mainly engaged in informal occupations such as handicrafts, music, horse-trading, and some agriculture (De Soto & Gedeshi, 2002). Some of the Roma had a nomadic lifestyle before communism, however when the socialist party came into power, the nomadic life was forbidden (“Roma and Egyptians in Albania,” n.d.). As a consequence of that, the socio-economic status of Roma community improved significantly during communism in Albania. The socialist government considered Roma as Albanians nationals and they were provided with education, health care, housing, and employment (UNDP, 2012). Even though the general perception is positive in regard to Roma integration in a Socialist society, Koinova (2000) claims that the integration was at a superficial level because Roma were involved in unskilled jobs.

Communism also improved the lives of Roma women. They were given the possibility to attend illiteracy courses (Brunnbauer, 2000), vocational training, full access to education, as the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade system became obligatory for every Albanian resident. Paid work was not a choice for women in Albania anymore (Lula, 2017) because the government could not effort leaving half of the potential workers at home. However, their employment pushed them to the public sphere because their productive capacity was vital in building a socialist state.

Despite these changes, the importance of reproductive and caretaking functions remained the same. The socialist government praised women as good mothers because the Albanian post-war had lost a vast majority of its population. Kushi (2015) explains in her article, that due to the measures of the socialist government the Albanian population increased significantly. To achieve the goal of increasing the population, the socialist government outlawed the abortion possibility for women and the use of contraceptive methods (Falkingham & Gjonça, 2001). While in other Eastern European countries such as Czechoslovakia the government introduced drastic sterilization policies for Roma women to control their fertility (*State Policies under Communism*, n.d.), in Albania Roma women were encouraged likewise Albanian women to give birth to many children. Thus, the situation within the households remained the same or even worsened for some women. In their article, King and Vullnetari (2016a), show that the gender hierarchy remained in place during communism and was perfectly reflected in the daily activities of women (p.203). Women ended up carrying the double burden working full-time and responsible for maintaining the household and caring for the elderly and children (King & Vullnetari, 2016b). As Fodor (2002) describes the situation of women in the other communist countries in Eastern Europe, in Albania also women spend hours waiting in the long lines of the shops, nurseries, schools with little help, or no help at all from their husbands. Moreover, because most of the families were poor, labor-saving devices were not affordable for every family, so the cleaning, cooking, laundry remained women's duty.

### 1.3. Roma women after the collapse of communism

The second turning point for Roma was the fall of communism in Albania in 1991. Many companies which offered menial jobs shut down. This fact affected the majority of Roma because they were the ones who were employed in these companies (Koinova, 2000). As a consequence of their engagement mainly in these unskilled jobs found Roma unprepared for the transition period (Koinova, 2000). However, the most vulnerable were the Roma women who likewise other post-communist women found themselves out of the labor market and were pushed back in the household (Kósá-Kovács, 2004). Nevertheless, for Roma women was more difficult to reintegrate into the labor market because they face a lot of discrimination based on their ethnicity. Being in these circumstances, many Roma argue that socialism favored more their needs than capitalism (ERRC, 1997, p.9). Although they were poor, they had access to basic needs and social provisions.

According to Lutjona Lula (2017), the fall of communism brought a retradicionalisation of the Albanian society, which means that gender norms were put again into place or were made very visible. These changes also affected the Roma community by making them more traditional, and as traditional, I define as Malina Voicu, and Raluca Popescu (2009), the term traditional is used to refer to Roma communinites where “control is very powerful, the education stock is very low and the involvement of women in work outside the home is almost non-existent” (p.1).

Roma women went back to the domestic sphere, being full-time households. From dual-earning families where women and men financially contributed at home, these families ended up altering gender roles to more normative ones, men the breadwinner and women maintain the household. Figures from UNDP (2015) report show that nearly 56% of Roma women in the Roma community in Albania are illiterate comparing to only 3% of Albanians in general. As

a consequence of the low level of schooling among Roma women unemployment rate is very high (UNDP, 2015). More specifically, nearly 59% of Roma women are unemployed, comparing to 31% percent of Albanian women (UNDP, 2015). These data show that the situation of Roma women after the collapse of communism became worse and the opportunities for being an independent Roma woman in terms of income have decreased.

However, Roma women are not discriminated only outside their community but also inside it. Some of the domains that the patriarchal system violates women freedom are related to body integrity, unfair distribution of housework, early and arranged marriages (Crowley, Genova, & Sansonetti, 2013). The finding of Crowley, Genova, & Sansonetti (2013) show that also in Albania that Roma women are confined within the social standards of their community as they are required to be good wives and develop excellent motherhood skills. The Roma woman does not always have a free choice in deciding about her reproductive right and choosing her partner because these rights are unnegotiable due to the traditional values that the Roma community holds. Therefore, this control does not leave room for women to object to the hierarchical gender system. Due to the fact that they lost their jobs, the only power that women can claim is their expertise to perform household labor.

#### **1.4. Why did I choose to study Roma community?**

For this project, I chose to explore the division of labor within the Roma family for several reasons. As I described above, Roma women, have been the target of double discrimination based on gender and ethnicity. They are also excluded by society because of their lack of education and employment. I think another domain that Roma women are oppressed is a domestic sphere; that is why I see it as very relevant to discuss domestic labor as another layer of control over Roma women. I consider analyzing domestic labor crucial in understanding

how domestic labor is negotiated only among women and how gender inequalities are produced, reproduced, and maintained in the Roma families.

Many projects and research are conducted related to the socio-economic status of Roma in Albania, but little attention is given to the Roma family, which I consider the genesis of women oppression. Family is an institution which operates based on power relations, and I think analyzing the division of labor in the Roma families, is an excellent source of information to observe whether the power, authority, decision-making are attributes which are distributed based on gender. In addition, my research is necessary to understand how Roma women's identities are shaped like women, wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters-in-law and if the role which they are expected to fulfill is oppressive or self-restricting. Roma girls pass from childhood to womanhood very fast, and the household responsibilities become the first burden than they have to bear. The direct transformation from childhood to womanhood happens as a consequence of the early marriages, which are very common in the Roma community in Albania. Hence, performing household duties and childbirth turn out to be a 'test' which these women have to pass in order to prove their worth. Therefore, it is important to study the consequences that the absence of adolescence, education, proper employment, and social pressure construct a different pattern of gender ideology than the others in general in Albania.

The impetus of this research was taken from an informal conversation with my Roma friend. The argument was related to the division of labor within the Roma couple. Her point of view was very traditional, and she was justifying the existing gender norm of dividing household labor. Therefore, from the discussion, I felt stigmatized for holding egalitarian views and claiming for equal division of domestic work between the couple. In the end, the conversation conveyed to me the feeling of shame because I was betraying the values of my community. According to

my friend, I was considered an outsider for holding ideologies which should not belong among Roma women.

At last but not least, being myself a Roma woman, raised in a very gender normative community and family conflicts with my egalitarian views. Thus, through this research, I want to give insight into the actual life of Roma women and searching for other women like me who hold similar views and were not only oppressed by the unequal division of labor but also oppressed by the social pressure that the community put on these women. Finally, I want to consider other meanings or ways of seeing household work than the majority of women in Albania. I want to make Roma women's experiences heard but not framed in terms of the majority culture, given the differences in marital, family structures, and gender roles understanding of my community.

### **1.5. Conclusions**

In this section, I explored the historical background of Roma in Albania during and after the communism. A particular focus was given to the experiences of Roma women in the labor market and in the household. The highlight of this chapter is that the situation of Roma women was challenging in both periods for different reasons. During the communism Roma women, on the one hand, benefited from the state policies to eradicate their complete illiteracy and get involved in the labor market, on the hand they were perceived as being able to perform mostly menial work. Thus, their integration into Albanian society made significant steps forward but remained at a superficial level. However, after the collapse of communism, their social and economic life regressed. The companies which they were employed, likewise other companies, collapsed, leaving them unemployed and unskilled to reintegrate into the labor market. The lack of employment opportunities, made Roma women dependent on the patriarchal ideology

of their community, pushing them towards more traditional gender roles and with limited chances to question them.

## **Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The division of labor within the household has become a critical topic among feminist scholars. This discourse emerged around the 1970s in Western academia and emphasized the women's oppression through domestic work. Scholars such as Presser (1994) Hochschild (1990), Coltrane (1989), England and Farkas (1986), Hartmann (1979), explored the issues concerning the unequal division of labor between women and men. Their focus was double-earning heterosexual couples, and they shed light on the gender differentials in the domestic participation work as well as the social condition in which the gap of the amount of domestic work between men and women widens or reduces.

My research is centered on the Roma community in Albania. Therefore, searching for the existing Albanian literature related to Albanian Roma division of labor was very important. However, I found out that there is a lack of research related to gender inequalities, which are produced and reproduced through domestic work in Albania in general. Some research conducted recently focused on the Albanian populations (Elezi & Rydenstam, 2011; Dauti & Zhllima, 2016) found out that 80% of housework in Albanian households are conducted by women. In addition, the time that women spend doing unpaid work is significantly higher compared to men who engage only 13 minutes (Elezi & Rydenstam, 2011) in domestic work. Nevertheless, these few types of research are concentrated more into data rather than analyzing these inequalities through gender and ethnic lens. Because of this gap of the literature, I



concentrate my literature review in exploring connections of household labor with ethnicity, time, gender and income because I consider them as the most potential elements to give answers to the actual patterns of dividing household labor in the Roma families. In this chapter, I map out the existing literature in order to give a definition of household labor. Then, I explore the most important factors which influence the division of domestic labor.

## **2.2. Defining household labor**

The definition of domestic labor should not be considered as universal (Shelton & John, 1996) because it has been shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts. However, there is a common understanding of domestic work, as labor which is invisible and not rewarded (Bergmann, 2005; Oakley, 1974). Couples negotiate for their involvement in domestic work because they see it as unenjoyable, monotonous, repetitive (Oakley, 1974). This consideration comes as a consequence of the fact that these tasks are often viewed as a waste of time since the individual does not get paid or does not raise his/her capacities. Hence, housework is seen by Shelton (1996) as a work which due to its unpaid nature is excluded from the analysis of labor in general.

Domestic work is perceived as a single task. However, Oakley (1974) explains that we should not talk about domestic labor as a single task, but we need to separate the duties as they require a variety of skills. By calling them a single activity, we underestimate their value. Therefore, Coltrane (2000) refers to housework as all the unpaid activities which members of a family get involved in the house. According to Bianchi et al. (2000) and Coltrane (2000) household labor entails many housekeeping tasks such as cleaning, doing laundry, cooking, doing grocery, and paying bills, household repairs, garden, and animal care. Nevertheless, including childcare as domestic work is arguable among scholars, but Mackie & Pattullo (1977) claims that in the domestic work definition should be included everything that has to do with organizing and

caring for other members of the family. In my opinion, domestic work should entail childcare because it is an activity which constitutes significant investments of time. Cooking for children, helping them with their homework, keeping contacts with teachers, other parents, and friends, preparing and accompanying them to school are not activities which should be neglected. I analyze these activities in terms of responsibilities and time consumption in doing them.

Furthermore, there are other studies which expand their definition by dividing household labor into tasks traditionally performed by women, gender neutral, and performed by men (Bianchi et al., 2000). Twiggs et al. (1999) go beyond dividing them in sex-typed chores and proposed a list from the most gender-neutral type of chores such as grocery, shopping and paying bills which are performed by both partners to the most segregated female chores performed by women such as cooking, laundry, and washing dishes. In addition, there is another category which is called male-segregated chores, which consists of work outside of the domestic sphere, repairing, gardening, etc. (Presser 1994). Moreover, Delphy and Leonard (1992) argue that emotional work and sexual well-being of the men should also be included as an essential part of the domestic work explanation. Thus, domestic work is very complex activities which involve more than practical involvement, but also emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.

In my research, I use the term household labor for all the unpaid household tasks such as preparing meals, washing dishes, housecleaning, doing laundry, shopping, and any other care functions.

### **2.3. A general overview of domestic labor**

In this section, I will inspect the existing literature to give a general overview of why domestic work is perceived as the women's primary duty. Most of the reasons are related to economic perspectives and cultural considerations (Brines, 1994). The economic perspective pays attention to the time availability and the relative resources that the couple brings into the family

to negotiate household labor (Bianchi et al 2000) while cultural perspective focus more on the ways gender identities are constructed within the family and acted out according to the community expectations (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

According to Oakley (1974), girls are socialized in a way to believe that childrearing and household labor are biological and are embedded in their nature. Girls are taught to believe in the pleasure of being nurturing, delicate, and loving toward their husbands (Firestone, 1970), and therefore they are forced to be invisible and remain within the domestic sphere. Due to the variety of ways that domestic work is divided across cultures, for Oakley, there is not a natural association of household responsibilities with gender.

Juliet Mitchell, in her book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1990), explores the unfair division of domestic work and point out that patriarchy dominates women. The patriarchal system is very hierarchal and becomes a fundamental ideological structure which teaches boys and girls how to become “men” and “women” in accordance to the gender definitions of a given culture (Ullah & Naz, 2017). Hence, Hartmann (1979) considers the family an essential place which should be analyzed in term of domestic work. Household is an arena where men exercise their patriarchal power over women. However, I think that what is missing in these analyses is the power that women exercise over their children and their influence in shaping gender patterns of dividing domestic work. Moreover, since the system of values differs from one community to another, it is crucial to look deeper on elements such as race/ethnicity, social norms, and interactions, because being part of an ethnic group comes along with a set of behaviors and attitudes which affect domestic chores. Therefore, the race is important to be taken into account because it affects the household labor based on internal and external factors such as prejudices, cultural and traditional norms and social experiences (Bolzendahl & Gubernskaya, 2016)

For instance, Roma minority in Europe face the same issues everywhere such as, poverty, discrimination, illiteracy, unemployment, statelessness, early marriages, and lack of adequate health conditions, (Foundation, n.d.) which makes Roma have a common shared experience and as a consequence creates a common pattern of division of labor.

## **2.4. Factors of the division of labor**

In this section, I will map out the existing literature in order to give a glimpse of the factors which influence the division of domestic work. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, domestic work is mostly considered women's responsibility, and as such women perform a more significant portion of household labor than their husbands. There are many theories which explain the reasons why this is happening but, the most prominent ones are: firstly, the construction of gender as a social category which influences the way people position themselves within the household (Hochschild 1990; West and Zimmerman (1987). Secondly, the relative resources which is measured in terms of income used to negotiate the equal division of labor between the couple (Brines, 1994; Blair & Litcher, 1991). Lastly, time availability, which focuses on the time the men or women dedicate to household work after their engagement in the paid work (Becker, 2009).

In my research I focus on these three main theoretical perspectives: gender ideology, time availability and relative sources because I consider that they implicitly or explicitly point out elements of power, work, and conflicts which are very important in understanding how domestic work is divided.

### **2.4.1. Gender Ideology**

In order to understand the role of gender ideology, I will look at how gender identity and social norms are constructed through domestic work. Early formulations of gender ideology are connected to childhood socialization development, where women and men learn from their

families and communities gender roles which are perceived as appropriate behaviors (Carter, 2014). Therefore, gender is a constructed identity and is embedded in the culture of a society. People are introduced to this concept since they were kids by their family members, especially parents and siblings who are the first agents the child has contact with (Carter, 2014). This perception was also proven in the Roma community in Albania. I found out that Roma women and men learned and constructed their gender identity since they were kids. They were taught by their mothers what is appropriate behavior for a woman within the household. However, this identity might be changed or adapted when women change the environment. When they get married, they comply with the gender ideology of their husbands' families.

West and Zimmermann (1987) are among the first sociologists who came with the idea that gender identities are formed by everyday interactions. The family and the community of the individual constitutes the areas in which these gender identities are constructed and played out. The division of labor among couples is very important because it teaches men and women to what extent they should get involved and what kind of tasks they should perform according to their gender. Due to the fact that people are required to be accountable for their gender, they act out in accordance with what the community expects from them. This process is called by West and Zimmerman (1987) 'Doing Gender.' Similar patterns are found also in the Roma community in Albania. In my research, Roma women do gender in everyday interactions, especially in domestic labor. They behave in accordance with the community expectation, and there is little room for objection. The only manner to voice their resistance is by attributing the problem externally and keeping shame out of their families.

Different scholars such as Hochschild (1990) define gender ideologies as traditional and transitional and egalitarian (p.15). According to Greenstein (1996), those wives with traditional beliefs do the bulk housework, and those with an egalitarian belief negotiate to have a balanced

division of indoor chores. Moreover, Hochschild (1990) describe as transitional ideology a mix of the above-mentioned beliefs. Women attribute to men some of the perceived feminine values and vice versa, but they still confine their gender identities in a very normative way Hochschild (1990). Academics (Greenstein, 1996; Presser, 1994) focuses more on the gender ideology of the wife rather than the husband because the division of labor depends on what the wife perceive as fairly distributed housework. Women get into a dialogue with their husbands only when they hold egalitarian views. However, I failed to completely prove this view in my research. Roma community in Albania is a closely tight community, which means they monitor the behavior of each other, and there is less or even none individual behavior or ideology. Therefore, it not very important what is the gender ideology of a woman or a man because the community beliefs are more powerful and eclipse individual beliefs. Based on that the overall gender ideology of the Roma women tends to be more traditional.

#### 2.4.2. Relative resources

Research conducted by Blood and Wolfe (1960) suggested that there is a relation between economic dependency and contribution to domestic labor. The relative resources (or resources bargaining) perspective argues that because of the general perception that women bring fewer resources at home they have less power to negotiate for an equal distribution of labor (England and Farkas 1986). Although it might seem that women contribute less, in reality, their input is invisible (Shelton and John, 1996) and is deemed as worthless outside of the relationship (England and Farkas 1986).

Also, Greenstein (1996) explain the relative sources argument according to the economic dependency model. Because wives are more likely to be economically dependent on their husbands, they are expected to allocate more time to domestic work than them. Shelton & John (1996) goes further to link this explanation with the perception of fairness regarding the

division of labor. They claim that the concept of fairness is very related to the gender ideology that a couple holds. However, in my findings, fairness turns out to be very closely related to income because women perceived as fairly distributed household only in cases that men were the main providers. If they were not employed women tended to require their assistance in the domestic work.

Furthermore, other scholars have examined the relation between income and housework performance from a micro- and macro-economic point of view. Firstly, Becker (2009) introduced a microeconomic model and concluded that women devote more time to household labor if their husbands' comparative advantages in the labor market are higher than theirs. The greater the gap between the couples' education, the greater the time difference that individual devote to these activities. Secondly, Fuwa, (2004) analyzes this argument for macro-level data, and the outcome was similar to Becker (2009). According to Fuwa (2004), women with a higher wage may have more power in deciding the distribution of chores as they may be better at negotiating. However, this finding was not statistically significant, and this can be linked to the fact that the countries are industrialized, and their gender norms may be not in a "transitional" stage (Fuwa, 2004). Lastly, (Diefenbach, 2002) concluded that countries which have gender norms in a transition phase, relative resources have a much stronger impact on household labor compared to countries which are considered traditional or have more egalitarian views. My findings are more in line with Diefenbach (2002) conclusions because Roma community hold a traditional ideology. As such relative sources do not play a significant role in the contribution of men within the household. Division of labor was divide based on gender regardless of who is brining more income at home.

### 2.4.3. Time availability

The time availability perspective is measured by the time women and men dedicated to household labor after their engagement in paid labor (Greenstein, 2000). This is a very important component which should be taken into consideration when explaining domestic labor, because the time men spend in the labor market, is usually considered more important than domestic work. This happens due to the fact that domestic work is a work which is devalued and not paid in relative resources. There are studies which show that employed women spend less time doing household chores than those who are full-time household. For example, (Robinson & Godbey, 1997) show in their research that employed women reduced their hours in domestic work. More specifically, they devote one third less time to domestic chores than those who are unemployed. Moreover, Coltrane (2000) sees time availability approach in relation to the time men negotiate for domestic work as well as the social condition which influence men to perform women segregated tasks. He finds out that education, late marriages, and egalitarian views of men are conditions that influence men engagement in domestic work. However, in my research, I could not prove these conditions because most of the husband of the women that I interviewed were uneducated, married at a relatively early age and the society hold traditional ideologies. Blair and Lichter (1991) explain that men who're their wives are employed, contribute much more time in household labor. However, I had the opposite finding. Regardless of the Rome women employment status, they had to fulfil all the domestic work that the house requires. According to (Shelton & John, 1996) women spend more hours doing housework when they have children and they are disadvantaged because they are the ones that should allocate time from their everyday activities in order to fulfill the requirements of their kids. I also prove this is in my research because every task that was related to childcare was completed by women. In addition, this responsibility takes so much time that women tend to quit their opportunities to develop themselves in order to prioritize children.



## **2.5. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored the various definition of domestic work, and I concluded that in my research domestic work it would be referred to unpaid activities which take place within the household. Those activities are related to washing, cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, paying bills, doing grocery but also childcare and emotional work. In this literature review, I have explored the three most important theories which explain the unfair division of labor. Firstly, gender ideology which checks out the relation between ideologies and contribution to the household. Secondly, relative resources argue the involvement of partners in performing domestic work based on their income. And finally, time availability refers to how much time a person devotes to domestic work beside paid work.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This thesis aims to shed light on how the division of labour is divided into the Roma families. Therefore, in this chapter, it will be outlined the research question and based on that the research design was chosen. Furthermore, I explain the methods used and data collection; I present the profile of the informants, interview questions, and limitation of the study. And in the end, I share reflections on my position as a researcher and state how the data were analysed.

### **3.2. Research question**

In order to see what are the factors that influence the division of labor within the household, the following question has been posed:

How Roma couples in Albania produce gendered interactions within a family and how men and women derive gendered meanings from the performance of household labor?

### 3.3. Research design

This research paper is concerned to address how the division of household labor, paid work, money management, and childrearing are negotiated among Roma couples. Based on three theoretical perspectives namely socialization theory, economic perspectives and cultural considerations (Brines, 1994) the research tries to shed new theoretical light on broader issues related to gender interactions, power, and hierarchy within familial relationships. Therefore, a deep understanding of Roma women perception of these three theories is important in order to answer the research question. Due to the fact that the study focuses only on Roma women narratives constructivist approach (see Spector-Mersel, 2010) is a well-matched paradigm. In order to conduct the research on the division of household labor in the Roma community in Albania, I collected my data based on the qualitative research method. I conducted open-question interviews in order to give the opportunity to the Roma women to share their experiences outside of their community members. Most of the women I interviewed, do not talk outside of their circle of trust, which usually consist of other women, sisters or close friends. I do believe that the methodology used for this research is very important, not only as a tool for getting information, but I see it as a space where Roma women took the courage to problematize division of labor, redirecting the attention to this overlooked topic. Although, their narrative might be seen as subjective and be contested, I do give to them credibility, because I believe that their personal involvement in articulating what really matters in the household is very important. Alessandro Portelli (2009) suggests that “orality, narrative form, subjectivity, the ‘different credibility’ of memory, [...] should be considered as strengths rather than weaknesses, a resource rather than a problem” (p.32). He argues that “there are no ‘false’ oral sources” (p.37) because the credibility of these testimonies comes from real experiences, symbolism, and desire emerged. Moreover, through narrated biographies, crucial intersectional elements such as gender, race and class, cultural values emerge (Sangster, 1994) leaving room

for analyzing ‘structural and ideological relations’ and incorporating ‘gender as a defining category of analysis’ in women’s experiences (p.7).

However, the narrated histories have their limitations because they should not be generalized since they are more focused on pieces of personal stories.

### **3.4. Methods and Data collection**

For this research, I looked up the existing feminist literature related to domestic work, women, gender roles, and inequalities in the family. Secondly, I consulted the Albanian literature and academic research related to the topic, although I have to mention the fact that it is very limited. Thirdly, based on the material which I collected from the desk research, I designed the questionnaire, and I decided the target group to be interviewed. The approach for this research is a narrative one since it helps to tackle more early based on storytelling the scope of this study is to comprehend the Roma women perspective on how the domestic work is divided and negotiated within the Roma family. To please the need of this study, I conducted ten interviews in Kombinat neighborhood in Tirana, Albania, during the period of December 2018 and January 2019. The interviews lasted almost 60 minutes each and were set up in their homes, coffee shops, or other quiet places, in order to ensure the privacy of the conversations. The interviews are conducted and recorded in Albanian, then translated and transcribed in English. The age of the interviewees varies from 22-50 years old.

#### **3.4.1. Profile of the informants**

The informants were chosen randomly in a semi-segregated area located in the outskirts of the city of Tirana. They are all married to Roma men and have children. In addition, they came to Roma from traditional families, which pays too much attention on constructing a normative gender identity and were married at an early age. Even though they are all Roma, they are still

divided into different groups based on their background. I will categorize their differences in two main aspects, based on their age and education.

The range of age varies from 22 to 50 years old. I think age is very important aspect of being taken into consideration in the analyses of this study because my informants have constructed the ideology and patterns of division of labour in different perspectives and different social realities. So, four of my informants are born after the collapse of communism, in a period of which most of the women, especially Roma women, were pushed back into the domestic sphere. They got an image that women belong to the household. In contrast to six of my other interviewees who their childhood and early adolescence was during the communist era. During this period, the women were part of the labour market, so they contributed within the family. However, they still saw their mothers in the role of caretakers.

Education is another element which distinguishes the informants. They are coming from different educational backgrounds, more specifically seven of them have completed the compulsory education which in Albania consisted in 8<sup>th</sup> grades, two completed high school and professional school, and one holds a university degree. The level of education is an aspect which I have taken into account because its level alters the employment opportunities. Moreover, it also affects the way women construct their identity as a housewife and as workers.

#### 3.4.2. Interview questions:

After targeting the study sample, I conducted my in-depth interviews. The interview questions are all open-ended. I divided them into sub-sections in order to understand most of the biographical information and elements which would help the analysis of my research. Although I have worked and lived myself in this neighbourhood, my connections with the community were limited, and the knowledge related to the lives and experiences of these women, depend

only on their narratives. The centrality on the division of domestic work and power relations can be noticed throughout the questions.

The first section of the questionnaire is related to early childhood socialization and the role of the family in constructing binary gender role and identities. In this section, information related to their childhood experiences of the division of labor, memories related to power relation and control of sources of their parents were asked. These questions helped me to get a glimpse of the childhood background of my informants and to better understand its influence in the second section of the questionnaire which was focused on their current families and the way domestic work was allocated between couple, parents and children. The aim of these questions was to see the internal interaction of the family and explore more whether there is an application of hierarchical relation between Roma couples in dividing domestic work depending on their gender. The questions were designed in a way, to measure two things. Firstly, the power relations between the couple and the children's participation in the domestic work, assisting their parents, and whether this assistance is gendered. Secondly, I wanted to see if women applied to their families the same patterns of dividing domestic work that they got from their parents. The last section of questions was dedicated to paid labour. In order to elaborate more income and leisure time has any impact on negotiation domestic work between the couple.

### **3.5. Ethics**

The neighborhood in which my interviews are conducted is known for me. I have worked there, and it was easy to locate one person who would help me contacting other informants based on the snowballing method. In a phone call from Budapest, I explained to one of the women, hereafter the contact point, the purpose of my interviews and the process, including the recording procedures which I was most worried about. In that conversation, we did not come up with a full list of names which would be interviewed. However, the contact point helped me

letting women know that in a few days, I was going to talk with some of them. This eased the process for me, although I re-explained the aim and the conditions of my research to women to ensure that the information was fully understood. After conducting the first interview with one of the women, I entered in the network of this women, ensuring confidentiality. Most of them were concerned about leaking information in the neighborhood. That is why I have changed the names of some informants. Although they knew that my thesis, was going to be written in English, and the access to this information would be very limited, not to say impossible, I still decided to change their names in the research.

### **3.6. Limitations**

This study has several potential limitations. Firstly, the study sample is composed of only one target group, which is Roma women. By doing so, I am silencing men voices, and I am articulating their experiences only through women perceptions. In addition, there is a risk that this narrative can be biased and contested by men. This limitation came as a result of time constrain, and length of the research. The second limitation is related to the lack of literature focused on the intersection of Roma and gender division of labour. The lack of sufficient academic data even for the Albanian population limits my possibility to make a comparison of the factors which influence the division of labour and the Roma of ethnicity and class in the household.

### **3.7. Positionality**

When I thought about myself as a researcher, I took into consideration two aspects. Firstly, my identity as a researcher and secondly, how my identity is perceived by the interviewees. I am a Roma woman coming from a semi-traditional family, in which domestic work was allocated only to my mother. Since a kid, I was raised with the idea that household labour is only for women. Due to the fact that this was never questioned in my family made me think of

challenging this framework and make this topic discussed. Based on my identity, I have my personal involvement in the research. However, this does not affect or manipulate the data. In my field work, I identify myself as an ‘indigenous outsider’ researcher (Banks, 1998) because I do belong to the Roma community but with a different life course development which is not considered traditional. With that, I mean that I am not a Roma language speaker, not married or have kids, and more educated. By holding this identity, my position was elevated, and sometimes I could notice controversial narratives.

### **3.8. Data Analysis**

After gathering all the data required for this study, I transcript all the interviews in order to have a better understanding of the data found. Then analyse them carefully to find common themes, overlapping, and differences. In the end, I divided them into three analytical chapters. First, is concentrated on socialization and childhood experiences in the division of labour. The second chapter tries to connect what they learned and what they apply in their domestic work by using the concept ‘doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman 1987). In the end, the third chapter explores time, gender, and income impact in sharing domestic work in the household.

### **3.9. Conclusion**

This section explored the methodology which I used to conduct my research. For this study, I have used qualitative methods based on narratives. I conducted 10 open ended interviews with Roma women from Kombinat neighborhood in Tirana. Before I conducted the research, I asked for their consent, and I recorded the interviews. After collecting the data, I transcribed and synthesized them in order to find similar patterns to come up with my conclusions.

## **Chapter 4 Gender socialization within the family**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I am going to explore the role that the family has in building up gender identities by using socialization theory. I will outline based on the data collected how parents shape gender roles on children and how women shift or adapt their gender roles in order to meet the standards of their in-laws.

### **4.2. Gender socialization within the Roma family**

This chapter aims to illustrate the gender division of household labor in the Roma families by following the family patterns which influence the conception of gender roles. By employing qualitative interviews in one of the Roma neighborhoods in Tirana, I try to find answers to how Roma women construct their identities as women and how they rationalize notions of femininity and masculinity through domestic work. More specifically, the chapter explores the notion of gender as a social structure in individual and interactional level in order to analyze how these interactions perpetuate inequalities in the households. Unpacking elements which come from the families and community itself, I try to understand why men and women are encouraged or discouraged to engage in specific household work. My main argument is that parents' and family attitudes mediate traditional gender roles which Roma women follow in their adulthood. Parents' operate as agents of socialization because they are the first unit children have contact with. I observed that women established a foundation of division of labor based on their parent's behaviors. The various way parents' divided the household labor at home, is used by Roma women as subsequent interactions in their current conjugal families. Also, messages related to what is appropriate and inappropriate according to their gender when performing household chores are received in the forms of advice, given by older women, especially before marriage. Older Roma women give great importance to



household labor because they see it as a form of pride, not only for the young Roma girls but also for their families.

#### 4.2.1. Parents modeling the division of domestic work

In this section, I will explain how gender roles are produced, reproduced, and maintained in the Roma families in Albania by asking my interviewees to recall some of their experiences during childhood and teenage years. Based on their narratives, I argue that socialization at home and community plays a crucial role in positioning gender roles. The most prominent theoretical perspective on gender development is social cognitive theory. This theory emphasizes the role of environment in constructing beliefs and behavioral norms about men and women (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Collin and Russell (1991) show in their research that parents' gendered behaviors at home become models which children follow in their adult life. Parents play a prominent role in shaping gendered personality characteristics and behaviors. This process is made possible by observing how other women and men act out different roles and allocate different time to domestic work and to leisure activities. However, not only the family reinforces sex-appropriate behaviors. The community and friends establish also norms which are expected to be followed by children. The compliance with them becomes a unique learning system in which children acquire gendered behaviors (Serbin, Powlishta, & Gulko, 1993).

Therefore, my research is relevant to trace parents' and community's gender ideology and behaviors regarding the division of labor. I focus on two main themes - how parent did or acted out the gender with the domestic sphere and which are those factors that have influenced the construction of their gendered identity since early childhood development. Therefore, to find out the role of childhood socialization in producing gender roles and embedding socially accepted ways to perform gender, I asked my interviewees to recall how their parents divided

domestic work. From their answers, I argue that the socialization process has modeled Roma women and men behaviors and effected their adulthood experiences regarding the division of labor. The first factor which has influenced the conception of the division of household labor for Roma women is the model they got from the share of work among parents and other siblings.

In their childhood recollections, most of the women interviewed, described the division of labor at home as defined by gender. The women who were born after the collapse of communism recalled a clear gender division of labor. Their mothers were mainly responsible for the household, while their fathers were engaged even in a more ‘difficult job,’ in finding various ways to make a living. The fact that after the collapse of communism many Roma people lost their jobs, maintaining financially their families became a struggle, and the possibilities to do so were limited. That is why the women perceived the role of their fathers as more important or crucial in helping the family to function properly. The household chores that their mother performed were seen as a substitution of the paid labor their fathers struggled to find. Although they were aware that the division of domestic labor was gendered, they still perceived it as fair to some extent, because someone had to take care of children and perform domestic work while men traced the opportunities to contribute financially at home. Ela (27 years old) describes her experience as following:

“My mother was cooking and cleaning, taking care of us. My father did not help her, but he was working, and you can’t imagine the work he did. Let’s say it was okay because someone had to work at home, someone outside. [...] For my mom was difficult to find a job, I mean for everyone [every woman].”

As we can see, in Ela’s perception, the division of labor is clearly gendered. Her mother was responsible for the household, and her father was trying to make a living. However, due to

the struggle of her father to find ways to feed his family, and because of the difficult nature of the job he performed, Ela considers this division of work fair. For her, both of her parents prioritized and contributed equally to having their children fed, regardless of - who was doing what?

In the same vain, built their argument the other respondents. They recalled their childhood memories from the transition period in Albania, where their families' finances were at stake. Their parents had lost their jobs due to the closure of many companies. Thus, the family relied only on their father's income because the employment opportunities were mostly in job which required physical strength such as reconstructions, security of private objects during night shifts and other menial jobs. Taking into consideration these contexts, most of the women justified their father's lack of contribution in the domestic work.

A different narrative came up from those women who lived their childhood during communism. For them, the example they got from their mothers was not only as households but also as workers who participated in the labor market. Paid labor for their mothers in the communist era was not a choice, but they still considered that women gained some kind of 'freedom', in the sense that they could socialize and participate in public life more than they do now. For them, women were to some extend equal to men because they contributed financially at home, although this equality was limited. By limitation they meant the fact that their mothers could not escape from the housekeeping responsibilities.

“There was no difference if you were working [in paid labor], or not. Domestic work was on my mom. She was working in a textile company which was a very tiring job. But this didn't matter. Nobody cared. [...] Everyone had to help, my father too” (Shpresa, 50 years old)

This response makes clear that the engagement of women in paid work, changes the perspective of judging division of labor at home. Shpresa explains that domestic work had to be shared more equally, because it required additional time and physical strength for her mother. According to her, domestic work should not be shared based on gender but should be seen as a task of everyone in the family. Otherwise, the family does not function properly.

Other women judged that due to the fact that having a lot of children and living in extended family was very common, their mothers found themselves in continuous struggle to perform properly the work assigned inside and outside the household. All the informants accepted that in case they lived in extended families the household labor was performed only by women who could be their mothers, older sisters, grandmothers, aunts etc. What was perceived as ‘harder’ tasks such as carrying heavy things, repairing and fixing outside the household were mostly men’s duties.

Despite the different contexts in which the women grow up, they perceived the division of labor as depending mainly on gender. In their opinion their mothers were able to perform any kind of activity or contribute financially in the same manner as their fathers could do, if the chance was given. But men, employed in formal, informal labor or unemployed, did not participate in domestic chores. The gender ideologies that the family followed did not allow them to go out of the box.

A second finding is related to the fact that when women were overburdened by paid and unpaid work, interviewees responded that they, as children, performed household chores. However, they recalled that this assistance was also gendered. Girls were assigned to help in housekeeping, cooking and taking care of younger siblings, while boys were more responsible for outside work such as doing grocery, cleaning the yard, preparing woods for heating etc. Moreover, it is obvious that older children, especially girls carry the heaviest domestic work.

Asked why this division, women stated that this is how their parents assigned tasks daily to them, therefore very often it was not a choice.

Klodiana (35 years old) states:

“I am the oldest child. My mother and father were working to make a living, we were poor. So, early morning, before leaving my mom reminded me and my little sister what we had to do during the day. I was at the age of eight or nine when I started helping at home. We cooked and washed dishes. Of course I was doing more, I was older than my siblings. My brother had to buy bread, or anything else we needed to cook. [...] Even when he grew up he did same work, of course he “wouldn’t wear our apron”<sup>1</sup> and cook. We didn’t expect this from him.”

I chose specifically this quote, because is very interesting how Klodiana closes her answer. For me the sentence “we didn’t expect this from him” tells me a lot about how women themselves become prey of a gendered understanding of division of labor at home. From her answer, I understood that sometimes women ‘normalize’ the way domestic work is divided by seeing their parents as models and the way they divide the work, unquestionable. How parents divided responsibilities between each other and with their children, shaped the perception that gender is as a very important factor which has to be taken into consideration when performing domestic chores.

When women were asked about their fathers, they shared similar expectations as to their brothers. For most of their mothers, it was crucial that their husbands contribute financially at home. Other domestic work if performed by men, were mostly considered an asset, but not requirement. The only case that women problematized domestic work performed by men, was when they brought up the issue of men’s unemployment. Based on my interviews I noticed a

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning that he would not engage in feminine work

correlation between men-money-household contributions. Women had internalized and ‘normalized’ the idea that it is enough for men to work and make a living for the family. They stated that arguments between their parents were more related to lack of men financial contribution, rather than domestic work. Bardha (44 years old) describes her experience accordingly:

“My mom was doing most of the work. All she wanted was help, that’s why she divided work with us. Back then, in communism, they had to work because it was mandatory. And then imagine, when she came home she had us “head to head”<sup>2</sup> to take care of and the parents in law. She did everything herself, what to do. She also head my grandma over her head. [...] My brother was older, so he went always after my father, helping him. We helped our mom. But still she was happy, because my father at least was working, and was not doing any mess at home.”

Dallendyshe (34 years old) explains:

“When we grew a bit up, he [my father] didn’t like working, only drinking. My mother made the living for us. But she was fighting with him about this. She wanted him to be a good man, to work [inside the household] or bring money at home because [she] could do everything else.”

As we can see from these two quotes, women explain that their mothers saw themselves as capable of doing everything what men could do. There were cases in which women were obligated to engage in paid work in order to make a living for the family. Although, women in most of their narrative describe the gender division of labor as fair or men’s contribution at home was an asset, there are sparkles in their stories, which show that they had high

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<sup>2</sup> Meaning a lot of children with little age difference

expectations from men in relation to domestic work, especially when they are unemployed. Their parents' debates are described in a way which makes me think that women approved the disobedience of their mothers with the gender roles their family constructed for them. Regardless of the circumstances, it is important that they went out of community's expectations.

In the case of Dallendyshe (34 years old), her mother expected from her husband to perform more household labor, since he was unemployed. Her mother's story, supports my argument that women wanted their husbands to participate more in the domestic sphere, especially when they did not contribute financially at home. Even though women do not accept it in most of their narrative, the lack of men participation at home, was considered a problem for them.

Sign of resistance I also notices after the interviews. As I mentioned in my methodology, I have based my research only on the narratives women shared with me during the interviews. Thus, I am not going to quote any of the women to make this point, because they believed that this information was shared confidently with me. What I observed is that they tended to 'blame' other men who were not their relatives, for not participating in domestic work. They shared information about men who lack empathy and appreciation toward their wives who engaged in domestic work and childcare. It is visible, that Roma women did not completely agree with the fact that men of their community did not 'help' their wives. I think, they feel powerless to change the situation, or the whole gender system in the community and that is why that try to 'normalize' it or comply with that.

Childcare in another topic which I was interested in exploring in the Roma families. I was interested in looking at how gender roles related to parenthood responsibilities were constructed in the Roma families. All the women, regardless of their age, reported that childcare was only mother's responsibility. They recalled memories being fed, clothed, washed and prepared them for school only by their mothers. As children they did not spend a lot of

time with their fathers. Some of them were not able to recall any moment which their fathers were taking care or babysitting them. Sometimes, a sense of shame was attached to men if they spend time with their children. Usually were other women who did not allow men to babysit children. If a man would participate in these task, the community perceived it as a domination of his wife over him.

Ida (40 years old) recalls her experience like this:

“I remember, once I was playing and I fell down. I starting crying. My father was there, and I know that he wanted to come and pick me up. But my grandmother literally said – “Oh, she is just a child. Children grow up like this”. He stopped, but called my mom, as it was her fault.”

Ida explains that childcare was seen as women’s responsibility and was not a task which men were usually expected to participate. The gender component in sharing parenthood responsibilities was very strong in her childhood memories. Women were even blamed for not taking good care of their children. Despite other responsibilities, women had to ensure that their children were taken good care of, and were well fed.

Other respondents also mentioned that the care they received from their mother was not only limited in terms of feeding, washing and clothing them. Although, most of my respondent’s parents have not more than compulsory education, mothers were always the ones who tried to help or checked their homework. The communication with the teachers or other parents were only mother’s responsibility. However, Edlira’s (42 years old) experience points out that helping children with homework depended also on gender. In most of the social science subjects were usually women who tried to help children. When there were cases of math exercises in elementary school, they delegated it to the men. Edlira explains:

“He [father] was helping too. Mom always was taking me to my father because he was good in math, or I don’t know.”



Edlira cannot explain why her mother was not able to help her in math. Despite the fact that both parents did not have more than compulsory education, women believed that men are better in calculations. This perception came as a consequence of the money management at home. Although they mentioned that the help was limited, but the fact that men always dealt with money, calculations, budget planning constructed the belief that men are the best fit in helping children to solve math exercises.

Taking into consideration all the time and energy women spend on taking care of the children, I wanted also to see whether their parents experience influenced their definition of domestic in relation to childcare. It was very interesting for me that women were talking about domestic work, they excluded childcare or helping children with their homework. Most of the women mentioned it only after they were asked specifically for this topic. In their opinion, their mothers help in any school related issues was not classified as domestic work. For them domestic work had to do only with keeping the house clean and feeding the family. Taking care of children's schooling tasks was perceived as something their mothers did it out of love for them and concern about their future.

The definition of work was also altered when performed by men or by women. It is very interesting how Bana (49 years old) while was describing a personal story, mentioned the expression "he [father] had worked all the day, taking care of us [the children]". This expression make it clear that definition of work is also gendered. When women were talking about taking care of children performed by women they did not mention it in terms of labor. While, the same job performed by men, was elevated, because it was something which did not belong to them, thus required more time, struggle and energy.

In order to ensure that this gender roles system related to household labor was reproduced properly, parents gave to their children verbal advice. Most of the women interviewed stated

that in teenage years, when their family prepared them for marriage, other women mainly their mothers, grandmothers and aunts, were the ones who guided them toward “the right path” of becoming “good wives”. They were advised to be good daughters-in-law, respecting their husbands’ families and of course fulfilling all the womanly duties as cleaning, cooking, and child caring in the household. From their responses I understood that women saw this compliance important in bringing honor to their family or as a “safe path” to avoid arguments in their marriage. Even in cases when women did not agree about any gender related role transmitting to their children, they still did it as a way to show that they were complying with the community norms. It was clear that if a girl was not educated in accordance to the expectations of the community, it would be very difficult for her family to bear the pressure of the community. Rebellious behaviors are perceived as deviant for a woman and not tolerated by their future in-laws.

“My grandma pushed my mom to teach me to cook, because I would go to my future “husband’s house”<sup>3</sup>. She didn’t want to be ashamed of me.” [...]. Not only to cook, but also to behave well, not to be lazy, to respond to everyone nicely. It’s okay to hear a lot but talk only when I was asked to. I also think that these things should be known by every woman, otherwise they can’t eat the bread<sup>4</sup> of the new family.” (Festime, 40 years old)

In other words, Festime explains that the community modeled manners of behaviors for boys and girls separately regarding household labor involvement. Women made great efforts to teach their daughters to fit into these gendered frameworks, because any deviance would bring troubles at home. Older women would be the ones to be blamed or responsible for not being able to transmit these gender roles properly. Although, both parents contribute intensively in

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<sup>3</sup> To my future husbands family

<sup>4</sup> Meaning that they will not have a good relation with someone

reflecting clear gender roles upon their children, women show more devotion in order to avoid responsibility and shame from the community.

### **4.3. Conclusions**

The aim of this chapter was to understand the role of the family, especially parents in constructing gender identities and modeling the division of domestic work. My main argument is that parents' and family behaviors build up a system of traditional gender roles which Roma women follow in their adulthood. The environment in which Roma children socialize is very important to conceptualize what domestic work is, who should participate in it and how it should be shared among the members of a family. I found out there are two learning methods in which parents and children engage intensively in the Roma community. The first one is by observing how the members of their families act out gender roles regarding domestic work. Moreover, gendered messages were also received through their assistance, as children, in different domestic chores. From an early age they were asked to contribute in the domestic work, helping their mothers in cleaning, washing or taking care of their younger siblings. This kind of jobs were only performed by girls. Boys usually were engaged in work outside of the house, as their father.

The second method is the verbal messages they received in the form of advice especially before marriage. They were taught by older women to take good care of the family, children, pay attention to cooking, cleaning and listen to what their in-laws said. This was the right thing to do, sometimes without questioning it, as a form of bringing to them and their families pride and good relations with the community.

I conclude that women learned by their parents a very gender normative family structure. They saw, especially after the fall of communism a model of their father making a living and their mothers maintaining the household. Although there are variations of the experiences depended

on the employment status of the couple, they all agreed that domestic work was seen as women's responsibility. Even though, women did not articulated in an explicit manner the disagreement with the gendered division of labor, there were signs of resistance in their narratives. I could sense an increase of expectations for unemployed men to contribute to the domestic work. However, women learned from their mothers' model that even when they did not agreed with the contribution of their husbands, there were limited possibilities to deconstruct the system.

## **Chapter 5 “Doing gender”, time availability and relative sources theories**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter endeavors to analyze, review and discuss three prominent theories of explaining the division of domestic work based on the experiences of the Roma women interviewed. I try to assess their applicability to the Roma families. Therefore, the first section is dedicated to gender ideology theory, the second to the relative resource and the third to the time availability theory.

### **5.2. Gender ideology**

I was interested in assessing the gender ideology that Roma women constructed based on the imposed identities and notions of femininity and masculinity in their community. I accomplished this by asking my interviewees to list some of the characteristics which they think a good woman and men should have. Moreover, I asked them in which context did they heard the expression “a real/good man/woman” and how they were using it themselves in order to make any point. The expression is used widely in Albania, as well as in the Roma community and I argue that it reinforces the hegemonic masculinity and ascribes to women some

characteristics which portray them as belonging to different domains, inferior, fragile and submissive to men.

From the responses of my interviewees I understood that the environment they were raised in, imposed to them a traditional gender ideology in which the status of a woman as inferior to men is given by the way the life was organized in the community. Most of them, due to the socialization process in their families, constructed their identities as women with similar characteristics to what they were taught by other adults during their teenage years. Women saw their primary role mostly related to working hard on domestic chores and caring for others. Some of them saw themselves also as working outside of the domestic sphere. However, a few of them described their role outside, mostly in cases when their husbands were not able to find any job opportunities.

Festime (40 years old) explains:

“Women should be good wives, reticent, clean, take care of the children, and listen to her husbands and families. She should also work, bring money in poor families. Men should be hardworking, prudent, loving and not to drink [alcohol]”.

Festime clearly distinguishes the characteristics that a woman and a man should have. Interesting is that in her understanding, women should listen to their husbands and family, an element which directly imposes to them an inferior status. There is a strong correlation of what Festime was advised by her mother, as I mentioned in the previous chapter (see the quote in p. 25), with the gender ideology she has contracted. Her view for women's position at home, is very traditional, because of the model she got from other women in the community, as well as the messages she received. Now, as adult, this ideology has turned out to be part of her identity and she attach all these characteristics to other women as well.

Most of the women did not problematize the expressions real man and real woman. For them, these expressions were relevant, and every Roma person should aim at meeting characteristics which were perceived as ideal according to their gender, in order to have a happier family life. Women saw men as being ‘a bit above them’, assertive and confident. Their husbands and sons in their adult life had to comply with the gender hierarchical practices, because only in this way they could give security to the family. Most of them used the expression “given by nature/god” to describe the superior position of a man in the family. Moreover, there were cases that women were upset of not having a ‘real man’ by their side. Their responses were not very different in essence. They fell under a very strict and normatized gender schema perspective. Women constructed the image of a good man as the main provider, caring, as well as able to control their anger in order not to be violent. Moreover, if they failed to financially contribute at home, they were perceived as ‘less men’. In many cases women used the expression, ‘he is not a man’ meaning that he was not fulfilling his primary duty to make a living for the family.

Marsela (30 years old) explained:

“He should work and bring money, but he [my husband] doesn’t do this. He is not a man. Men bring money and provide food for their families. [...] Women should dedicate their lives to children and shouldn’t allow anyone to harm them, or suffer as we did. This is what I am doing. I am living for my children”.

We can also notice that in Marsela’s understanding that gender roles are separated and hierarchical in the family. She considers men more powerful, and thus, his primary duty is to provide a living for the family. However, these roles are not strict and unchangeable for her, she mentions that women also can be breadwinners, when their husbands are not able to find a job. This means that, although she expresses a very traditional gender ideology, when the context changes because her husband does not have any income, she considers their relations in a more egalitarian perspective.

### 5.2.1. Gender ideology related to childcare

When my respondents were asked about their role as parents and the kind of the support they had to give to their children they ascribed some genderless characteristics to each other. Almost all of them indicated that an ideal family should entail similar characteristics for motherhood and fatherhood. They considered important the application of equal responsibilities for the child well-being, especially focused on the emotional support. Children's education and daily care were mostly related to men than women, but characteristics such as being loving and open to give advice to their children were seen as important regardless of gender. They did believe to a natural connection between mothers and children, that is why everything which had to do with feeding, clothing and washing was ascribed to women.

### 5.2.2. Gender Ideology, women and paid work

I extended the scope of measuring their gender ideology by asking women about their favorite occupational position. I consider this question very important because I see a strong connection between traditional gender ideologies and experiences of work they have been engaged in. I wanted to know more, where they see themselves involved at or capable of, because I think that they construct their self-image as mothers, wives, workers, and households in accordance to what they performed within the household. They stated that due to the fact that they have been engaging in domestic work most of the time, they saw themselves more into paid care or service work. The fact that most of them have seen their mothers being caretakers, as well as themselves as being assigned to these roles, they would like to work in care and service work. While for their husbands they imagine 'heavy' work, which required more physical strength and were paid more. Klodiana (22 year old) explained:

“I like to work too. I see myself more working as a cook helper. I have worked before, but also I have some experience from cooking at home. [...] My husband, I think it would be good in reconstruction jobs which are paid. ”

Klodiana, constructs her identity as a worker related to her previous experiences at home. The same is happening also with what she envisions for her husband. The traditional gender ideology she embraces is more a product of her experiences rather than a choice. Although, she expresses her desire to work as her husband does, she still continues to separate them based on what is perceived feminine work, which of course is paid less, and masculine work which require more strength and consequently is paid more.

Some of the interviewees emphasized the lack of education as a reason for looking for a limited range of jobs. For example, Ida (40 years old) highlighted the fact that even when there were opportunities to get a profession through vocational trainings, her obligation at home prevented her from participating in them. Thus, domestic work does not only construct Roma women's gender roles identity and ideology but also becomes an obstacle for developing their own potential. They dedicate their lives to their families' well-being and comply sometime obligated by the circumstances with this situation.

Ida (40 years old)

“One organization gave me the opportunity to attend a vocational training for social animator, but where to leave my children. My husband was working all day. Who would take care of them? I did not attend it. Also, if I don't get money, my husband doesn't see it as very important.”

Ida's experience tells me a lot about the egalitarian gender ideology she has. Her response reflects a belief that men and women have a joint responsibility and capability for earning although in her case it was impossible due to her domestic and childcare responsibilities.



Her decision not to participate in the vocational training it is not a choice but was forced by her husband and the circumstances. She envisions herself and her husband as not belonging in different spheres.

### **5.3. “Doing gender”**

In the previews section I explored gender ideology in the Roma women because in my opinion it provides the foundations of explaining the “doing gender” theory at home. In this chapter, I focus on how Roma women “do gender” in accordance to what their family and community expect from them. I focus my analyses not only within the couple, but I also see the role of the in-laws in forcing women to act out their gender. In order to do this analyses I asked my interviewees to describe me a full day of theirs, and to talk about their relationships with the in-laws mostly mothers-in-laws. From their responses, I understood that women “do gender” in their family, in accordance with what they have seen and learn from their family. In addition, they learn the gender norms of the new family after marriage, and they try to perform in accordance to them. Although, women have been prepared for marriage before, they still need to figure out what are the codes of ‘doing gender’ in their husbands’ families. There are cases in which the husband gives a ‘doing gender map’, meaning he explains the expectations of his family to his wife, in order to avoid any debates. For example, Festime (40 years old) explains that after first day of marriage her husband guided her toward what was expected from her in the house. Giving a description of how she should behave and where she should get involved in, Festime explains that is was very easy for her to her with her in-laws.

“He explained to me, this person is like this, this one like this; you should get up a bit early and be sweet to my parents because they are old. Basically, these things. [...] Yes, it was helpful, because I knew what they wanted, and I did it, but I also liked it.”

As we can see Festime learn how to act out her position as a bride, as well as her gender, by her husband. He explained to her that getting up early and being kind to her parents was an expectation. Therefore, in order to be considered a good daughter-in-law and to avoid any dissatisfaction, she had to comply with the norms. Festime ends her response by saying that she liked to perform what was expected. However, I think that Festime liked the outcome of that performance, but not the actual performance. This means that her in-laws were happy with her cleaning, cooking, getting up early and being kind. The fact that they did not have any complain, gave her the results she wanted a good relation with them. This, I think that ‘doing gender’ in this case acts like catalyzer of good relations in the family. Festime, though her devotion in domestic labor becomes accountable of her gender, by making her womanly traits visible and selling to her in-laws conducts which fall within the framework.

Ela (27 years old) explains that she did not live with her mother-in-law. However, she was still expected to go once a week and help her with housework. Ela explains that this is not something she learned from her in-laws, but she saw it from her mother, as well as she heard it before marriage that her role was to help her husband’s family, especially her mother-in-law.

“I go once a week and help her because she is old. Sometimes I am tired, and I don’t want to go, but don’t have what to do. [...] No, my husband does not help her in the domestic chores.”

It is obvious that in Ela’s case helping her mother-in law in her domestic work, it is not her choice. Due to the fact that she is taught that this is her role, she perceived it as unavoidable and continuously perform it. Thus, Ela ‘does gender’ by helping her mother-in-law because she cannot escape to what is perceived as her job, while her husband ‘does gender’ by avoiding to engage in household labor.

### 5.3.1. Women “experts” of the household

Another interesting topic which came up during the discussion is related to the tendency of women to represent themselves as being expert of the household. Almost all the women when they described their husbands’ involvement in the domestic chores, they used expression such as ‘have to do the same thing twice’, I redo the same thing’ etc. This means that women have internalized the idea that women are the experts of cooking and cleaning properly at home, and I noticed a tendency to elevate their work compering to their husbands. However, the fact that they are unhappy with the work their husbands do, reinforced that to ‘do gender’ because they comply with the expectation. Marsela (30 years old) explained that when it happens that her husband does any homework, she is unhappy by his performance and she does it herself.

“But sometimes I don’t ask him to wash a plate for the baby, because I have to do it myself again, and I lose time.”

Shpresa (50 years old) describes the same experience with her husband. The fact that she does not like the way he performs any of the domestic work, reinforces the gendered division of labor, as well as terms of references of who should do what.

“If I put him in the kitchen, he will take out every plate possible and make a mess. I rather decide to do it myself, than wash three times more dishes. I ask him he clean the yard instead.”

It is visible that Shpresa is ‘doing gender’ by pretending to be the expert. She takes the role of the leader of the household labor, who has to divide the tasks and to check the quality of their performance. Lacking awareness, Shpresa is reinforcing the dichotomy of separates spheres that she wanted herself to break. She is expected to know everything related to the household,

and thus she is acting that out by doing the work and performing herself those tasks which are considered feminine.

I will bring back the case of Ela (27 years old) to explain another interesting area of ‘doing gender’ within the household. In the chapter four, Ela explained that she had to quit her job, in order to take care of her children, while her husband got a full-time job position. Although, she was discontented to taking over the housework, she did not protest for her career or neglecting family expectations, to take care of her children. Thus, I think that in spite the fact that Ela and her husband clearly performed in accordance to their gender roles, the differential responsibilities parents take over children contributes also to children exhibiting highly gendered expectations from their parents. In build up the image of the mother as primary care taker, while position their fathers as second in this work.

#### **5.4. Time Availability**

I wanted to see how time availability theory apply to the Roma families. In order to do so, I asked my interviewees about their past experiences in the labor market and if there was any impact on the household labor they performed. I focused my questions on the relation between their free time and the time spend in the doing household labor. More specifically, the interviewees were asked about the time they spend and the kind of domestic chores they performed when they were employed. Also, I asked them if their husbands’ attitude changed regarding household labor after they got employed.

From their responses I understood that women’s occupational status is negatively associated with the time they devote to housework. Although women engage in the labor market, they still remain responsible for the majority of the domestic work. Regardless of the employment position or the time they spend working in paid labor, they perform

significantly more work than men. They argued that the time they spend on the household reduced or allocated differently, but the kind of tasks they were assigned to, remained the same. Their husbands continued to engage in similar work that they did before, mainly repairing things around the house, gardening and sometimes going for groceries.

Fatmira (50 years old), is not working at the moment but she shared her previous experience as following:

“I was selling second hand clothes. It was very tiring, because I had to stay all the day out and carry heavy begs. [...] I was doing the cooking and laundry too. My husband was only working.”

Fatmira explains that she had to move in the surrounding neighborhoods or in the nearest villages on foot, in order to sell second hand clothes. As she explained in the quote above her job was very tiring. It required a lot of time, sometimes more than a full time job. However, cooking and cleaning which were considered the most important chores at home, were performed by her. Her husband regardless of the time he was engagement in the paid work, did not contribute to the domestic labor.

Most of the women explained that the lack of time made them created mechanisms for easing their share of domestic labor. Most of them said that they divided the time they spend on doing housework chores. Those which required more time such as laundry, cleaning the house and taking care of the plants were tasks which were usually allocated to the weekends. Other tasks such as cooking and taking care of the children were considered as necessary every day. For example, Xhemile (47 years old) explained that she was working as a cleaner in a bar close to her home. In the beginning she was working full-time, but after a shortage in her work place, they reduced her working hours. Her commitment in the household continued the same regardless of her working hours.

“I am cooking every day, but laundry and cleaning thoroughly the house is just once a week. It’s easier for me this way. Even if I want, I can’t do everything within a day”.

As other women, also Xhemile did not share her household labor with her husband. She decided to find the solution by herself without forcing her husband to contribute. Men did not change their attitude, although they had more time. In the case of Marsela (30 years old) for instance, her husband is unemployed, while she is currently working in two different places as a cleaner. She explains that she is very unhappy by her husband’s contribution at home. When asked about her experience and how she dealt with that she described it:

“I wake up in the morning and run to my first job. Thanks god my children have classes in the afternoon, so when I come back from the first job, I prepare them for school and then I leave. [...] I have cooked already, either early morning, or late at night. [...] My husband is ‘recovering’<sup>5</sup>. [...] I am not asking a lot, but he must take care of the children and prepare something to eat.”

Marsela’s case is unique in understanding that time availability is not playing any role in changing the gendered division of labor. Although, she is very unhappy by her husband’s lack of contribution she is obligated to do everything herself, because there is no way to convince him that household chores should be shared. Marsela mentioned that one of her requests to her husband was cooking. This topic came up in other interviews as well as a task which required a lot of time. Women explained that despite their engagement in paid work, even occasionally, they remained responsible for making a cooking plan which fit to the preferences of all the family. Due to the lack of financial resources for doing abundant groceries, the planning process becomes even more difficult. Most of them expressed also the concern that despite the limited amount of money they had for cooking, they had to think about preparing meals which

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<sup>5</sup> Uses ironically to explain that she is doing nothing

were preferable for all the family. This task required even more energy and time, because it could happen that if the husbands or their children did not like what was offered for lunch, their time spending on cooking was considered worthless. When asked how they felt about it, they were very critical. However, they felt having nor agency in changing the situation. Some of them tried to justify it to some extend by the idea that the kind of jobs their husbands engaged in, were heavy work, and they had to be fed in a healthy manner.

I also noticed that there is no connection between men's working hours and household labor. Although men felt a kind of pressure when they were unemployed from their wives to engage more in taking care of children, they still delegated these tasks to other women, such as their mothers, sisters, or older daughter. Men stayed away of domestic work and child care regardless the time they had available. Some of the women stated that the men participated in the household labor only when women were unable to do them due to health issues as a way to show care and love. Thus, the contribution of their husbands was not related to the time they had available, but it was related to impossibility of their women to perform their tasks.

### **5.5. Relative sources**

Moving forward to the other phase of my interviews, I was interested to see how relative sources influenced the share of domestic work in the Roma couples. I assessed this influence in terms of income that the couple contributed at home. Although most of the women at the moment of the interview were full-time households, they spoke mostly related to their past experiences. In most of the cases that they were both employed, women's wages did not exceed that of their husbands. From their past experiences, I noticed that lower wages made women depended financially on their husbands. Thus, they continued to perform the same amount and type of work, in order to substitute the financial contribution of their husbands. Women were involved in informal work, as for example cleaning houses in the

neighborhood. On the one hand, the payment was very low and did not justify the work. On the other had they remain within the same domain, doing household labor, which was not highly regarded from their families. Some of the women expressed their concern that in their families this kind of job was not valued or ke for granted, because was deemed as not requiring a lot of efforts from them. In order to convince their family that their contribution at home was considerable they continued doing the same intensity and quality to domestic work.

Some interesting responses also raised the issue related to lack of job opportunities for married or pregnant women. This is very important when we discuss on terms of income. Due to the fact that most of them had children with a very small age difference from each other, they concluded that finding a job as pregnant women was not easy. They felt as having limited chances not only from the employers who did not hire them, but also from their community. Their role as mothers during pregnancy was considered more important and their husbands usually did not allow them to work outside the home. In this case, unemployment was accompanied by lack of income for women, thus more dependency on men. Being in these circumstances they engaged as full-time households. In addition, it is worth mentioning the paternalistic attitude of husbands or other men toward women in the community which controls the choices and opportunities of women. This attitude perpetuate inequality within the family.

There were only two cases in which interviewees earned more than their husbands. I think are very worth mentioning because they enrich my analysis, by shedding light also on the impact of education in the family. Firstly, Ilda (30 years old), holds a MA degree and is currently working in an NGO with a salary three times higher than her husband. She describes that her higher salary does not have any impact on negotiating for less household labor. She admits the



fact that she continues to perform the same amount and quality of domestic work as before when she was unemployed or employed with lower wage than her husband. When asked who is doing most of the domestic work she replies:

“Although we both work, domestic work is my responsibility. I prepare our daughter for kindergarten, go to work and when I come back I make grocery in order to cook. My husband does not participate at all in cooking or cleaning, but he takes care of our daughter. [...] I know that this is not fair, but I don’t want to get into debates.”

It is very interesting the reasons Ida sets to describe why she complies with this share of domestic work. Although she clearly does not agree with the way domestic work is shared, she wants to avoid any conflict in her family which comes as a consequence of altering gender roles at home. The continuation of the performance of domestic work becomes a tool to keep the gender roles in place and assures her husband that she is not trying to dominate him in any way. As it is deemed that husbands should make a living for the family, the fact that her husband is unable to fulfill this expectation his masculinity is threatened. Thus, he does not get involved in domestic work, because it would diminish his superiority and authority at home.

Ela (27 years old), has completed high school, but she was an autodidact foreign languages learner. She was working in a full-time job when her husband was unemployed in order to sustain economically the family. Now recently, her husband got employed. Ela immediately quitted her full job and instead teaches privately English and Italian to children. Due to the limitations of the network she had, she has a small number of students that is why she earns less than she did before. Although she admits the fact that it was not her choice to quit the job, she had to do it because the household responsibilities and childcare were deemed to belong to her. She took this decision because felt powerless to oppose this role and wanted to avoid her

husband and family dissatisfaction, she said it was easier for her to comply with what was asked for.

“I liked to work but what I am doing now is not taking a lot of time, and is more convenient for me because I can take care of my daughter and house. I know, I could earn more money if I worked full time ...”

Ela expressed the desire that she wanted help in task such as cooking, dressing up children and accompanying them to school in order to continue her full-time job. If her husband performed these domestic tasks, it would be a great help due to the difficult nature of the tasks themselves. However, due to the pressure of the community and the shame that these jobs would bring to the family if performed by men, she decided to do them herself.

## **5.6. Conclusions**

This chapter was focused on exploring the three most important theories of explaining the division of labor within the couple. In the first section, I conclude that the gender ideology that women have constructed vary from the context. A strong influence in this process is the family which has transmitted to them a very traditional or egalitarian gender ideology. Some women who were raised in a more traditional families, believed in gendered separate spheres of men and women in the employment and family domains. Others expressed more egalitarian gender ideologies and interchangeability of domains, especially in the case of the impossibility of their husbands to join the labor market. However, I argue that this is not egalitarian ideology rather than a traditional one because women devaluated the image of men if they did not contribute financially at home. They position their husband in a lower category in the social hierarchy. In addition, I argued that women do gender within the household by complying with what is expected. They have learned the codes of doing gender, by their families. Husbands play a crucial role as well in describing the construction

of an image of daughter-in-law in their families. Most of the time women fulfill the expectations, they do gender, regardless of the reasons. Sometimes they act out wives, because this is an identity they have constructed in their family, or sometimes this is what they found in their new conjugal family. There are cases that women do not prefer to do gender, but they find themselves powerless to deconstruct the system. Lastly, women reinforce the dichotomy of domestic work themselves, without being aware, they contribute to doing gender by acting out as experts of household. They push themselves back to the kitchen, because they fulfill the expectation that domestic work should be performed in a certain way. Furthermore, in the penultimate section I found out that time availability is negatively associated with the division of labor because even though Roma women were working outside their home they were still engage in the same way in the domestic chores. And in the last section, although in a very limited sample, the interviews showed wife's relative income does not have a great explanatory power with respect to the share of housework. Women's relative income does not affect the men's proportion of housework time and tasks. In some cases, childcare is a task which is shared, but everything else related to cleaning and cooking are performed by women. Still the gender ideology dominates the division of domestic work in the Roma couples.

## **Chapter 6 Findings**

### **6.1. Introduction**

In this chapter I will outline the findings of my research based on the data analyzed in the fourth and fifth chapter.

## 6.2. Findings

This research explored the division of labor within the Roma households in Albania. Based on the ten interviews with Roma women conducted in the Kombinat neighborhood in Tirana, I found out that Roma women have constructed their gender identities and gender roles based on the models they got from their families in two ways: observation and verbal advice.

Firstly, Roma women lived in a very gender normative family in which they had the possibility to observe that the division of labor among parents was negotiated based on gender. However, I still found differences based on the historical context, a model of mothers during communism and after communism. Based on these differences, I conclude that gender roles in the household were divided in two parts. First, Roma women during communism were part of the labor market but they still remained responsible for the household. While, the Roma women after the collapse of communism were responsible only for the household, since they lost their jobs. Moreover, women constructed what is feminine and masculine work not only by looking at the contribution of their mothers and fathers at home. I found out two models of how Roma women “do gender”. The first model consists to their involvement as children in assisting in household labor. The task they were assigned to participate were very gender. Boys followed the patterns of their fathers, in contrast to girls who were involved in similar tasks as their mothers.

The second method was the verbal messages in the form of advice which they got before marriage, in their early teenage years. Other women, including the extended family mapped out gender roles based on which domestic labor should be performed. However, I observed that also this responsibility was shared only among women and the failure of transmitting proper gender roles was perceived as a shame only on mothers for not doing properly the job of education their daughters. In this case disobedience is not an option because if they perform any act of resistance they bear the consequences from the community. However, I still could see

that women were protesting in a way by voicing other's women dissatisfactions according to division of labor. In this way they kept shame out of their families and in the same time manifested their objection to the strict gender roles.

Another finding which draws from these conclusions was related to the definition of domestic labor by women. I found out was altering according to gender. For women, childcare was not considered a labor, while for men this job was elevated because was perceived as requiring more efforts in performing it.

Based in the models they got from their families, they developed a traditional gender ideology and they divide the domestic work in a dichotomy of feminine and masculine work. By feminine work they meant washing, caring, cleaning and in the masculine work they included which was strongly seen as the main provider. This identity was constructed in a very hierarchical way where women were accorded a lower status. The traditional ideology was shifted into an egalitarian one only when the couple bargains for the income. However, I claim that women do not change their traditional ideology, actually what changes them is the position of the man who now is not the main provider and as such his hierarchical position decreases and is considered less masculine.

Other findings were linked to the application of the most prominent theoretical prospective - gender ideology, time availability and relative sources – in the division of household labor in Roma community in Albania.

This research found out that Roma women hold a package of values regarding gender roles. They adapt the gender identity and roles to what they find in their husband's families regardless of their opinion. This adaption of gender roles brings to them good relation with the in-laws because they fulfill their expectation. Sometimes women do not question whether there is a

possibility to not comply with the standards of the family in law, they see it as a responsibility of their marital duties.

Another result based on the data analysis section was that time availability has not a significant impact of the work that Roma women perform. Even though they have less free time they still engage in the same tasks. However, they reallocate the remaining time during the week to the weekend to complete the household which required more time.

The last finding is related to the income level and its correlation to division of domestic work in the household. Gender division of labor was influenced by low income. Meaning that, not participating in the labor market or having lower wages than their husbands increases their economic dependency. Thus, they performed more domestic work in order to substitute the paid labor of their husbands. However, also in the families in which the women earned more than their husband they continued to perform the same domestic chores which makes me conclude that the division of labor is not significantly influenced by relative sources.

### **6.3. Conclusions**

To conclude, I think that my research was very limited because it had a very small sample which might not be representative of the all Roma Community in Albania. For further research I would suggest that this topic to be explored in a wider and more diverse community. In addition, I based my thesis only on interviews with women as such, it might be considered as a limitation therefore, the sample of other research should entail men and children experiences. As a last comment I want to emphasize the lack of this kind of research in the field of Roma in Europe as well as for Albania in general.

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