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THE LIMITS OF INDIVIDUALIZING PARENTHOOD IN SERBIA: STUDY OF GENDER SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN

ABSTRACT
This paper seeks to explore the limits of individualizing parenthood in Serbia, gleaned from the example of gender socialization of children. The main thesis is that the noted limits to individualization of parenthood in contemporary society have a particular Serbian manifestation due to the country's familism. The study traces the ideology of familism through normative aspects of gender structures within contemporary Serbian society, that is, by analyzing the presence and forms of expression of the patriarchal matrix in upbringing practices of parents, the most significant element of which is the ethics of good parenthood. The analysis shows that individualization of parenthood and more egalitarian patterns of gender socialization occur above all due to the dynamic within the marital relationship, one which abandons the concept of sacrificial parenthood. The analysis presented here is based on data collected in empirical research of upbringing practices in contemporary Serbia.

1. Introduction

The risks occurring in late modernity due to the weakening of the welfare state, the strengthening of the market economy, the changes in values and to political demands of a democratic society have all led to a greater symmetry between men and women in the public sphere, and have thus required a re-examination of familial life (the roles and relationships between partners, as well as those between parents and children) (Beck 1997; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).[1] Cultural patterns change quickly in contemporary society, forcing individuals, prepared or not, to continuously assess their circumstances, adopt a reflective attitude toward themselves, their position, toward other people, and to act accordingly. Relationships within the contemporary family are subject to constant negotiation, meaning that even in this sphere there are no predefined

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1 This article draws on portions of the author's doctoral dissertation "Gender Socialization of Boys in Contemporary Families in Serbia. Exploring Parental Attitudes and Upbringing Practices," full text in Serbian available at: https://uvidok.rcub.bg.ac.rs/handle/123456789/3319

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outcomes or roles (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). In spite of the critiques of the thesis of individualization, the elements of the modern family are undoubtedly deconstructed in modern societies (Tomanović 2017: 169). Indeed, the concept of the family as a community of members with voluntary obligations to one another has lost its significance; rather, other possible familial forms, above all those based in freedom of choice and current affinities of individuals, are explored (Beck 2002). The changes in relations among family members is grounded in negotiation processes, distancing the family ever further from traditional patterns: there is a destandardization of relations and a democratization of the family (Beck 1997), which includes honoring the principles of respect, autonomy, communication and equality. Changes are also occurring in cross-generational relations, between parent and child, as can be seen in a kind of "liberalization of parenthood." Less significance is placed on conformist behavior in children. Instead, a central place is occupied by autonomy, that is, the development of the particularity of the child and its potential, independent from gender. The sacrificing model of parenthood is abandoned, yielding to equality of needs and responsibilities of all family members and mutual empathy (Tomanović 2010a). The main characteristics of the process of individualizing parenthood comprise honoring "principles of autonomy, equality, respect and communication" (Tomanović 2017: 167) within familial relations, freedom from traditionally imposed patterns and gender roles within relationships. Being subject to negotiation, they are also subject to change. Such a model requires the participation of both parents in the process of socialization, "for maximum interchangeability in conducting activities with children" (ibid: 2017: 172). Children are approached as individuals with particular characteristics and potentials to be supported and developed, all the while respecting the stated principles, and without previously established gender-based criteria. Going under the name *undoing gender* (Risman, 2009), the process "creates a specific field of neutrality that assumes no gendered predispositions of actors, nor is seen by relevant others as doing so" (Stanojević 2015: 252). It assumes opening space for a deconstruction of gender-determined parenting attitudes (rather than specifically maternal or paternal roles). It also allows the deconstruction of the notions *good boy* and *good girl*, for a development of a child personality without gender prefixes. This is the de-traditionalization of parenting, expressed in the functional weakening of traditional roles of mother and father, and presenting the parents with new daily challenges. Partner relations and parenthood are liberated from the binds of tradition, that is, the blind application of norms and practices of previous generations (primarily families of origin), becoming ever more ordered by interpersonal negotiation and respect, as well as open communication leading to consensual decisions (Tomanović 2017). Long-term, a high level of adaptability to new circumstances leads to the formation of new familial practices, new parenting practices, and thus new narratives and ideas about the given practices among mothers and fathers.

Serbia is among the countries undergoing what theoretical literature refers to as a second demographic transition (Bobić 2013). Second demographic

transition designates changes in experiencing family, children and marriage that occur in circumstances of increased material wellbeing, level of education (primarily for women), as well as the influence of urbanization and secularization. These changes include a reduced significance ascribed to marriage, increase of persons in alternative forms of partnerships (such as cohabitations), delay or refusal to have children, and greater gender symmetry within the family. They also imply certain values underpinning practices, such as self-actualization, choice and individual freedoms (ibid). Even though Serbia is seeing demographic changes that in developed countries are indicators of second demographic transition, they nevertheless do not testify to significant modernizing changes (above all of in value orientations) among the population. The content of these changes in Serbia does not mean that values and practices of individualism and gender equality have taken hold within the system (Bobić 2006). On the contrary: on the level of values, the preponderance of patriarchal values within the population is still among the highest in Europe (Pešić 2010). Parenting in Serbia is thus taking place in a specific context: inherited patterns of child upbringing and parent relationships are slowly losing their hold, yet a gendered segregation of roles, including within parenting, is still in place, which is not the case in countries of western, central and northern Europe. Family practices in Serbia take place within a specific local framework, which according to Sylvia Walby's theory, can be best described as state-sponsored public patriarchy (Walby 1991), common in former socialist countries, that is, countries characterized by a south European model of familist (family) solidarity (Tomanović 2017). In this model, the emancipation of women was initiated through an ideological promotion of gender equality, above all through a normative state framework. Thus, supporting women's transfer from the home into the sphere of employment was also supposed to change aspects of family life (within the home). However, these countries lack institutional support for parenthood, leaving parents to draw on the support of families of origin, which can take the form of living in an extended family unit or helping (women) to "care" for the children while the parents are at work, etc. Drawing on the support of families of origin, however, slows down the process of distancing from traditional, established models of behavior, that is, taking an active position in changing the inherited models of parenthood. In the course of social reproduction, generational continuity – the inclusion of new generations of individuals with specific characteristics into society – also ensures social continuity (Tomanović 1993). The process takes place through transmission and adoption of a specific cultural codex. Change in the context can take place if there is a tendency and interest of persons to examine the normatives and take actions directed at transforming these structures. Since in Serbia the socialization of children occurs in a specific context, the premise of this paper is that parents' normative beliefs and practices are a reflection of the socio-cultural and historical context in which the process of gender socialization takes place. This is visible in normative gender structures of parenting, that is, the ideology of familism expressed through the patriarchal matrix in the parents' narratives,

i.e., the presence of a gender-segregated model of *good parent*. The model of *good parent* is expected to be reproduced in upbringing practices through a gender-segregated norm of *good child*. It is also expected that individualization of parenthood and more egalitarian patterns of gender socialization will occur due to the egalitarian dynamic of within the marital relationship.

The following paper section deals with contextualization of the given research premises. The methodological framework is presented in the third section, while the fourth section presents the limits of individualization of parenthood in Serbia observed through the findings of research conducted in 2012/13. The concluding part presents the discussion of barriers to de-traditionalization of parenthood within the familist context in Serbia.

2. Normative Aspects of Gender Structures in Contemporary Serbia

The findings regarding upbringing practices of parents presented in this article are interpreted in accordance with the changes Serbian society underwent over the course of the period of the study, but also in accordance with the country's heritage. The contextual characteristics relevant for the normative structure of *good parent* include the modernizing effects of the socialist period and the re-traditionalization in the post-socialist transformation. It is important to immediately highlight the incontrovertibly positive effects of the socialist period's modernization process for female emancipation in Serbia. However, the particularity of the ensuing post-socialist process, along with the formation of a new elite based precisely on a break with the socialist welfare heritage have combined to support patriarchal power relations and patterns of unequal work share in the home (Pešić 2010: 169–185). The collectivist system of values, authoritarian government and patriarchal social framework were propped up in the period of post-socialism by civil wars and nationalist ideologies (Lazić 2011). The transformation of values in this period is marked by a national homogenization and de-secularization, in the course of which collective and authoritarian values came to dominate individual values. The period saw the withdrawal of women from the public sphere into the private, where they have since taken up a key role in creating and conducting strategies of sustaining the home: the so-called, "self-sacrificing micro-matriarchy" (Blagojević 2002). This notion is presented in the literature as the counterpart to public patriarchy (ibid). Only after 2000, in large part due to processes of harmonization of Serbia's normative framework with that of the European Union, does the male-female relation appear as a question of gender equality. Still, the characteristics of the post-socialist transformation in Serbia have ensured the survival of patriarchal values in the domain of the home even after 2000 (Pešić 2010), which has confirmed that changes introduced on the legal and institutional level are not necessarily followed by changes in values and habits of men and women (ibid). Serbia continues to have a high degree of patriarchy, manifested in the division of labor and decision-making within the family, as well as a

conspicuous dichotomy of the private-public (Pešić 2006). Study shows that patriarchal values are held more often by men (rather than women), persons of lower levels of education, residing in rural (rather than urban) areas (ibid: 183). Serbia's 2001 participation in the World Values Survey showed high esteem for the family, family authority and sacrifice for children. Moreover, it displayed a pattern of family attitudes and values based in an unreflective relationship to parent authority, an emphasis on diligence and responsibility as the most important personal characteristics, as well as a mild (in)acceptance of a different role for women (Pavlović 2007). A study of value systems within contemporary families in Serbia (Milić 2010) has showed that acceptance of modern attitudes is moderate, and that both men and women endeavor to maintain their traditional rights. The study findings indicate that individuals with low levels of education tend to hold traditional attitudes, compared to only a very small number of individuals with high levels of education. Research has shown that despite some signs of a second demographic transition, Serbia still holds exceptionally high traditional values, and that they are maintained on the normative level: e.g. "a woman is only fulfilled as a mother," or "family unity ought to stand above the individual" (Bobić 2010: 144).

When it comes to family practices in contemporary Serbia, they too reflect the particularity of their context. Contemporary parenthood in Serbia includes the combining of norms regarding child development as an individual, that is, as an autonomous person, with the need to protect the child from risks posed by contemporary society (Tomanović 2010b). Although certain elements of individualization of parenthood are more conspicuous in upper and upper middle layers (ibid), making them financially entirely independent from their families of origin, an important characteristic of parenthood in Serbia is the gender asymmetry in sharing home responsibilities (including child care) and the distribution of authority and power (ibid). The bulk of the work within the home is done by women (Ćeriman et al. 2018). Women comprise the most common familial network of support, and data shows that women perform nearly all the home duties regardless whether or not they are employed (Babović 2009). The degree of involvement of women in the work performed in the home is irrespective of her level of education, socio-economic status or place of residence (Tomanović, Ignjatović 2004). Still, studies show that neither mothers nor fathers display dissatisfaction with such a division of duties, power and responsibility. The explanation given for this is the internalization of normatives of mother and father roles, seen as functionally complementary, although the mother is the "primary parent" and the father the "secondary" (Tomanović 2010a, 2010b). On the other hand, if women do show dissatisfaction with such a division of duties and power in the home, it most often results in conflict among partners (Fiket 2018: 25–44). Also noticeable, and accepted by most mothers and fathers, is the preponderance of a model of "self-sacrificing" parenthood (Tomanović 2010a: 182).

To emphasize, the normative framework of parenthood in Serbia is based on the familism construct, which manifests in the inviolable value of the family

as such (Milić 2004; Tomanović 2004a, 2004b), as well as a high esteem of marriage (Tomanović, Stanojević 2015). This means that alternative family formations are normatively less accepted (ibid). Familism also manifests in the strict definition of the roles and relationships for men and women, and the proceeding division of authority and power in the family. In turn, this determines the content and significations of parenting practices (Tomanović, Stanojević 2015). As mentioned, the normatives of *good mother* and *good father* are mutually complementary, such that the first is grounded in care for children, while the latter in the role of provider and protector (ibid). Such an ethics of good parenthood is widespread in Serbia, "embedded in a modernist framework of complementary but segregated gender roles (...) incorporated in a patriarchal matrix" (Tomanović 2017: 166). What follows from this are also the norms regarding the *good child* who will one day succeed the previous generation. Thus, the *good boy* model means socialization for social and economic life outside the household, expressions of independence, leadership, action, etc. (Babović et al. 2016). The *good girl* model, on the other hand, means socialization for care of the home and family, and characteristics of loyalty, attentiveness to others, sensibility and acquiescence (ibid).

As the most elementary form of social reproduction, gender socialization is conducted through a series of routinized interactions in daily family life (Giddens 1979). This text bases its analysis of upbringing practices – the acts and attitudes in course of the gender socialization of children – on two dimensions: care and control. Above all, the choice reflects the fact that the most important characteristic to be acquired in the process of socialization for boys is control. "Control over oneself, one's emotions, social relations and control over others. (...) Control over others, power and submissiveness indicate that the male world assumes an authoritarian type of personality that will help boys to develop skills for a world of economic and political structures and hierarchies" (Stanojević 2018: 56). On the other hand, care is the most important element in the gender socialization of girls on their way to becoming women. Care (for another) is the ethical calling and normative placed before a woman (conspicuous in the demand for [primary] care of a child). It is also the main characteristic of a woman, determining her within the family sphere as well as in other social relations (Zajović, Kovačević 2012). Control encompasses information regarding disciplining (punishment and reward) and independence of children. Care encompasses common activities of parents and children, parents' recognition of their child, their communication and expression of emotion towards the child.

3. Methodological Framework

The experiential evidence of the analysis presented in this paper draws on data obtained in 48 semi-structured in-depth interviews with parent couples (mothers and fathers) in six locations across Serbia. The sample comprises married

couples with both a daughter and a son aged between two and twelve and was determined as such in order to differentiate between preadolescent upbringing practices for boys and girls. Following the theoretical framework for the sample, 13 chosen families were from urban, while 11 were from rural municipalities, of varying professions and education levels. The interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 2012. In the course of each visit to a household, separate interviews were held with the father and mother, with matching genders for the interviewers. The sample was homogenous with regards to average monthly household income in the period when the interviews were conducted. Using the pre-prepared questions on income, employment and household provisions, in the course of the sample construction, the study excluded families whose social standing was above or below the national average range. As the focus was on gender in parenting, the parents were not diversified according to age, since they fell within a narrow range and had children of comparable age. Eight of the couples live with their children in extended families, while the rest are in the form of nuclear families.

The analytical framework used the method of grounded theory (Corbin, Strauss 1990). The analysis of data went through three-step coding: open, axial and selective. The initial coding assumed the discrimination of basic categories and subcategories from the material collected, while further analysis provided connections among these. The connections obtained in this (axial) form of coding were tested by new data. The hypothetical connections among the categories and subcategories were verified or rejected during a continuous process of comparison with new data from interviews performed simultaneously to this portion of the analysis. Selective coding (the third step) served to connect the categories selected in the second phase with one or more of the core categories (ibid). Mutually comparing categories and noting connections among them allowed for further conclusions to be drawn. The text presents the findings obtained in this way, that is, "emerging" from the data.

The present analysis was executed across three levels. The first level of analysis refers to the normative gender structures of parenting, that is, the ideology of familism expressed through the patriarchal matrix in the parents' narratives. The reproduction of the patriarchal matrix was followed by a gender-segregated model of *good parent*, which is to say, *good mother* and *good father*, since these patterns were supported by the socio-cultural and historical context of Serbian family life. The second level of analysis includes a subjective aspect of parenthood: parents' upbringing practices in the process of gender socialization of children. This level of analysis included the interpretations of the *good boy* and *good girl* models in the upbringing practices of parents (fathers and mothers), that is, their actions and attitudes in the course of socializing children, as well as their coherence with the previously selected and interpreted *good mother* and *good father* normatives. The third (familial) level of analysis looks at data regarding the parents' relations to each other and to their families of origin in the process of gender socialization of children.

4. Analysis

4.1 Normative Models of Parenthood

Since all models are upheld by a socio-cultural and historical context, the reproduction of the patriarchal matrix in Serbian family life is observed here through the gender segregated normative of *good parent*, that is, *good mother* and *good father*. The analysis has shown that attitudes of almost all fathers and mothers in the sample contain the reproduction of the patriarchal matrix, expressed through the gender segregated normative of the *good parent*.

Constant comparative analysis of the sampled parents' narratives has established two categories used by almost all fathers and mothers to define the model of *good mother*. The first emphasizes heteronormativity, while the other refers to a dichotomous division of private/public. Both categories can be subsumed under the familism construct (Tomanović 2017), given that the family is perceived within it as community of marital partners whose roles are complementary. Further, their roles as mother and father are highly valued in the course of gender socialization of children due to the intergenerational transfer of heteronormative values and clearly gender segregated spheres for women (private sphere) and men (public sphere). Being complementary, the given constructs have a prominent role in socializing children into a gender-colored world. Indeed, the figure of the father is the son's model of identification, in particular in the approach to social life through "separation" of boys from the figure of the mother and the *private*, that is, domestic sphere. This view is supported by almost all mothers and fathers in this research. The main attributes of such constructs are heteronormativity and familism, and are of course significant in the introduction of daughters into the role of women that follows the normative model of *good mother*. The mothers' and fathers' narratives in transmitting heteronormative values to daughters feature "morality" as the main category; on the other hand, the main category in transmitting heteronormative values to sons is "separation." Separation is conducted through symbolic communication and symbolic power, such that fathers symbolically conduct the transfer of boys from the sphere of *nature* (female sphere) into the sphere of *culture* (the male sphere) (Papić 1997). This transition is conducted by jointly "doing manly things" and having "manly talks" – representing discussions about male-female relations, growing up and adolescence – in accordance with the heteronormative order of the world and patriarchal hierarchies "that mothers cannot reach." These rituals enact on a normative level tabooed behavior and a clear gender segregation, even when the topic is something for which mothers are in fact competent (Tuzin 2004). Gender segregated conversations are more likely to be held by fathers and mothers of lower education living in rural areas. Parents who have good communication with their partners and whose relation is characterized by mutual trust are more likely not to have strict divisions for communication with children, although they do emphasize that children confide in their mothers more, since this is the "woman's primary role" in the family.

Almost all individuals point out that the home sphere is the foremost responsibility of the woman, and that her main tasks are child care and upbringing. The segregation of roles delegates women to the position of primary care-giver, meaning that her function in gender socialization is above all expressive. That is to say, her role is to give emotional support, which is buttressed by the belief of "natural connection of mother and child" (Papić 1997). Differences in attitudes between fathers and mothers are noticeable in the degree to which they thought the mother should also participate in the labor force. Individuals of a lower education level (elementary or high school degree) were more likely to advocate for the woman's complete exclusion from the labor market. However, all individuals believe that daughters and sons can confide in their mother equally, as well as receive equal encouragement and acceptance so valuable in their development as person, which is in accordance with the majority position of individuals regarding the naturalness of the maternal role. On the other hand, the mother's role in transmitting heteronormative values, and with them certain gender roles, is clearly differentiated in the normatives of a majority of individuals, depending on the gender and age of the children (a more rigorous socialization for a specific gender role is more prevalent among older children). This attitude is independent of levels of education, profession or place of residence (urban/rural). Only two mothers from the sample had critical reflections on their own position in the household, as well as on the different roles that a woman in the family might have. They took an active attitude towards changing the gender stereotypical settings of family relations. Both mothers are employed and live in an urban environment, and their partnerships are characterized by high mutual respect.

When it comes to defining of the model *good father*, heteronormativity is also the predominant model among the sampled parents. Complementary to the model *good mother*, it reduces the father to the role and transmission of values necessary to complete the role of *good mother*. Given that the primary sphere of activity for men is public, all individuals stated that the main function of the father is instrumental in nature: to provide material and physical security for the children and the family. While fathers serve as gender identifiers to sons in the process of gender socialization, their role to daughters is providing a sense of protection and safety, since fathers are "more gentle" with daughters than with sons. Most fathers in this study see the father as the person who doles out punishment for inappropriate behavior. Most fathers induct the boys more strictly into their gender role, endeavoring to prepare them for a functional transfer of generations, that is, taking over the role of agent of reproduction of inherited hierarchies in which women and girls are the "gentler sex." These attitudes are more prominent among fathers with completed elementary or high school and whose wives are unemployed. However, comparative analysis with fathers who can be categorized as atypical, being unemployed while their wives work, has shown the same attitude, leading to the conclusion that the role of the father as family provider is a strongly established position on a normative level among the men in the study sample. Although not required, all

the mothers answered this question in the interview by comparing the roles of father and mother in the family, leading to the conclusion that the concept of *good father* characterizes the complementary determination of the characteristics of women and men as parents. Such designation corresponds to a complementary asymmetric family model (Parsons 2009), which rests on gender segregation of spheres (private/public, i.e. women/men).

4.2 Normative Model of *Good Child* in the Parents' Upbringing Practices

This portion of the text interprets the models of *good boy* and *good girl* in the upbringing practices of parents, as well as their coherence with the models of *good mother* and *good father* as previously presented.

What emerges using the constant comparative method of analysis of answers given by fathers and mothers across two of the most significant dimensions of upbringing practices in this study – care and control – is that the models *good boy* and *good girl* are correlated with the models of *good mother* and *good father* as presented in the previous section of the text. The study has shown that there is a consistency between gender segregated models of *good parent* and *good child* in the narratives of individuals with lower educational levels (elementary and high school degree), employed in blue collar jobs or unemployed, and who are more likely to live in rural areas and in extended families. On the other hand, among the highly educated parents from urban area, the gender segregated model of *good child* is questioned and has begun to be deconstructed. Further, upbringing practices are also shaped by their relation to perceived changes in society. In families resistant to change, there is hardly any questioning of the gender segregated normative *good child*, while in families responding to perceived changes, the given normative undergoes de-traditionalization. If parents (fathers and mothers) see society as chaotic and with numerous risks, they will relate to their children with a greater degree of protection and control, meaning that their upbringing practices will include a stricter system of reward and punishment, lest the children transgress the clearly delineated borders. Families in which fathers and mothers are in agreement with this, the family gender ethos will move in the direction of construction of masculinity and femininity that correspond to learned and prescriptive models. Conversely, in one family that perceives social changes not as dangerous but merely challenging, the father and mother will strive to adapt their responses. Such families undergo de-traditionalization of the desired models of gender, also visible in the mutual relation of partners.

The main differentiation between the models *good boy* and *good girl* takes place along the active/passive axis. Namely, the two most prevalent categories significant for the construction of the model *good boy* are 1) the dichotomy of private/public and the related dichotomies of active/passive and strong/weak, and 2) heteronormativity. Both categories correspond to the model of *good father* whose primary sphere of activity is outside the home, focused on the instrumental role of family provider. The most prevalent categories significant

for the construction of the model *good girl* are 1) the dichotomy of private/public and the related dichotomies, and 2) heteronormativity. Both categories correspond to the model of *good mother*, whose domain is the home and has the expressive role of care. The given categories are significant for both models and can be subsumed under the construct of familism.

The most prevalent model of *good boy* in this study includes the development of a strong personality and a physically agile person. Strength, characterizing masculine authority, must be proven and confirmed through confrontation with imagined or real competitors in society (Jordan, Cowan 2009). A major characteristic of this desired masculinity is heteronormativity, expressed above all through a "desirable, healthy, normal" sexuality.

The greatest gender segregation between the models of *good boy* and *good girl* was found in the significance of sexuality that parents ascribed to prevalent normatives of the masculine and feminine. Where morality, that is, decency is the most important signifier ascribed to the sexuality of *good girl*, the sexuality of *good boys* implicitly carries confirmation and "male respect". Hence, these two spheres are segregated, in the fathers' and mothers' narratives, each placed within its own "male or female story." Models of *good child* different to the mentioned were expressed by only one married couple (urban residents, holding specialist jobs). These parents nurture above all an open expression of emotions in their own relationship and relations with children, as well as with their families of origin and with friends, highly prizing emotional intelligence, considering it an important element in interpersonal relationships. This position corresponds best to the construct of individualization of parenthood, since this couple think that a "healthy person" is one capable of navigating the contemporary world, possessing the ability to adapt ("to find solutions, to seek help"), that is, one capable of transforming existing models and responding to novel situations.

The dimension of care was expressed by most fathers and mothers in differing activities for sons and daughters, in accordance with gender segregated roles and spheres of parents (private/women, public/men). As the children grow, there is an increasing need for them to be consistently introduced to clearly differentiated gender roles. This position is coherent with perceived divisions of gender spheres in parents' narratives, requiring children of greater age to provide a more adequate transfer of generations. Comparative analysis of fathers' narratives has shown that their upbringing practices in the process of gender socialization mostly correspond to the concept of the *absent father* (Tomanović-Mihajlović 1997). This concept describes the role of the father who does not have enough time for a relationship with children, given that he is the family provider who conducts his work outside the home. Being absent, such a father has a more difficult time reconstructing his children's quotidian and understanding their needs (for both sons and daughters). And he expresses emotion towards them with more difficulty. Fathers whose upbringing practices fit within the concept of the *absent father* most often spend time with their sons in activities outside the home, while separate activities with daughters

are almost entirely absent. On the other hand, common activities of mothers and sons most often involve a passive intake of content (such as watching TV). The most common activities of fathers with sons are in the domain of sport or activities of mechanics, such as fixing cars or building things, which on rare occasion is potentially dangerous to the child's health (such as taking a two-year old for a ride on a motorcycle). This narrative is in stark contrast with activities mothers can have with children, the most important element in this case being the security of the children. Most often, activities of mothers with daughters have as their goal the child's introduction into a clearly defined gender role, corresponding to the model of *good mother* whose primary sphere is the home.

Constant comparative analysis of parents' narratives has shown that male primogeniture is a significant aspect in family practices. Namely, certain mothers state that first-born sons are included in the activities of care for younger children. Mothers from these households also testify that their families include more agreement about division of house chores among marital partners, although this was not noted in the interviews with the fathers of these families. The assumption is that the fathers provide a positive example to their sons, who then more easily accept the household chores. In the process of gender socialization of children, mothers emphasize their expressive role, that is, present the role of the mother as a locus of support and expression of emotional comfort. They justify this attitude with the belief of *natural connection* between mother and child, based in physiological predispositions of women to bear children and a comparatively greater capacity of women for emotional expression. The majority of sampled mothers place the needs of their children above their own, meaning that their upbringing practices correspond to the concept of "self-sacrificing motherhood."

Upbringing practices different to the mentioned were expressed by only one married couple (urban residents, holding specialist jobs), who broke with the traditionally inherited models of parenting and "sacrifice" for children. Changes are mostly initiated by the overcoming of the concept of good (sacrificing) parenthood, manifested above all in a greater participation of men in performing household duties. Such conduct deconstructs on a practical level the crude normative division of the models of *good mother* and *good father*, itself grounded in the dichotomy private-public. Changes in the home occur due to the critical reflection of partners and their taking an active position in the direction of projecting a desirable future. In such families, changes are above all the consequence of the high quality of the partner relationship, developed over a long period and characterized by closeness and adapting to changes in the environment through agreement and negotiation.

When it comes to the dimension of control, the main factor influencing upbringing practices of parents is their relationship to perceived changes in society. Namely, if parents see society as chaotic, with numerous challenges, they will relate to their children with a greater degree of protection and control. In turn, their upbringing practices will include more strict rewards and punishments in order to keep the children within given boundaries. Most fathers from

the sample punish their sons more strictly than their daughters, but also reward them better for successfully fulfilling their role. Such practice corresponds to their attitude towards women as the "gentler sex." Sons acquire independence by respecting the demands and criteria set by their fathers, whence they climb the rungs of gender hierarchy. Mothers more often expect daughters to be more autonomous than sons in everyday life, primarily because most mothers expect daughters to be ready for their role as woman. These specific individuals present their upbringing practices as being in accordance with gender stereotypical positions about the "maturity" of girls and boys (who "mature later"). In contrast to these parents, in one family in which social changes were perceived not as dangerous but only challenging, the father and mother sought to adapt their responses, abandoning the model of "sacrificing parenthood" for one with less control over children. This family supported children in acquiring skills that enable an independent life and making decisions/choices that craft their own future. In addition, the upbringing practices were supported by the quality of the intramarital relation (more on which further on). An example of this model in this research is the family living in an urban environment, employed as specialists.

4.3 Family Relations

Another relevant dimension in upbringing practices, also derived from constant comparative analysis, is whether the family is nuclear or extended. Among the categories tied to life in the extended family are hierarchies and nostalgia for tradition, both of which are elements in the patriarchal matrix. This indicates reproduction of inherited models of parenthood in the parents' upbringing practices. Among the categories tied to nuclear families, combined with high education of parents, employed in specialist or administrative positions and living in an urban setting, is an active attitude towards changes. Parents who match this description strive to transform inherited models of parenting and adapt them to contemporary processes.

Intergenerational dynamics within extended families turn out to be an important element in the evaluation of one's own experiences (as both parent and partner), given that there is continuous comparison with upbringing practices of the family of origin as well as the participation of other family members in the gender socialization of children. Parents from extended families are not able to develop consistent upbringing practices due to the involvement of other family members. This can be seen in narratives of parents who previously lived in extended family households. Only with residential independence, that is, organizing into a different family unit, was there the possibility of break with previous family practices. On the other hand, parents who live in extended families, although they have disagreements with members of the household, strive to apply learned patterns of parenting from the previous generation. Their narratives often include nostalgia for tradition and "past times" in which upbringing of children had a significantly different character from contemporary

family practices they encounter in their environment. Familism, resistance to change, collectivism and the attempt to preserve tradition comprise the main narrative elements of these parents. In addition to parents in extended families, nostalgia for tradition and the demand for reproduction of learned models of behavior is present among parents with only elementary or high school degree, the unemployed, as well as those holding blue-collar jobs and who live in rural areas. These families express clearly gender segregated roles for men and women within the family, while age segregation is the top criterion of decision-making and organizing of family life. Women and the youngest have the least power, and if there is dissatisfaction with the given order, it is almost never articulated to other members of the household. The least articulation of dissatisfaction with living conditions in extended families comes from women with elementary education who live in rural areas.

Determining factors for independence from the family of origin are personal resources: education level and personal income. The possibility for de-traditionalization in such families is based on good partner relations, developed trust and closeness – leading to a consistent family ethos towards gender egalitarianism. Parents in such families adjust their upbringing goals to the current moment and the potentials of the individual child. Intramarital relations and the structure of their activities – which is to say division of duties, responsibilities and power in the home – are determined by family dynamics (negotiation and acts across different stages of consolidation of the family). Analysis shows that these new models of family practices will emerge only if the partners recognize their interest in them and adapt to novel situations. Mutual expressions of closeness and flexibility in the relationship are significant contributing elements to engaging in new practices.

Constant comparative analysis of parent narratives on this level of analysis has shown that the intramarital dynamic determines the mutual coherence of upbringing aims among parents, as well as their individual upbringing practices in the process of gender socialization of children. If there is an asymmetry in the power and authority of the partners (with only rare expressions of closeness or resistance to change), the upbringing practices will be marked by inconsistency and gender typical attitudes and gestures in the socialization process. On the other hand, if the intramarital relationship is more equal (with frequent expressions of closeness and readiness to adapt to novel circumstances), in particular at crucial moments (such as the birth of a child), their attitudes and upbringing practices in gender socialization will be much more egalitarian. Asymmetry between partners is more noticeable among parents with lower levels of education. The question in this study that crucially establishes (a)symmetry is the household spending of money, since the role of the family provider remains as the most significant characteristic of the "good father" norm, which is also confirmed by other studies (Tomanović 2017; Stanojević, 2018). Asymmetry between partners manifested primarily through a conspicuous asymmetry in decisions regarding finances, which tended to take place in patrilinear families. Sons are favored over daughters in these families since

they are inheritors of material goods and bearers of the family tradition. This situation is most common among less educated parents (elementary and high school graduates), who are blue-collar workers and most often live in extended households in rural areas. Symmetry in decision-making between parents, in the household as well as all other areas of family life, is a characteristic among families in which parents are employed in specialist or administrative positions and live in nuclear families in urban areas. The particularity of parents singled out in this study as such is that the relation of mutual respect and faith in "common strength" was developed through various conflictual situation and specific life experiences. Reflexivity towards one's own position, marriage, family and upbringing practices, as well as adaptation to novel situations comprise the basis for personal, marital and familial growth. Expressions of closeness and emotion within the partner relation turn out to be an important element for open communication, lacking among asymmetrical couples. If the parents blindly follow social norms and given models of parenthood, they are less likely to adapt to novel situations due to decreased flexibility in different phases of family consolidation.

Conclusion

Individualization of parenthood in Serbia is conducted in a particular social context. As opposed to Scandinavian countries, it is neither incentivized nor supported at either the normative-discursive, or the practical-political level (Tomanović 2017). Poor socio-economic positions of parents, inadequate institutional support, a chaotic labor market, but also the normative gender regime, all present significant limitations to individualization of parenthood in Serbia. The reason for this can be found above all in the particularity of context in which family life unfolds. This is the dominant model of south European familist (familial) solidarity, which is not supported either as a cultural normative or as practice in this region, and thus offers no new models to which to turn in the attempt to speed up the process of de-traditionalization of parenthood (ibid).

The ideology of familism in this text has been followed via the normative content of gender structures within contemporary Serbian society, that is, through an analysis of the patriarchal matrix and forms of its expression in upbringing practices of parents. The most significant element in these practices is the ethics of good parenting. The analysis has shown that the upbringing practices of most sampled fathers and mothers reproduce a patriarchal matrix, manifested as the gender segregated normative of *good parent*, and supported through the socio-cultural and historical context of Serbian society. All individuals see the family as a marital unit containing complementary roles. Those roles are simultaneously highly rated in the process of gender socialization of children, due to the intergenerational transfer of heteronormative values and clearly segregated gendered spheres for women and men. Being complementary, the given constructs socialize children into a gendered

world. Thus, the figure of the father is presented as an identification model for boys and their entrance into social life through "separation" from the figure of the mother, that is, from the *private* sphere of the home. Heteronormativity and familism represent the main characteristics of these constructs, and are thus also significant for the introduction of daughters into the gendered role of woman that follows the model of *good mother*. What emerges through a constant comparative method of analysis of fathers' and mothers' responses along the two most significant axes of upbringing practices in this research – care and control – is that the models of *good child* stand in correlation with the models of *good parent*. This research has shown that there is a consistency between gender segregated models of *good parent* and *good child* in the narratives of individuals with lower levels of education (elementary and high school degree), blue-collar workers or unemployed, and those more likely to live in rural areas and extended families. On the other hand, the gender segregated model of *good child* is questioned and begun to be deconstructed among those highly educated, employed parents from urban area who live in nuclear family. Indeed, parent upbringing practices are shaped by their relationship to perceived changes in society. In families resistant to change there is no questioning of the gender segregated model of *good child*; whereas, in families that develop new responses to perceived changes, the given model is indeed de-traditionalized. Changes are mostly initiated by the overcoming of the concept of good (sacrificing) parenthood, manifested above all in a greater participation of men in performing household duties. Such conduct even deconstructs on a practical level the crude normative division of the models of *good father* and *good mother*, as well as the normative division of the models *good boy* and *good girl*, since in these families the first-born sons are included in the activities of care for younger children. Changes in the home occur due to the critical reflection of partners and their taking an active position in the direction of projecting a desirable future.

Like some previous studies (Tomanović 2017; Stanojević 2018), this research has shown that new parenting practices can be developed with the implicit consensus of the couple on egalitarian values. This confirms the expectation of transformation of upbringing practices towards egalitarianism of those parents who are more flexible and express closeness in their relationship. A greater degree of closeness and flexibility, as well as better communication between the partners lead to more egalitarian models of gender socialization of children.

These insights also reveal the specificity of individualization of parenthood in Serbia, a country with a problematic heritage. Individualized parenthood is a relational phenomenon whose necessary basis is the consensus of the couple regarding gender equality. Nevertheless, as the bearer of the process of individualization, in Serbia such a couple (living in urban area, fully employed) would be forced to develop independently, without reference to some previous model and without institutional support.

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Jelena Ćeriman

Ograničenja individualizacije roditeljstva u Srbiji: studija o rodnoj socijalizaciji dece

Apstrakt

Fokus ovog rada je na ispitivanju ograničenja individualizacije roditeljstva u Srbiji na primeru procesa rodne socijalizacije dece. Osnovna teza je da specifičnosti familističkog konteksta u kom se odvija porodični život u Srbiji, ograničavaju individualizaciju roditeljstva. Ideologija familizma u ovom radu se prati preko normativnih sadržaja rodnih poredaka u kontekstu savremenog društva Srbije, odnosno kroz analizu prisutnosti i načina ispoljavanja patrijarhalne matrice u vaspitnim praksama roditelja, pri čemu najvažniji element čini etika dobrog roditeljstva. Analiza pokazuje da individualizacija roditeljstva i egalitarniji obrasci rodne socijalizacije nastaju pre svega pod uticajem dinamike partnerskih odnosa u kojoj se transformiše koncept žrtvujućeg roditeljstva. Analiza u ovom radu je zasnovana na podacima prikupljenim u empirijskom istraživanju o vaspitnim praksama roditelja u savremenoj Srbiji.

Ključne reči: familizam, individualizacija, roditeljstvo, vaspitne prakse, rodna socijalizacija.