Social deprivation and parental alienation

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Abstract

Having in mind that every social phenomenon should be perceived in a specific social context, parental alienation has to be considered having in mind the specific characteristics of modern society and social phenomenon that are most directly related to it – the modern family. Social reality is complex, layered and diverse, and as such, confronts the family group and its actors with unprecedented challenges. However, families from socially deprived backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to potential family problems. Parental problems often result in chaotic and inconsistent parenting styles and inadequate care for children. To what extent this affects alienated parenting and what are the consequences of such practices on children's socialization, we will try to answer by analyzing recently researches on parenting in some Roma settlements in Serbia.

Key words: parenthood; parental alienation; family; social deprivation; Roma population

Introduction

Intensive and hitherto unseen development of modern society complicates and diversifies all elements of the global social structure. The current Fourth Industrial Revolution, just like the previous three, in addition to changes in lifestyle and the overall economy, changes, no less dynamically, the political

and cultural sphere of social life, modifying social consciousness, imposing new value systems and new patterns of social behavior of people.

„The constant and accelerating need to harmonize with the pace of development of modern communication and information achievements puts modern man in a special position of increasingly intensive adaptation to new circumstances, while the process of adapting an individual to social change becomes more complex and demanding" (Komatina, Kaplanovic, 2019, p. 166).

This whirlpool also affects the modern family, which, as a decisive factor in the socio-cultural reproduction of the social community, is in a constant and dynamic cause-and-effect relationship with social changes. By changing its structure and functions more intensively than ever before, the modern family responds to the challenges of modern society. At the same time, the contents of the social roles of its main actors – parents and children, who have to respond to increasingly complicated social demands, are also changing.

Parental alienation in this paper will not be considered at the level of individual parent-child relationships and problems in performing parental function, but in the context of dynamic and often incomprehensible to parents changes in the wider social environment, as well as varieties of family relations that deviate from the usual notion of standards in the performance of the parental role, are not socially visible and take place in socially deprived environments.

1. Contemporary socialization facing challenges of dynamic social changes and transformation of family structures and functions

When we talk about the challenges that modern society faces the family, then we are primarily asked whether the diversity of family forms, in which the process of socialization takes place today, enables quality growing up, undisturbed personality formation and adequate preparation for social life?

The family is a universal social institution that has changed during human development both structurally and functionally, but has always remained the most important social community, irreplaceable in the process of humanization and socialization. Some family functions change their character during socio-historical development, some are reduced, and in modern society, with the development of an increasing number of specialized social institutions to support the family, many family functions are performed largely relying on them. However, some family functions, here we primarily mean socialization, although they can be shared with the social institutions, cannot be completely left to it.

Since it is a basic factor of social reproduction, modern sociology views socialization as a social process of exceptional importance, insisting on the fact that it is a two-way and lifelong process (Milić, 2007, p. 240-243).

It is worth recalling here that in the middle of the last century, John Murdoch (1949), studying family forms in 200 different societies, came to the knowledge that in every family form there is some kind of nuclear family, and that four family functions are universal: sexual, reproductive, economic and educational. Since today, to a large extent, although they are indispensable in creating a family, the sexual and reproductive components transcends the family, we can ask ourselves whether economic function (common consumption) and socialization are a common denominator, the backbone of different family forms that coexist in modern society.

Vilić (2013, p. 57-58) considers that a significant role in the stability of the family is played by its income, ie their satisfactory level. Since we live in a materialistic culture, we can assume to what extent incomes, which do not meet the living standards of a particular family, may affect the dissatisfaction of its members. However, the fact is that in times of crisis in Serbia in the 1990s, families survived and its members were in solidarity with each other (Milić, Tomanović, 2009), and that the increase in the number of divorces was first recorded by the most developed and richest countries. Poverty or worsening economic conditions can be one of the triggers for endangering the stability of the family, but it is certainly not the main reason for its breakdown.

The whole range of different family forms, that exist in modern society, disabling a clear perception of its structure: the classic nuclear family in which children and parents are related by blood; a nuclear family in which the parents live with the children they have adopted; an extended family in which some other family members join the family nucleus; a nuclear family formed after the divorce and remarriage, whose members may or may not be blood relatives (stepfathers and stepmothers, half-brothers and half-sisters, children brought from previous marriages); families in which spouses live without children (because they do not want them); single-parent families; families arising from same-sex marriages in which one parent can be blood related with the child or neither parent is ... Here we see how the concept that defines a family as a group of relatives is slowly collapsing in modern forms[1]

Analyzing the modern family in its permanent changes, and, above all, having in mind the mass reorganization of families due to the large number of divorces and remarriages with the addition of new members in newly formed families, Simson (1994) points out that the process of transition of the *nuclear family* into an *unclear family* is underway.

„Although modern societas have largely reject the view of the harmful effects of so-called deficient families on personality formation and the socialization

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[1] „The family consists of two elements that vary in historically variable proportions: (1) living together and working under the same roof of a group of people and (2) kinship between them. This combination experiences its fullness only in the modern era" (Milić, 2007a, p. 414).

process, the fact is that their number is constantly increasing, so it remains to be seen whether alternative ways of raising children, in such a wide range of family variation relationships, have equally good results as when both parents are present during socialization" (Komatina, Kaplanović, 2019, p. 171).

The usefulness of the very concept of the family is also called into question. „The process of detraditionalization, which decreases the importance of traditional groups such as family, kinship and origin, which lose its forced character in relation to the individual, the process of individualization, which shifts the focus to personal relationships and intimacy, and destandardization of personal relationships, which includes great variety forms of family and partner life, call into question the purposefulness of the very concept of the family" (Tomanović, 2019, p. 317).

It seems that Talcott Parsons (1955), despite all the criticism that he was focused on the modern American nuclear family, is still the closest to the essence of the existence of the modern family, respectively what makes it irreplaceable in its exclusive function – socialization, ie social reproduction. Here, first of all, we have in mind Parsons' thesis that the family is irreplaceable in modern society because of two things: one is primary socialization, and the other is the stabilization of the mental life of adult family members.

The aspect regarding to the needs of adult family members has been neglected, to a certain extent, in modern research. „When it comes to secondary socialization, modern societies are under incomparably more complex tasks and greater challenges than traditional ones, which did not leave too much space for improvisation in social behavior, nor too large ranges for playing given, clear and unambiguous roles" (Komatina, Kaplanović, 2019, p. 168).

2. New standards of parenting to meet the new concept of childhood

Family relations have ceased to be clearly and distinctly established for a long ago, just as the performance of certain roles within the family was given and unchangeable. The fact that it is in permanent modifications, confronts the modern family with the need to constantly respond to the demands of the wider social environment.

Modern parents, adapting to the continuous developmental changes of their children, as well as the challenges of the social environment in which they live and work and their individual needs, change themselves at the same time, so the processes of socialization of children and parents are mutually conditioned and permanently influence each other.

The content of the parental role in modern society is largely shared between its main actors, the parents themselves, and the wide institutional network of educational, health, social, cultural, sports and many other social institutions,

which develop in parallel with family changes and meet its growing needs. However, Milić (2007, p. 183) warns that the speed of changes in basic trends of social expectations and recommendations directed towards parents creates the possibility that less educated and incompetent parents are often unable to adapt to social trends, so they are declared „irresponsible" and „bad" parents.

What is a good parent today and how parents should perform their role to meet their own attitudes, and needs of their children, and the expectations that sets the social environment?

What used to be a spontaneous and clearly profiled social role in traditional societies, today becomes one of the most demanding tasks to which parents are dedicated. Adults who are parents are increasingly beginning to perceive their own lives and their own success through the prism of success in overcoming current parenting responsibilities. Thus, the role of a parent today requires a great commitment in the constant need to be „in line with the times" and modern trends in education and constant innovations, imposed by numerous „helping" social institutions.

This position faces parents with many dilemmas and constant insecurity because they are confronted with numerous contradictions: between the power they have over children and the helplessness to deal with problems, between individualization and professionalization of the educational process, between repression and tolerance in performing parental roles, and romantic ideologies of self-realization and sacrifice for the sake of children (Milić, 2007, p. 182-186).

The fact that the content of motherhood and fatherhood within parental roles has changed also contributes to confusion. Since paternal authority in the new fatherhood is seriously endangered by his removal from the throne of the „exclusive breadwinner of the family", modern motherhood is complicated with numerous other social roles, including the role of breadwinner.

The challenges of modern parenting are largely a consequence not only of the changed balance of power in the social space of the nuclear family, where the democratization of relations between the sexes and between generations is established, but also due to the extreme imbalance caused by the central position of the child where child's priority is over the needs of adult family members. The transformation of the parental role is mutually conditioned with the central position of the children in the modern family. In this relationship, it can be seen to what extent the influence of socio-historical circumstances actually determines the definition of „alienation" of social roles, in this case parental. What in traditional patriarchal societies was the standard in performing parental roles would be perceived today as parental alienation. A distant, emotionally unavailable, physically absent father whose authority is unquestionable today would surely be qualified at the very least as an „alienated" parent.

The modern family itself, an idealized oasis of intimacy, closeness and love, is often a source of frustration for both children and parents. The scientific studies of childhood, which views this age as a social construct, whose complex study is inspired by the fascinating study of Aries (1989), opposes its ideologisation. Kvortrup (1995) insists on a paradoxical relationship in which childhood and the world of adults existed in modern society, causing numerous parental frustrations.

Despite the fact that in modern society the central attention and a lot of family resources are directed towards the child, neither planetary, nor within any society, that position cannot be generalized. „Today, children are the center of attention in the developed West, while in the poorer parts of the world they are still marginalized" (Weatherly, 2005, p. 33). Of course, this difference is not only present between the developed and the underdeveloped world, but the different social position of children and parental practices within the same societies should not be neglected. Criticizing authors who deal with childhood history that their analyzes suffer from a lack of sociological subtlety, ie social differentiation, Tomanović (1996) indicates a generalization of the analysis of childhood to all social strata, ie the absence of analysis of socio-economic factors and conditions that would explain certain patterns of childhood practice.

The fact is that we live in an economically and culturally differentiated world and that the „desirable" pattern of parenting or the one we would define by „normal" parenting depends on the context in which it is observed. Today, in the literature dealing with family, childhood and parenthood, the desirable form of parental practice can be most generally formulated as one that approaches the upbringing of a child with a lot of love and understanding, satisfying all its age needs, respecting its personality and dignity and applying discipline without any form of mental and physical punishment.

3. Socially deprived families – socially invisible parental alienation: the example of Roma parents in Serbia

Based on twenty-five years of parenting research in the Western Balkans (on the "semi- periphery"), Marina Blagojević Hughson (2014, p. 384) affirms the approach that links parenting as a micro-social relationship with macro structural social changes, drawing the vertical from individual lives to global change. „The crisis of everyday life has intensified **tension, conflicts, deprivation** in all aspects of life. The crisis stopped the processes of individualization and de-alienation of parenthood, even parenting in the crisis became itself a source of new alienation". (Blagojević Hughson, 2014, p. 390).

If we observe the Serbian society on a global level, which has been in permanent transition for decades, it should be said that, despite the public discourse

in which the concept of social inclusion is very exploited, social differences between certain social groups are more pronounced[2]. So that today, with a small privileged social elite, formed on the wings of a suspicious transition and closely cooperating with political structures, and the largest part of the Serbian population of approximately equal and very modest socio-economic status, a large number of very poor people exist in Serbian society. And the poorer then the poorest is the Roma population, which is, according to the last census of population (*Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova*, 2011) the second largest national minority in the Republic of Serbia, with 2.1% share in the total population. Due to their fixation in the social structure at the lowest social position, at the very bottom of the social ladder, Roma are still recognized as the most endangered minority community (Raduški, Komatina, 2013, p. 101).

If we can look for elements of alienation of a large number of parents in existential problems, personal frustrations and lack of time to rest and to connect and socialize with children, then it is justified to ask how people at the very bottom of Serbian society cope with parental problems.

There is a small number of research that deal with the daily life of Roma families in Serbia. Based on the results of empirical research of Roma family life in the unhygienic Roma settlement „Deponija" by Marina Novaković (2004), as well as in Komatina's research (2007, 2020), it can be concluded that the dominant form of family organization among Belgrade Roma is the nuclear family and also that the patriarchal family patterns in many segments are replaced by the democratic relationship between children and parents.

Defining the Roma family in the process between traditional heritage and striving for modern life patterns, Petrović (2014) presents a survey whose data partly support the emancipation of the Roma family, but there are no indicators that would further explain parental roles in the Roma family.

In the following, we will present the results of one aspect of a complex qualitative research on the education of the Roma population[3] (Komatina,

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[2] According to the SILC survey conducted by the Republic Statistical Office, in 2016, 15.7% of the population in Serbia was at permanent risk of poverty, and 25.5% at risk of poverty. According to the indicators of subjective poverty, 63.9% of the population of the Republic of Serbia thought that they were poor.
Inequality of income distribution was 9.7, which means that 20% of the richest population had almost 10 times higher equivalent income compared to 20% of the poorest.
The Gini coefficient, which measures inequality in the entire distribution of income, in Serbia was 38.6, which is significantly higher than the average of the 28 countries of the European Union in which the observed years this value was 30.7. (*Nacionalni izveštaj…*, 2018, p. 24-35).
[3] Empirical research on the education of Roma children, using the case study (where appropriate qualitative and quantitative research methods were combined), was conducted during the

2020), in which, among other actors, parents of Roma children of primary school age also participated. We will describe what parents' problems look like on an individual level, on a family level, and in what dimensions their parental role can be considered alienated. In the following, we will list the most significant findings of the mentioned research in connection with the topic we are dealing with.

The results of the research showed that some parenting practices, according to the adopted social standards, represent some forms of deviant behavior. Such behavior affects the quality of parenting and can be considered as alienated parenting. These parenting practices have a negative effect not only on the health and development of the child, but also on preventing any opportunity for the child to rise above the social position of their parents.

Elements of alienation of Roma parents from socially deprived backgrounds are reflected in the following dimensions: physical neglect in the form of inadequate hygiene, clothing and nutrition of children, as well as inadequate supervision; health neglect; educational neglect of children; harmful impact on the children caused by domestic violence; inadequate socialization; practicing cultural customs that are opposite to the interests of the children.

Physical neglect of children is the most common form of inadequate parental practice among the Roma population in Serbia. It is mostly a consequence of extreme poverty, which is reflected in unfavorable housing and hygiene living conditions, poor nutrition, inadequate clothing and footwear, neglect of children's personal hygiene. This form of neglect of children in the conditions of very high total social deprivation of families actually also means neglect of children by society. According to UNICEF Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey of the Position of Women and Children in Serbia (MICS 5), the estimated infant mortality rate in Roma settlements is 13 per 1,000 live births, and the probability of a child dying before the fifth birthday is 14 per 1,000 live births, which is twice the national average obtained through vital statistics data. 15% of live births from Roma settlements were low birth weight, about 10% of children were malnourished (2% in Serbia), and about 19% of children were stunted (4% in Serbia).

The health neglect of children is in fact a continuation of the previous form of neglect, to the extent that the normal living conditions of the child enable his optimal health condition. In addition, there are problems that are particularly related to uneducated Roma population, and are reflected in difficulties in communicating with

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sixteen months of 2013 and 2014 in five Belgrade Roma settlements (four container and one residential settlement). Quantitative analysis included 100 primary school pupils from the observed settlements, and the qualitative analysis involved 56 examinees (children, parents, teachers, educators, pedagogical assistants). The research tested a holistic approach in the education of Roma children, and it also analyzed the model of displacement of unhygienic Roma settlements applied by the City of Belgrade in solving Roma housing problems. See in: Komatina, 2020.

health institutions and poor orientation over time, which leads to delays in receiving vaccines and coming to check-ups if a child has a health problem.

When it comes to **educational neglect of children**, then two things should be kept in mind: one is low educational status of parents, who do not fully understand the importance of education and often have personal negative experiences from school, and the other that society in different ways, especially by introducing inclusive education (Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja, 2009), helps Roma children to prepare for school and enroll on time, and develop supporting mechanisms during schooling. However, Roma children have a lot of problems in the school environment. They start with inadequate hygiene and appearance of children (clothes, shoes, yours), and are complicated by discrimination and segregation by other children. Research has shown that Roma children are often victims of school violence. Parents understand their children's problems, but they are not part of their solution [4]. Parents not only withdraw and do not cooperate with the school, but also allow their children not to go to school, and even to leave it completely, because of the problems they suffer there.

The research findings show that the examinees got married very young and did not know each other enough or almost not at all. In difficult social circumstances for life and responsibility for the children, poor and uneducated parents face with problems which they don't know how to deal with. Often happens that disagreements are resolved through violence. **Domestic violence**, and, above all, violence against women, is a common occurrence in Roma families from socially deprived backgrounds. There is also physical punishment of children, but it does not take drastic forms and is used as an educational tool. However, even when the children themselves are not physically punished, the family situation in which the mother suffers violence and the atmosphere of fear of the father adversely affects children's development.

Inadequate socialization of Roma children is manifested not only in inadequate conditions for life, health and development, but also in socio-cultural deprivation, which greatly affects not only the content of knowledge about life that children receive at preschool age, but also their overall socio-psychological, intellectual and emotional development. Deficient socialization is also consequence of the segregation of Roma settlements, distance from the sources of socio-cultural events, the confinement of families in the narrow circles of the community to which they belong (Kolin, 2008; Raduški and Komatina, 2013) and

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[4] There are exceptions. A survey conducted in the Belgrade neighborhood of Rušanj in 2007 shows how important the support of educational institutions and the non-governmental sector is in performing the parental function, especially when it comes to the educational neglect of children (Komatina, 2007).

very rare communication outside that circle. Inadequate socialization is closely and, as the research showed, a cause-and-effect connection with the **Roma tradition of early marriage**, several years before they reach adulthood.

To understand the socialization of Roma children, it should be having in mind that Roma families, in the segment of child care and upbringing, have retained the traditional division of parental roles, so mothers are a key parent for nursing, nutrition, hygiene and children's education, while fathers must manage to provide means of subsistence. Roma women become, by the standards of modern / Serbian society and world standards adopted by the UN Declaration on Human rights (1948) and UN Convention on Children's Rights (1989), very young and insufficiently psycho-physically mature for the role of mothers. „Insufficient physical and socio-psychological maturity of young mothers, in addition to poor economic and housing conditions, in which they live and raise children, has numerous negative implications for the physical development and health of Roma children, which also weakens their starting positions at school" (Komatina 2020, p. 152).

In the research, the author calls them „mothers-children", insisting on their key role in the education of Roma children.

> These mothers are very young women, married as underage girls, aged 13, 14 or 15. If they attended school by then, as a rule, their schooling ends with marriage. Around the age of 20, they already have four or five children. Since children are born one after the other, when the oldest child is old enough to go to school, the mother is still attached to the house and other small children who are still completely dependent on her. So that even if she could, there is no time or way to dedicate himself to a child which began its schooling.

> There is no one to help her child adapt to the school, nor to overcoming the initial school steps. Since she herself is illiterate, she is not able to support her child either at the very beginning or later, when the school material becomes more complicated and the child becomes more and more confused.

> She is a good-natured in communication, kind, cheerful and smiling young woman. Very careful and gentle towards children. Apart from that primordial love and care, she doesn't have to give them much. She understands, to some extent, that it is in her child's interest to finish school, which it is good for him, but she is powerless to help him in that.

> If she is married to a man of her age, he is even more immature than her in this period of his life, and it is not easy for him to provide for his family materially and to cope with all the difficulties of life. If she is married to a much older man, she is often a victim of domestic violence, because her husband treats her like a child who needs to be brought up or re-educated. In the trap of such a hard life, this woman will need many more years to mature somewhat emotionally and socially and start to participate more actively in her own life. For her children and their education, however, it will be too late then.

> Since she herself did not have time to grow up, in the critical period of her child's development – at the beginning of the puberty, she will not be able to cope with his

rebellion and mischief, especially when it comes to school success and class attendance. Then her children will leave school, and in a few years, they will get married, continuing the chain of poverty, deprivation, lack of education and incompatibility with the wider social environment. (Komatina, 2020, p. 151-152)

In the above analysis, we see the overlap between the secondary socialization of mothers and the primary socialization of children who coexist in such family constellations in a specific, but to some extent typical way.

The helplessness and incompetence of parents during puberty is a special story. Not all Roma want to marry their children prematurely, nor do they want their children to leave primary school before graduation, but in that period they do not know how to cope with their children's behavior (Komatina, 2020, p. 124-129).

It is obvious that parental alienation of Roma people from unhygienic settlements remains invisible for the majority of population. Social institutions dedicated to family and children welfare should be more aware of that problem. The parents themselves obviously cannot cope with these problems.

Conclusion

The dynamic changes of modern society have resulted in structural and functional transformations of the family, so the characteristic of modern society is that the process of socialization of children takes place in an increasing number of family varieties. Modern parenting is facing great challenges to perform its role in the process of socio-cultural reproduction in a quality and socially desirable way. Parents are facing higher and more complicated standards that they need to meet by performing this demanding social role, which is a source of numerous frustrations even in a satisfactory socio-cultural conditions in which children grow up.

However, one should not ignore the fact that desirable parenting standards are not and cannot be universally accepted in all social strata. On the example of a part of the Roma population in Serbia, we have shown that in socio-culturally deprived areas, in which a part of this national minority (which is not negligible) lives, a special form of parental alienation dominates. It is reflected in the physical, health and educational neglect of children, deficient and deprived socialization which that takes place in an atmosphere of domestic violence that fathers use against mothers, but also physical punishment of children as disciplinary measures, and parental inability to cope with children's developmental problems, especially at puberty. So the traditional patterns of premature marriages are repeated, which only pass this condition on to the next generations. Since this is endangering basic human and children's rights, the inadequate functioning of social institutions and the whole legal system cannot be justified by anything.

The parental roles of fathers and mothers from socially deprived backgrounds, where many Roma in Serbia live, deviate in many segments from what is implies in society as the standard of parenting. The alienation of their parental role is directly influenced by the unfavorable circumstances of the socially deprived environment in which the parents themselves grew up and whose family patterns they reproduce in their own family. In conditions of extreme poverty and constant struggle for family survival, numerous frustrations often culminate in violence and deviant behavior which, in combination with other socio-cultural deficits and deprivations, leads to a specific form of parental alienation. It is difficult to recognize in the local community itself, because it is part of the usual and generally accepted behavior, just like early marriage, which puts immature and unprepared young people in the parental position, so it is not unusual that they cannot cope with that role in a society that sets very high standards. This results not only in parental frustrations, who are aware of their impotence, but also has numerous and far-reaching negative consequences for the offspring.

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Social deprivation and parental alienation

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Abstract

Having in mind that every social phenomenon should be perceived in a specific social context, parental alienation has to be considered having in mind the specific characteristics of modern society and social phenomenon that are most directly related to it – the modern family. Social reality is complex, layered and diverse, and as such, confronts the family group and its actors with unprecedented challenges. However, families from socially deprived backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to potential family problems. Parental problems often result in chaotic and inconsistent parenting styles and inadequate care for children. To what extent this affects alienated parenting and what are the consequences of such practices on children's socialization, we will try to answer by analyzing recently researches on parenting in some Roma settlements in Serbia.

Key words: parenthood; parental alienation; family; social deprivation; Roma population

Introduction

Intensive and hitherto unseen development of modern society complicates and diversifies all elements of the global social structure. The current Fourth Industrial Revolution, just like the previous three, in addition to changes in lifestyle and the overall economy, changes, no less dynamically, the political

and cultural sphere of social life, modifying social consciousness, imposing new value systems and new patterns of social behavior of people.

„The constant and accelerating need to harmonize with the pace of development of modern communication and information achievements puts modern man in a special position of increasingly intensive adaptation to new circumstances, while the process of adapting an individual to social change becomes more complex and demanding" (Komatina, Kaplanovic, 2019, p. 166).

This whirlpool also affects the modern family, which, as a decisive factor in the socio-cultural reproduction of the social community, is in a constant and dynamic cause-and-effect relationship with social changes. By changing its structure and functions more intensively than ever before, the modern family responds to the challenges of modern society. At the same time, the contents of the social roles of its main actors – parents and children, who have to respond to increasingly complicated social demands, are also changing.

Parental alienation in this paper will not be considered at the level of individual parent-child relationships and problems in performing parental function, but in the context of dynamic and often incomprehensible to parents changes in the wider social environment, as well as varieties of family relations that deviate from the usual notion of standards in the performance of the parental role, are not socially visible and take place in socially deprived environments.

1. Contemporary socialization facing challenges of dynamic social changes and transformation of family structures and functions

When we talk about the challenges that modern society faces the family, then we are primarily asked whether the diversity of family forms, in which the process of socialization takes place today, enables quality growing up, undisturbed personality formation and adequate preparation for social life?

The family is a universal social institution that has changed during human development both structurally and functionally, but has always remained the most important social community, irreplaceable in the process of humanization and socialization. Some family functions change their character during socio-historical development, some are reduced, and in modern society, with the development of an increasing number of specialized social institutions to support the family, many family functions are performed largely relying on them. However, some family functions, here we primarily mean socialization, although they can be shared with the social institutions, cannot be completely left to it.

Since it is a basic factor of social reproduction, modern sociology views socialization as a social process of exceptional importance, insisting on the fact that it is a two-way and lifelong process (Milić, 2007, p. 240-243).

It is worth recalling here that in the middle of the last century, John Murdoch (1949), studying family forms in 200 different societies, came to the knowledge that in every family form there is some kind of nuclear family, and that four family functions are universal: sexual, reproductive, economic and educational. Since today, to a large extent, although they are indispensable in creating a family, the sexual and reproductive components transcends the family, we can ask ourselves whether economic function (common consumption) and socialization are a common denominator, the backbone of different family forms that coexist in modern society.

Vilić (2013, p. 57-58) considers that a significant role in the stability of the family is played by its income, ie their satisfactory level. Since we live in a materialistic culture, we can assume to what extent incomes, which do not meet the living standards of a particular family, may affect the dissatisfaction of its members. However, the fact is that in times of crisis in Serbia in the 1990s, families survived and its members were in solidarity with each other (Milić, Tomanović, 2009), and that the increase in the number of divorces was first recorded by the most developed and richest countries. Poverty or worsening economic conditions can be one of the triggers for endangering the stability of the family, but it is certainly not the main reason for its breakdown.

The whole range of different family forms, that exist in modern society, disabling a clear perception of its structure: the classic nuclear family in which children and parents are related by blood; a nuclear family in which the parents live with the children they have adopted; an extended family in which some other family members join the family nucleus; a nuclear family formed after the divorce and remarriage, whose members may or may not be blood relatives (stepfathers and stepmothers, half-brothers and half-sisters, children brought from previous marriages); families in which spouses live without children (because they do not want them); single-parent families; families arising from same-sex marriages in which one parent can be blood related with the child or neither parent is ... Here we see how the concept that defines a family as a group of relatives is slowly collapsing in modern forms[1]

Analyzing the modern family in its permanent changes, and, above all, having in mind the mass reorganization of families due to the large number of divorces and remarriages with the addition of new members in newly formed families, Simson (1994) points out that the process of transition of the *nuclear family* into an *unclear family* is underway.

„Although modern societas have largely reject the view of the harmful effects of so-called deficient families on personality formation and the socialization

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[1] „The family consists of two elements that vary in historically variable proportions: (1) living together and working under the same roof of a group of people and (2) kinship between them. This combination experiences its fullness only in the modern era" (Milić, 2007a, p. 414).

process, the fact is that their number is constantly increasing, so it remains to be seen whether alternative ways of raising children, in such a wide range of family variation relationships, have equally good results as when both parents are present during socialization" (Komatina, Kaplanović, 2019, p. 171).

The usefulness of the very concept of the family is also called into question. „The process of detraditionalization, which decreases the importance of traditional groups such as family, kinship and origin, which lose its forced character in relation to the individual, the process of individualization, which shifts the focus to personal relationships and intimacy, and destandardization of personal relationships, which includes great variety forms of family and partner life, call into question the purposefulness of the very concept of the family" (Tomanović, 2019, p. 317).

It seems that Talcott Parsons (1955), despite all the criticism that he was focused on the modern American nuclear family, is still the closest to the essence of the existence of the modern family, respectively what makes it irreplaceable in its exclusive function – socialization, ie social reproduction. Here, first of all, we have in mind Parsons' thesis that the family is irreplaceable in modern society because of two things: one is primary socialization, and the other is the stabilization of the mental life of adult family members.

The aspect regarding to the needs of adult family members has been neglected, to a certain extent, in modern research. „When it comes to secondary socialization, modern societies are under incomparably more complex tasks and greater challenges than traditional ones, which did not leave too much space for improvisation in social behavior, nor too large ranges for playing given, clear and unambiguous roles" (Komatina, Kaplanović, 2019, p. 168).

2. New standards of parenting to meet the new concept of childhood

Family relations have ceased to be clearly and distinctly established for a long ago, just as the performance of certain roles within the family was given and unchangeable. The fact that it is in permanent modifications, confronts the modern family with the need to constantly respond to the demands of the wider social environment.

Modern parents, adapting to the continuous developmental changes of their children, as well as the challenges of the social environment in which they live and work and their individual needs, change themselves at the same time, so the processes of socialization of children and parents are mutually conditioned and permanently influence each other.

The content of the parental role in modern society is largely shared between its main actors, the parents themselves, and the wide institutional network of educational, health, social, cultural, sports and many other social institutions,

which develop in parallel with family changes and meet its growing needs. However, Milić (2007, p. 183) warns that the speed of changes in basic trends of social expectations and recommendations directed towards parents creates the possibility that less educated and incompetent parents are often unable to adapt to social trends, so they are declared „irresponsible" and „bad" parents.

What is a good parent today and how parents should perform their role to meet their own attitudes, and needs of their children, and the expectations that sets the social environment?

What used to be a spontaneous and clearly profiled social role in traditional societies, today becomes one of the most demanding tasks to which parents are dedicated. Adults who are parents are increasingly beginning to perceive their own lives and their own success through the prism of success in overcoming current parenting responsibilities. Thus, the role of a parent today requires a great commitment in the constant need to be „in line with the times" and modern trends in education and constant innovations, imposed by numerous „helping" social institutions.

This position faces parents with many dilemmas and constant insecurity because they are confronted with numerous contradictions: between the power they have over children and the helplessness to deal with problems, between individualization and professionalization of the educational process, between repression and tolerance in performing parental roles, and romantic ideologies of self-realization and sacrifice for the sake of children (Milić, 2007, p. 182-186).

The fact that the content of motherhood and fatherhood within parental roles has changed also contributes to confusion. Since paternal authority in the new fatherhood is seriously endangered by his removal from the throne of the „exclusive breadwinner of the family", modern motherhood is complicated with numerous other social roles, including the role of breadwinner.

The challenges of modern parenting are largely a consequence not only of the changed balance of power in the social space of the nuclear family, where the democratization of relations between the sexes and between generations is established, but also due to the extreme imbalance caused by the central position of the child where child's priority is over the needs of adult family members. The transformation of the parental role is mutually conditioned with the central position of the children in the modern family. In this relationship, it can be seen to what extent the influence of socio-historical circumstances actually determines the definition of „alienation" of social roles, in this case parental. What in traditional patriarchal societies was the standard in performing parental roles would be perceived today as parental alienation. A distant, emotionally unavailable, physically absent father whose authority is unquestionable today would surely be qualified at the very least as an „alienated" parent.

The modern family itself, an idealized oasis of intimacy, closeness and love, is often a source of frustration for both children and parents. The scientific studies of childhood, which views this age as a social construct, whose complex study is inspired by the fascinating study of Aries (1989), opposes its ideologisation. Kvortrup (1995) insists on a paradoxical relationship in which childhood and the world of adults existed in modern society, causing numerous parental frustrations.

Despite the fact that in modern society the central attention and a lot of family resources are directed towards the child, neither planetary, nor within any society, that position cannot be generalized. „Today, children are the center of attention in the developed West, while in the poorer parts of the world they are still marginalized" (Weatherly, 2005, p. 33). Of course, this difference is not only present between the developed and the underdeveloped world, but the different social position of children and parental practices within the same societies should not be neglected. Criticizing authors who deal with childhood history that their analyzes suffer from a lack of sociological subtlety, ie social differentiation, Tomanović (1996) indicates a generalization of the analysis of childhood to all social strata, ie the absence of analysis of socio-economic factors and conditions that would explain certain patterns of childhood practice.

The fact is that we live in an economically and culturally differentiated world and that the „desirable" pattern of parenting or the one we would define by „normal" parenting depends on the context in which it is observed. Today, in the literature dealing with family, childhood and parenthood, the desirable form of parental practice can be most generally formulated as one that approaches the upbringing of a child with a lot of love and understanding, satisfying all its age needs, respecting its personality and dignity and applying discipline without any form of mental and physical punishment.

3. Socially deprived families – socially invisible parental alienation: the example of Roma parents in Serbia

Based on twenty-five years of parenting research in the Western Balkans (on the "semi- periphery"), Marina Blagojević Hughson (2014, p. 384) affirms the approach that links parenting as a micro-social relationship with macro structural social changes, drawing the vertical from individual lives to global change. „The crisis of everyday life has intensified **tension, conflicts, deprivation** in all aspects of life. The crisis stopped the processes of individualization and de-alienation of parenthood, even parenting in the crisis became itself a source of new alienation". (Blagojević Hughson, 2014, p. 390).

If we observe the Serbian society on a global level, which has been in permanent transition for decades, it should be said that, despite the public discourse

in which the concept of social inclusion is very exploited, social differences be-tween certain social groups are more pronounced[2]. So that today, with a small privileged social elite, formed on the wings of a suspicious transition and closely cooperating with political structures, and the largest part of the Serbian popu-lation of approximately equal and very modest socio-economic status, a large number of very poor people exist in Serbian society. And the poorer then the poorest is the Roma population, which is, according to the last census of popu-lation (*Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova*, 2011) the second largest na-tional minority in the Republic of Serbia, with 2.1% share in the total population. Due to their fixation in the social structure at the lowest social position, at the very bottom of the social ladder, Roma are still recognized as the most endan-gered minority community (Raduški, Komatina, 2013, p. 101).

If we can look for elements of alienation of a large number of parents in existential problems, personal frustrations and lack of time to rest and to con-nect and socialize with children, then it is justified to ask how people at the very bottom of Serbian society cope with parental problems.

There is a small number of research that deal with the daily life of Roma families in Serbia. Based on the results of empirical research of Roma family life in the unhygienic Roma settlement „Deponija" by Marina Novaković (2004), as well as in Komatina's research (2007, 2020), it can be concluded that the domi-nant form of family organization among Belgrade Roma is the nuclear family and also that the patriarchal family patterns in many segments are replaced by the democratic relationship between children and parents.

Defining the Roma family in the process between traditional heritage and striving for modern life patterns, Petrović (2014) presents a survey whose data partly support the emancipation of the Roma family, but there are no indicators that would further explain parental roles in the Roma family.

In the following, we will present the results of one aspect of a complex qualitative research on the education of the Roma population[3] (Komatina,

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[2] According to the SILC survey conducted by the Republic Statistical Office, in 2016, 15.7% of the population in Serbia was at permanent risk of poverty, and 25.5% at risk of poverty. According to the indicators of subjective poverty, 63.9% of the population of the Republic of Serbia thought that they were poor.

Inequality of income distribution was 9.7, which means that 20% of the richest population had almost 10 times higher equivalent income compared to 20% of the poorest.

The Gini coefficient, which measures inequality in the entire distribution of income, in Serbia was 38.6, which is significantly higher than the average of the 28 countries of the European Union in which the observed years this value was 30.7. (*Nacionalni izveštaj…*, 2018, p. 24-35).

[3] Empirical research on the education of Roma children, using the case study (where appropri-ate qualitative and quantitative research methods were combined), was conducted during the

2020), in which, among other actors, parents of Roma children of primary school age also participated. We will describe what parents' problems look like on an individual level, on a family level, and in what dimensions their parental role can be considered alienated. In the following, we will list the most significant findings of the mentioned research in connection with the topic we are dealing with.

The results of the research showed that some parenting practices, according to the adopted social standards, represent some forms of deviant behavior. Such behavior affects the quality of parenting and can be considered as alienated parenting. These parenting practices have a negative effect not only on the health and development of the child, but also on preventing any opportunity for the child to rise above the social position of their parents.

Elements of alienation of Roma parents from socially deprived backgrounds are reflected in the following dimensions: physical neglect in the form of inadequate hygiene, clothing and nutrition of children, as well as inadequate supervision; health neglect; educational neglect of children; harmful impact on the children caused by domestic violence; inadequate socialization; practicing cultural customs that are opposite to the interests of the children.

Physical neglect of children is the most common form of inadequate parental practice among the Roma population in Serbia. It is mostly a consequence of extreme poverty, which is reflected in unfavorable housing and hygiene living conditions, poor nutrition, inadequate clothing and footwear, neglect of children's personal hygiene. This form of neglect of children in the conditions of very high total social deprivation of families actually also means neglect of children by society. According to UNICEF Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey of the Position of Women and Children in Serbia (MICS 5), the estimated infant mortality rate in Roma settlements is 13 per 1,000 live births, and the probability of a child dying before the fifth birthday is 14 per 1,000 live births, which is twice the national average obtained through vital statistics data. 15% of live births from Roma settlements were low birth weight, about 10% of children were malnourished (2% in Serbia), and about 19% of children were stunted (4% in Serbia).

The health neglect of children is in fact a continuation of the previous form of neglect, to the extent that the normal living conditions of the child enable his optimal health condition. In addition, there are problems that are particularly related to uneducated Roma population, and are reflected in difficulties in communicating with

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sixteen months of 2013 and 2014 in five Belgrade Roma settlements (four container and one residential settlement). Quantitative analysis included 100 primary school pupils from the observed settlements, and the qualitative analysis involved 56 examinees (children, parents, teachers, educators, pedagogical assistants). The research tested a holistic approach in the education of Roma children, and it also analyzed the model of displacement of unhygienic Roma settlements applied by the City of Belgrade in solving Roma housing problems. See in: Komatina, 2020.

health institutions and poor orientation over time, which leads to delays in receiving vaccines and coming to check-ups if a child has a health problem.

When it comes to **educational neglect of children**, then two things should be kept in mind: one is low educational status of parents, who do not fully understand the importance of education and often have personal negative experiences from school, and the other that society in different ways, especially by introducing inclusive education (Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja, 2009), helps Roma children to prepare for school and enroll on time, and develop supporting mechanisms during schooling. However, Roma children have a lot of problems in the school environment. They start with inadequate hygiene and appearance of children (clothes, shoes, yours), and are complicated by discrimination and segregation by other children. Research has shown that Roma children are often victims of school violence. Parents understand their children's problems, but they are not part of their solution [4]. Parents not only withdraw and do not cooperate with the school, but also allow their children not to go to school, and even to leave it completely, because of the problems they suffer there.

The research findings show that the examinees got married very young and did not know each other enough or almost not at all. In difficult social circumstances for life and responsibility for the children, poor and uneducated parents face with problems which they don't know how to deal with. Often happens that disagreements are resolved through violence. **Domestic violence**, and, above all, violence against women, is a common occurrence in Roma families from socially deprived backgrounds. There is also physical punishment of children, but it does not take drastic forms and is used as an educational tool. However, even when the children themselves are not physically punished, the family situation in which the mother suffers violence and the atmosphere of fear of the father adversely affects children's development.

Inadequate socialization of Roma children is manifested not only in inadequate conditions for life, health and development, but also in socio-cultural deprivation, which greatly affects not only the content of knowledge about life that children receive at preschool age, but also their overall socio-psychological, intellectual and emotional development. Deficient socialization is also consequence of the segregation of Roma settlements, distance from the sources of socio-cultural events, the confinement of families in the narrow circles of the community to which they belong (Kolin, 2008; Raduški and Komatina, 2013) and

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[4] There are exceptions. A survey conducted in the Belgrade neighborhood of Rušanj in 2007 shows how important the support of educational institutions and the non-governmental sector is in performing the parental function, especially when it comes to the educational neglect of children (Komatina, 2007).

very rare communication outside that circle. Inadequate socialization is closely and, as the research showed, a cause-and-effect connection with the **Roma tradition of early marriage**, several years before they reach adulthood.

To understand the socialization of Roma children, it should be having in mind that Roma families, in the segment of child care and upbringing, have retained the traditional division of parental roles, so mothers are a key parent for nursing, nutrition, hygiene and children's education, while fathers must manage to provide means of subsistence. Roma women become, by the standards of modern / Serbian society and world standards adopted by the UN Declaration on Human rights (1948) and UN Convention on Children's Rights (1989), very young and insufficiently psycho-physically mature for the role of mothers. „Insufficient physical and socio-psychological maturity of young mothers, in addition to poor economic and housing conditions, in which they live and raise children, has numerous negative implications for the physical development and health of Roma children, which also weakens their starting positions at school" (Komatina 2020, p. 152).

In the research, the author calls them „mothers-children", insisting on their key role in the education of Roma children.

These mothers are very young women, married as underage girls, aged 13, 14 or 15. If they attended school by then, as a rule, their schooling ends with marriage. Around the age of 20, they already have four or five children. Since children are born one after the other, when the oldest child is old enough to go to school, the mother is still attached to the house and other small children who are still completely dependent on her. So that even if she could, there is no time or way to dedicate himself to a child which began its schooling.

There is no one to help her child adapt to the school, nor to overcoming the initial school steps. Since she herself is illiterate, she is not able to support her child either at the very beginning or later, when the school material becomes more complicated and the child becomes more and more confused.

She is a good-natured in communication, kind, cheerful and smiling young woman. Very careful and gentle towards children. Apart from that primordial love and care, she doesn't have to give them much. She understands, to some extent, that it is in her child's interest to finish school, which it is good for him, but she is powerless to help him in that.

If she is married to a man of her age, he is even more immature than her in this period of his life, and it is not easy for him to provide for his family materially and to cope with all the difficulties of life. If she is married to a much older man, she is often a victim of domestic violence, because her husband treats her like a child who needs to be brought up or re-educated. In the trap of such a hard life, this woman will need many more years to mature somewhat emotionally and socially and start to participate more actively in her own life. For her children and their education, however, it will be too late then.

Since she herself did not have time to grow up, in the critical period of her child's development – at the beginning of the puberty, she will not be able to cope with his

rebellion and mischief, especially when it comes to school success and class attendance. Then her children will leave school, and in a few years, they will get married, continuing the chain of poverty, deprivation, lack of education and incompatibility with the wider social environment. (Komatina, 2020, p. 151-152)

In the above analysis, we see the overlap between the secondary socialization of mothers and the primary socialization of children who coexist in such family constellations in a specific, but to some extent typical way.

The helplessness and incompetence of parents during puberty is a special story. Not all Roma want to marry their children prematurely, nor do they want their children to leave primary school before graduation, but in that period they do not know how to cope with their children's behavior (Komatina, 2020, p. 124-129).

It is obvious that parental alienation of Roma people from unhygienic settlements remains invisible for the majority of population. Social institutions dedicated to family and children welfare should be more aware of that problem. The parents themselves obviously cannot cope with these problems.

Conclusion

The dynamic changes of modern society have resulted in structural and functional transformations of the family, so the characteristic of modern society is that the process of socialization of children takes place in an increasing number of family varieties. Modern parenting is facing great challenges to perform its role in the process of socio-cultural reproduction in a quality and socially desirable way. Parents are facing higher and more complicated standards that they need to meet by performing this demanding social role, which is a source of numerous frustrations even in a satisfactory socio-cultural conditions in which children grow up.

However, one should not ignore the fact that desirable parenting standards are not and cannot be universally accepted in all social strata. On the example of a part of the Roma population in Serbia, we have shown that in socio-culturally deprived areas, in which a part of this national minority (which is not negligible) lives, a special form of parental alienation dominates. It is reflected in the physical, health and educational neglect of children, deficient and deprived socialization which that takes place in an atmosphere of domestic violence that fathers use against mothers, but also physical punishment of children as disciplinary measures, and parental inability to cope with children's developmental problems, especially at puberty. So the traditional patterns of premature marriages are repeated, which only pass this condition on to the next generations. Since this is endangering basic human and children's rights, the inadequate functioning of social institutions and the whole legal system cannot be justified by anything.

The parental roles of fathers and mothers from socially deprived backgrounds, where many Roma in Serbia live, deviate in many segments from what is implies in society as the standard of parenting. The alienation of their parental role is directly influenced by the unfavorable circumstances of the socially deprived environment in which the parents themselves grew up and whose family patterns they reproduce in their own family. In conditions of extreme poverty and constant struggle for family survival, numerous frustrations often culminate in violence and deviant behavior which, in combination with other socio-cultural deficits and deprivations, leads to a specific form of parental alienation. It is difficult to recognize in the local community itself, because it is part of the usual and generally accepted behavior, just like early marriage, which puts immature and unprepared young people in the parental position, so it is not unusual that they cannot cope with that role in a society that sets very high standards. This results not only in parental frustrations, who are aware of their impotence, but also has numerous and far-reaching negative consequences for the offspring.

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