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**Historical Continuity
of *Private* and *Public*:
Household and
Motherhood from
the Perspective of
Female Journalists
in Vojvodina**

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Historical Continuity of *Private* and *Public*: Household and Motherhood from the Perspective of Female Journalists in Vojvodina

The paper addresses the patriarchal model of understanding family relationships as an exclusively private sphere with specified and unchanging roles for men and women. In socialist Yugoslavia, despite support for women's emancipation in principle, the model of the patriarchal family and invisible work at home was not called into question and was not a focus of official policy. With the fall of socialism and the growth of nationalist ideology in the 1990s, there was a re-traditionalization and a return of women to the private sphere, and emphasis was placed on their contribution to the survival of the family during a socio-economic crisis. Based on personal and professional memories of female reporters in Vojvodina of different ages, this paper will examine the relationship between *private* and *public*: family roles, maternity, motherhood, and professional careers. The conclusions point to identifying gender identity with traditional roles, which, due to an overlap with a journalist's obligations, contributes to either suppressing female identity as it relates to professional identity or turning women into superheroines who are equally successful at being mothers, wives, homemakers, and female reporters. These issues could continue to further limit a more effective merging of gender and professional identity and hamper the development of a gender-sensitive culture in journalism. Thus, it does not contribute to the improvement of women's social positions.

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KEYWORDS:

socialism, Vojvodina, female journalists, motherhood, household, gender roles, profession

Gender Roles: Continuity of the Privacy Sphere

In the former Yugoslavia, as Stolić observes, there was no widespread interest in gender issues and history.¹ The reasons for this lie in specific areas of the national historiographical tradition, theoretical re-examination of core profession postulates, and the special position the political emancipation of women had within socialism. According to Stolić:

In Yugoslavia during the 1970s and 1980s, the issues of a feminist past and feminist critique were dealt with by the sociologists, philosophers, and ethnologists Žarana Papić, Lydia Sklevicky, and Dunja Rihtman Auguštin... In Serbia, women's history and the history of gender came in through the back door in the 1990s through projects by the Center for Women's Studies in Belgrade and the Institute for Recent History of Serbia...and even today remain outside the scope of academic history programs.²

Empirical research conducted in the second half of the 1980s by sociologist Marina Blagojević Hughson on professionally successful women in Yugoslavia, starts from the fact that during this time, according to her, even research in Yugoslav sociology on women's position in society faced a series of serious theoretical limitations. These limitations included few papers dealing with these issues and a lower value placed on academic insights of this kind. Blagojević Hughson reasons that sociologists reduced the notion of social inequality to the "narrowly understood production sphere, while production not intended for the market was completely ignored, as was unpaid household work."³ She states that, "Professionally successful women in the former Yugoslavia managed to overcome social limitations... since they largely belonged to a marginal group...[However] their entire existence was marked by explicit efforts to overcome the resistance present in their social environment, ranging from education to profession, and from creativity to family."⁴ Furthermore, "It is precisely the family role of women, whose purpose is biological reproduction and unpaid household work, that is the basis of women's marginalization as a group, and due to this, there are corresponding mechanisms of systemic inhibition."⁵

As sociologist Žarana Papić reasoned in a paper published in the 1980s, one of the causes of maintaining the traditional notion of the gender positions and roles is a concept of normality, which is still being defined, as a criterium for potential, desirable, and acceptable features of male and female

¹ Ana Stolić, "Ženska i rodna istorija i feministička teorija: pretpostavke za bavljenje istorijom feminizma u Srbiji (Jugoslaviji) do II svetskog rata" [Female and Gender History and Feminist Theory: Assumptions for Dealing with the History of Feminism in Serbia (Yugoslavia) until WWII], in *Feministička teorija je za sve* [Feminist Theory is for All], eds. Adriana Zaharijević and Katarina Lončarević (Belgrade: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Fakultet političkih nauka, 2018), 51.

² Stolić, "Ženska i rodna istorija," 51.

³ Marina Blagojević Hjuson [Hughson], *Sutra je bilo juče: prilog društvenoj istoriji žena u drugoj polovini 20. veka u Jugoslaviji* [Tomorrow was Yesterday: Contribution to Social History of Women in Yugoslavia in the Second Part of the 20th Century] (Novi Sad: Zavod za ravnopravnost polova, 2015), 26.

⁴ Blagojević Hjuson, *Sutra je bilo juče*, 220.

⁵ Blagojević Hjuson, *Sutra je bilo juče*, 151.

gender and their social and individual relationships.⁶ According to Einhorn, in socialist countries, a nuclear family is called a “socialist family,” and it is still considered a core unit of society.⁷ Therefore, there is no re-examination of gender labor division within the family.

Women’s roles can be observed through two, clearly divided spheres. The first is the private, which is seen as naturally normed for a woman according to the patriarchal viewpoint (the role of a wife, mother, and homemaker). The second is the public (professional achievement, political and social activism), which is “suitable” for men but in which women can also take part, which they did in modest numbers at first, and then in somewhat larger numbers after the second half of the twentieth century. Journalism is one of the professions in which men made up the absolute majority until the beginning of the twenty-first century when feminization occurred, which will be discussed later.

Thus, in socialist Yugoslavia, regardless of support for women’s emancipation in principle, the “model of the repressive patriarchal family and invisible work at home” was neither called into question nor was it a focus of official policy.⁸ As an explanation for why the essential position of women didn’t change, Kobolt states that women’s rights in socialism were limited to social rights, which didn’t guarantee them any political power. However, she also highlights the difference in terms of the modern age of neoliberal capitalism, because in “a society of gender-monitoring, we paid a price for a guaranteed percentage of women in parliament by reducing their social rights.”⁹

With the fall of socialism, the growth of nationalism, the outbreak of wars, and the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, a process of re-traditionalization occurred, which involved the pronounced return of women to the home (the private sphere), and the importance of women’s contribution to the survival of the family during a social and economic crisis was further emphasized in political discourse. As Papić believes, women’s non-presence in the public sphere is a sign of strong patriarchal Serbian culture and politics: “In every nationalism, especially in this aggressive/ethnofascist type, men are the ones who build the ‘soul’ and the ‘engine’ of the vision/interpretation of the exclusive, war-oriented ‘essence’ of the nation, while women are systemically pushed into the sphere of invisibility until they become widely circulated victims of a hostile nation.”¹⁰ On the other hand, it was women, including numerous female journalists, who became

⁶ Žarana Papić, “Socijalizam i tradicionalno stanovište o odnosu polova” [Socialism and Traditional Viewpoint on Gender Relation], *Marksistička misao* [Marxist Thought] 4 (1981): 31.

⁷ Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to Market* (London: Verso, 1993), 39.

⁸ Ana Vilenica, ed., *Postajanje majkom u vreme neoliberalnog kapitalizma* [Becoming a Mother during Neoliberal Capitalism] (Belgrade: Uzbuna; Novi Sad: Daniel Print, 2013), 17.

⁹ Katja Kobolt, “Nezadovoljna bela žena od dvostrukog do trostrukog opterećenja ili zatočenica dijalektike vica” [Discontent White Woman from Double to Triple Burden or the Prisoner of a Joke Dialectic], in *Postajanje majkom u vreme neoliberalnog kapitalizma* [Becoming a Mother during Neoliberal Capitalism], ed. Ana Vilenica (Belgrade: Uzbuna; Novi Sad: Daniel Print 2013), 38.

¹⁰ Žarana Papić, “Europa nakon 1989: etnički ratovi, fašizacija života i politika tijela u Srbiji” [Europe after 1989: Ethnical Wars, Fascization of Life and Body Politics in Serbia], *Treća* [Third] 3, no. 1-2 (2001): 34-35.

drivers of the anti-war movement and the fight against the authoritarian regime. However, an analysis of interviews with female journalists indicates that, despite their highly pronounced professional identity and activism and advocating for the respect of human rights, the majority of them don't see gender inequality as a personal issue.¹¹ Furthermore, they consider the fight for their own freedom as women insufficiently justified in social terms.

Kobolt explains that, when placing women in the private sphere, their interests are reduced to personal decisions and are interpreted as private and thus specific. They are thus denied the possibility of politicization because what is political has always been that which is articulated as general: "Although the process of the breakup of a social country actually steps into people's lives and affects the biographies of a wide group of subjects, the dominant discourses of neoliberalization deny those subjects the right to the political articulation of their problems and interests."¹²

According to Papić, "the women issue" was not resolved in Yugoslavia because the socialist system was not devoid of a traditional/patriarchal orientation towards women: "In mass media, civic stereotypes on women's positions and roles are usually reproduced casually—they nurture us with the ideal of the content, capable, hardworking homemaker and wife and her world that doesn't go beyond the scope of family existence."¹³ Similar conclusions are drawn from an analysis of media discourse in daily newspapers in Vojvodina (*Slobodna Vojvodina / Dnevnik*). In Yugoslavia during the first few years after World War II, the fight for women's rights was politically and ideologically supported, and women had an active role in creating the socio-economic sphere. Analysis shows that, unlike then, by the mid-1950s desirable roles for women had become wife, mother, homemaker, caretaker, and kindergarten teacher instead of female worker, editor, collective member, or politically active woman and female citizen.¹⁴

The reduction of women's social and political engagement is also connected to the formal cancellation of the Women's Antifascist Front (WAF) in 1953 and the establishment of the Union of Women's Societies. As Stojaković explains, the dismantling of a well-organized system such as the WAF took place between 1950 and 1953 by shutting down numerous activities, creating unclear directives, and reducing it to a humanitarian organization: "The hardest blows to the organization were the decision to cancel professional work and the decision to create new organizations of the 'mother and child' type. Paradoxically, in that period of shutting down the organization, very important questions were raised about double burdening

¹¹ Smiljana Milinkov, *Novinarke u Vojvodini: Obrazovanje, profesionalni status i rodni identitet* [Female Journalists in Vojvodina: Education, Professional Status and Gender Identity] (Novi Sad: Zavod za ravnopravnost polova, 2016), 200-01.

¹² Kobolt, "Nezadovoljna bela žena od dvostrukog do trostrukog opterećenja ili zatočenica dijalektike vica," 38. *It was a mistake!*

¹³ Papić, "Socijalizam i tradicionalno stanovište o odnosu polova," 29-32..

¹⁴ Smiljana Milinkov, "Medijska prezentacija žena pedesetih godina prošlog veka u Jugoslaviji: retradicionalizacija društva vs. emancipacija na primeru Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine" [Media presentation of women in Yugoslavia during the fifties: The revival of tradition vs. the emancipation of women on the example of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina], *Narodna umjetnost* [Popular Art] 51, no. 2. (2014): 187.

women, which was also followed by research regarding the issue.¹⁵ A few years later, in 1961, the Union of Women's Societies shut down as well.

Female journalists are the focus of this paper specifically because of the media's important role in creating dominant social values, relationships, and attitudes. They are creators of media content and are also important actors and witnesses of the process of feminization in journalism. This process began in socialist Yugoslavia the 1970s and 1980s, when the presence of women became more noticeable in a profession that, ever since its inception, had been traditionally seen as male. More precisely, women entered the journalism profession as *the Second*. However, even now in the twenty-first century, regardless of the increasing number of female journalists, men still hold professional and political power in the media.

This paper examines the patriarchal model of understanding family relationships as an exclusively private sphere with clearly defined and more or less unchanging gender roles for men and women. Based on personal and professional memories of female reporters in Vojvodina of different ages, this study attempts to examine the relationship between *private* and *public*, including family roles, maternity, and motherhood versus a professional career.

The conclusions based on interviews with female reporters in Vojvodina cannot be generalized due to a limited sample size and limited geography. However, they can serve as a partial illustration of the previous analyses conducted in the 1980s by Marina Blagojević Hughson, in which the position of women in the profession in Yugoslavia was predominant.¹⁶ It also partially illustrates another analysis, *Juggling the Patriarchate and the Precariat*, published in 2018, which looked at balancing family and professional roles for female academics at the beginning of their careers.¹⁷

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Methodological Frame and Research Corpus

Women's oral histories are a form of documentation through which different social, political, and cultural processes in a specific geographical area can be witnessed. In this case, the geographical area is the multinational, multiconfessional, and multilingual Vojvodina in the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁸

In historiography, events recorded through personal stories (personal history) of common people are not considered scientifically sound and are seen as less relevant testimonies about events, individuals, and occurrences from the past. According to Vučetić, memories of contemporaries can be misleading: "In people's testimonies about the past, the quality of facts is mostly determined by the quality of their subjective experience rather than

¹⁵ Gordana Stojaković, *Rodna perspektiva u novinama Antifašističkog fronta žena (1945-1953)* [The Gender Perspective in the Newspaper of the Women's Antifascist Front (1945-1953)] (Novi Sad: Zavod za ravnopravnost polova, 2012), 46.

¹⁶ Blagojević Hjuson, *Sutra je bilo juče*.

¹⁷ Jelena Čeriman, Irena Fiket and Krisztina Rácz, eds., *Žongliranje između patrijarhata i prekarizata: usklađivanje porodičnih i profesionalnih obaveza akademskih radnica* [Juggling between the Patriarchate and the Precariat: Balancing Family and Professional Obligations of Female Academic Workers] (Belgrade: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Centar za etiku, pravo i primenjenu filozofiju, 2018).

¹⁸ Milinkov, *Novinarke u Vojvodini*, 80.

their objective value.¹⁹ On the other hand, Hoopes thinks that oral history can also fulfill its mission as an important resource of humanistic research because the key critical question is not whether the examinee told the truth but what can be gleaned from the examinee's accounts of their lived experience and their perception of it.²⁰

According to Savić, a woman's life story is her own construct that she forms on the basis of her memory during narration by recounting the events starting from childhood up until her adulthood and selecting the events she believes are important at a given moment during the dialogue.²¹ Savić believes it is important to emphasize the data on the relationship between the emotional and the historical for an individual, since this method speaks not only of events but also of people's emotions.²² It comes from the belief that feelings are also a part of a society's historic memory, and as this nuance is not a part of the scientific approach in other methods, the method of life stories should be also be understood as a feminist method.

Regarding the study's corpus, the study was conducted according to the method of life stories (*oral history*), and included 16 female journalists of different ages who worked or work in various media in Vojvodina from the second half of the twentieth century up until the beginning of the 2010s.²³

The interviews included female reporters who fulfilled at least two of the following criteria: female journalists working within the profession for more than twenty years; female journalists who have made significant professional contributions and improved journalism's reputation according to a consensus of the social and journalist communities; recipients of social and professional acknowledgments; female journalists belonging to the majority nation or various ethnic communities in Vojvodina.

The interview recorded 21 hours and 22 minutes of audio material, and the study was based on an analysis of 311 pages of authorized text.

Since this study involved female journalists born between 1944 and 1985, their memories can contribute to illustrating a historical period spanning half a century in different countries and different ideologic frameworks. There is a record of stories by women who have different

¹⁹ Radina Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam. Amerikanizacija jugoslovenske popularne kulture šezdesetih godina XX veka* [Coca-Cola Socialism. The Americanization of Yugoslav Popular Culture in the 1960s] (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2012), 21-22.

²⁰ James Hoopes, *Oral History: An Introduction for Students* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 123.

²¹ Svenka Savić, *Profesorke Univerziteta u Novom Sadu: životne priče* [Female Professors of the University of Novi Sad: Life Stories] (Novi Sad: Ženske studije i istraživanja, Futura publikacije, 2015), 504.

²² Svenka Savić, *Vojvodanke (1917-1931): životne priče* [Women in Vojvodina (1917-1931): Life Stories] (Novi Sad: Ženske studije i istraživanja, Futura publikacije, 2015), 15.

²³ Research corpus was collected within the creation of a doctoral dissertation *Formal and informal education and professional status of female journalists in Vojvodina – gender perspective*, defended on June 14, 2016, at the University of Novi Sad. A life story is made up of a person's memories that they chose to convey to others. Those are segments of life and events that the person remembers from their earliest days and wants others to find out. Life stories are recorded through a half-structured interview, meaning there is a conversation frame (childhood memories, memories of parents, education, youth...) but also that each interview is specific because the direction of the conversation depends on the readiness of the examinee to address a certain topic.

memories of socialist Yugoslavia. For the youngest ones, it is part of their childhood and a period of growing up and maturing, while for the middle generation it is a period when they began developing professionally and were also starting a family. For the oldest female journalists born during or after World War II, socialist Yugoslavia is a significant part of their life memories.

Although these female journalists recollect how the primary family used to function and speak of their parents' relationship in their memories, this paper analyzes the segments connected to their own families because it was important to identify the way these women saw the family – profession relationship according to their own example. Only the most illustrative quotations will be given so as not to burden the text further.

Women in Journalism

According to Gozzini, the history of journalism is the history of men and women who created a new profession, made it independent from other professions, and helped it grow in social complexity and power.²⁴ The first female journalists appeared in various roles in European culture starting in the early nineteenth century. However, it wasn't until the 1970s that the number of female journalists became noticeably larger. Furthermore, various studies from the 1990s show that female journalists made up between 20 and 49 percent of the profession.²⁵ According to Melin, regardless of the change in gender structure, journalism has remained a men's world because men continue to have professional power.²⁶ As for ratios in Serbia, it is harder to attain precise data because there is no comprehensive database. Research conducted in 2010–2011 showed that there were almost two times as many men among the media owners and managers who were interviewed, but there were more women in journalist positions.²⁷

A similar observation was made by female journalists who participated in a study conducted in 2008 by the women's section of the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (IJAS). "Women notice certain forms of discrimination in the editorial office, such as a higher number of men in managerial positions, the instrumentalization of women in editorial positions, and the choice of media sectors. However, in most cases, women attributed it to a traditional society, and didn't express any particular desire to change anything."²⁸

Although it is stated in the literature that women leave journalism in their early thirties when they decide to start a family,²⁹ some female

²⁴ Đovani Gocini [Giovanni Gozzini], *Istorija novinarstva* [History of Journalism] (Belgrade: Clio, 2001), 9, 221.

²⁵ Milinkov, *Novinarke u Vojvodini*, 36.

²⁶ Margareta Melin, *Gendered Journalism Culture* (Goteborg: JKG, 2008), 34.

²⁷ Marijana Matović, "Rodna dimenzija novinarske profesije u Srbiji" [Gender Dimension of the Journalist Profession in Serbia], *Genero* 17 (2013): 97-118.

²⁸ Tamara Skrozza, "Žena u redakciji: žena u medijima" [A woman in the Editorial Office: A woman in the Media], in *Priručnik za medije* [Manual for the Media], eds. Lidija Vasiljević and Violeta Anđelković (Belgrade: Ženski INDOK centar, 2009), 24-25.

²⁹ Debora Čejmbers [Deborah Chambers], "Globalizacija medijskih programa" [Globalization of Media Programs], in *Istraživačko novinarstvo* [Investigative Journalism], ed. Hjujo de Berg [Hugo de Burgh] (Belgrade: Clio 2007), 167-68.

journalists' life stories show it is possible to balance family life and obligations with this dynamic and stressful profession. Thus, out of 16 female journalists interviewed in Vojvodina, only three did not enter into marriage or a partnership, which they admitted publicly, while one was widowed prematurely.

Non-standard working hours and unforeseen journalistic tasks occurring at any part of day or night significantly affect planning, leisure time, and family commitments. This was stated by a retired female journalist who was a correspondent for Radio Free Europe and the daily *Danas*. Her story was confirmed by a former correspondent for the newspapers *Borba* and *Naša borba* and Radio Free Europe, and by a female journalist from the Ruthenian editorial staff at Radio–Television of Vojvodina.

Let's say you've planned your free time, but when something unexpected happens, you have to postpone everything and go on fieldwork even when you don't feel like it, when you want to rest, or when you have something else important to do. Many events don't care about personal priorities. (V.L., 1954)

I don't know, my children probably experienced the consequences, too, and who knows how they saw me being a journalist at certain times or when I had to rush off to a political rally. (Ž. S., 1953)

I think my family is a bit angry at me because I don't work normal hours, and I don't have time for them. Well, sometimes I have days off, so we spend time together, but sometimes it's a couple of days in a row of shooting, editing, fieldwork—it gets hard. (L. O., 1973)

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Out of 151 female journalists who participated in a study conducted by IJAS in 2008, only five of them stated that they had never sacrificed their personal lives for work, and the most common cause of these sacrifices they mentioned was undefined working hours. Skrozza states that female journalists complained the most about difficulties with organizing childcare and housework.³⁰ They also complained that they'd had to give up additional jobs and the largest part of their monthly income due to pregnancy.

Regarding experiences with balancing professional and private obligations, there are similarities among female journalists of various ages. However, there is a difference regarding the secured social status and healthcare for employed women during socialism and the generally unstable, and thus uncovered, employment insurance during maternity leave in the current period of neoliberal capitalism.

A story that illustrates this is from a female journalist who started her career in the early 1970s in the youth editorial office at Radio Novi Sad, and then became a mother in 1976.

I was 27 and was one of the older first-time mothers. Maternity leave lasted for 6 months back then, so my son was in the nursery after that. I didn't use much of my sick leave, but it was a guaranteed right [for those working] in state media. Later, in the private media, we used to substitute for each other so we wouldn't use sick leave, because no owner was thrilled with "their staff" taking sick leave. (Z. R., 1949)

³⁰ Skrozza, "Žena u redakciji: žena u medijima."

A common feature among the female journalists from Vojvodina and those the IJAS research was that, regardless of these issues, the question of gender equality was seen not as a personal problem, but as a general social problem that was reported on but was not actually being resolved for individuals. According to Skrozza, in time, after numerous years spent in an unequal environment, and especially if they have achieved professional success, these women try to “forget” the obstacles they used to come across.³¹ They are also some of the loudest advocates of the belief that there is nothing to talk about concerning gender inequality because they believe it would only add to an image of themselves as victims.

On the other hand, the testimonies of female journalists show a clear professional identity, and that journalism and the journalistic way of life, regardless of stressful and risky situations, is their life choice. Therefore, they give more space to that subject in their stories.

I was always responsible and really dedicated to my job. And I was guided by that; I am a journalist 24 hours a day. I accepted being woken up at 2, 3, 6 in the morning because that was my job, my choice. (B.D., 1970)

I had a million stressful, awful situations. I was used to functioning like that. It was an additional motivation, it made me more persistent. (B.D.S., 1973)

I was also sent to the radio's female editor-in-chief's office to be told off because I played the song “O how lovely it is to be stupid” after the news as a clear and unambiguous comment. There wasn't a person at that radio station who didn't tell me, “You're going to lose your job. You'd better be quiet and lay low, keep your job.” I replied that I was leaving because I couldn't remain silent. And another thing, I couldn't work for the sake of something which I absolutely didn't believe in. (J.Z., 1952)

So, I didn't leave because of the war, and no one forced me to go [work there]. I went on my own because I think it's an absolute challenge to work for an editorial office where they were all professionals from all over Yugoslavia. All of them twenty years older than me. I was soaking up knowledge and putting in a great deal of effort. (M.F., 1968)

This study shows that professional identity is specific for and common to all the female journalists who were interviewed, and most of the interviewees place it above gender identity according to the significance and time they devote to certain topics.

Private is (not) Public: Family and Household

As Simić and Simić state, “In the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), regardless of changes in gender relations after World War II, childcare remained primarily the woman's domain. Although nurseries and pre-schools were organized according to the ideology of work and gender equality, and were meant to enable working mothers to return to their jobs, the capacities of these facilities never kept up with the number of children who could potentially attend them. Similarly, the official pro-natal ideology of modern-day Serbia does not reflect the policy of public childcare, which has remained primarily the woman's domain, and is insufficient for most

³¹ Skrozza, “Žena u redakciji: žena u medijima.”

mothers, making the traditional female network of relatives the main part of their social safety net."³²

Among most of the female journalists interviewed who have children, it is also common to hand over childcare and household chores to their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts—and, in rare cases, to their husbands—because of their prolonged and frequent absence due to the nature of their work and nights on call. A generational difference in responses was not noted, which is similar to the situation in the 1970s and 1980s, and also in the 1990s.

My grandmother, my mom, and my sister used to help me (J. Z., 1952).

I was 27 and one of the older first-time mothers. Maternity leave lasted six months back then, so my son went to the nursery after that. I mainly covered evening events, I traveled, mostly due to the needs of Hronika Sterijinog pozorja show. I was widowed prematurely, and with a son, but I got by. **My parents, relatives, and friends were at my disposal.** (Z. R., 1949).

I knew he was in a good environment, the best one possible. That is, **in my parents' care, and they were dedicated to him.** So my absence wasn't especially painful for him, so it seems; he was still very little. (M. S., 1965).

Journalist mothers emphasize that they managed to organize their lives more easily and avoid additional stress specifically because of help from their mothers and grandmothers, and only in some cases from their husbands and grandfathers.

If I hadn't had **a mother** I could rely on in terms of watching the kids any time of the day or night or over the weekends when I had to do something, I suppose I wouldn't have been able to continue like that. (Ž.S., 1953)

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This story is confirmed by research from the 1980s, which showed that children of female artists and scientists were most frequently (36%) looked after by the "grandma-service" when they were at pre-school age. As clarified by Blagojević Hughson, the results can be explained by a low level of socialization of family functions and by women professionals' limited financial resources, which made their work in science or art an extreme individual effort.³³

According to Simić and Simić, "In Yugoslavia, paternity leave wasn't provided for by law, and the father's role was commonly connected to the idea of a 'father figure' who was supposed to contribute to childrearing but not participate in children's upbringing and the obligations associated with it."³⁴ This is a patriarchal pattern for family roles because when the woman cannot be present due to professional obligations, her "duties" are usually taken over by other women from the extended family (grandma makes lunch and tidies up the home). Men doing those chores are rarely mentioned, and

³² Marina Simić and Ivan Simić, "Država i materinstvo: (dis) kontinuiteti u politikama javne brige o deci u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji i savremenoj Srbiji" [State and Motherhood: (Dis) continuity in Public Childcare Policy between Socialist Yugoslavia and Contemporary Serbia], in *Feministička teorija je za sve* [Feminist Theory is for All], eds. Adriana Zaharijević and Katarina Lončarević (Belgrade: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju i Fakultet političkih nauka, 2018), 221.

³³ Blagojević Hjuston, *Sutra je bilo juče*, 166.

³⁴ Simić and Simić, "Država i materinstvo," 224.

they are mostly mentioned in connection to entertainment (grandpa telling stories, husband watching the kids).

Regardless of the clear sense of change in the private sphere in Yugoslavia in the second half of the twentieth century, family and household chores continued to be the woman's responsibility, and, according to Calic, only one in seven men participated in those chores. "It wasn't just men who were having a hard time accepting a female colleague as their equal in the area of work; the women were also hesitant to give up a centuries-long practice of the woman being solely responsible for the family."³⁵

This is confirmed through testimony by I.H.K., who began her career in the 1960s as the youngest and only female journalist among the editorial staff, and who, after some time, became the editor-in-chief of the Ruthenian weekly newspaper *Ruske slovo*. However, regardless of her professional success and the weight and the responsibility of her work, other women often competed over chores for which it was implied any "good housewife" could do, which, as she said, used to take up a significant amount of her time.

So, can I cook it that way? Can I embroider that well? Can I sew? I could do all of those things. Maybe not so well, but neither of them could do it all. I thought, if an illiterate woman can do it, why can't I? Still, it's a waste of your strength if you're doing it just because you "should." (I. H. K., 1944)

The interviewee didn't have her husband's support in her professional obligations either. So, as she explains, she did her best so that her husband and children wouldn't feel like she had a job and was absent.

To be honest, he told me, "You're not going to make a career at my expense." So, since that was the case, I wouldn't simply make scrambled eggs for lunch; I would prepare a full lunch every day. I even sewed and knitted for my kids. (I. H. K., 1944)

Various studies conducted throughout the world in the 1980s show that, contrary to the expected equalization of men's participation in household chores due to women's employment, there was very little change in the distribution of these chores between the spouses.³⁶ Apart from the time spent by women and men, a significant aspect of how household chores are distributed is the connection between gender and type of chore. Specifically, women mostly do routine, regular, repeated, and service chores (preparing meals, cleaning, washing, ironing), while men do occasional chores (car maintenance and repair, gardening).

According to Calic, in socialist Yugoslavia, working mothers were twice as burdened by long working hours, sleep deprivation, constant exhaustion, and a complete absence of free time.³⁷ Women read less, were poorly informed, and were seldom engaged in political and self-governing bodies.

The situation during the transitional period and in the current neoliberal capitalist period can be described by middle-aged and younger

³⁵ Mari-Žanin Čalić [Marie-Janine Calic], *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. veku* [History of Yugoslavia in the 20th Century] (Belgrade: Clio 2013), 270-71.

³⁶ Blagojević Hjuson, *Sutra je bilo juče*, 167.

³⁷ Čalić, *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. veku*, 270.

female journalists. They say that balancing professional, family, and household obligations doesn't leave enough free time for themselves, which is the case for most working women. It is noticeable that older female journalists didn't raise the issue of their free time in their recollections. This could be interpreted as being due to the fact that, at the peak of their careers when their children were little, what was most important was managing private and professional obligations, and so they didn't even think about their own needs outside the family and the professional sphere.

The only thing is that, while balancing all of that, you don't really have time for yourself. I started with yoga classes, aerobics, language courses a hundred times, but there was always something that would come up. (B. D. S., 1970)

I like reading books and meeting my friends, **but I don't have much time.** But mostly, when I'm not spending time with my daughters and visiting my mom, I like to read a good book. (J. Č. G., 1981)

Just as female journalists who testified that they didn't have free time for themselves while balancing family and professional obligations, similar results are present in a study conducted among female academic workers at the beginning of their careers. "The reality described by the interviewees involves a lack of free time, (successful) 'juggling' of household and professional obligations, and the daily struggle for equality in the household to find a balance between professional and family spheres."³⁸

According to Fiket, numerous studies throughout the world show that even women in modern society still carry out the majority of household chores, and that even having more flexible working hours to provide possibilities for professional fulfillment does not relieve women of their traditional role in the household.³⁹ Moreover, it adds yet another professional role, which can lead to a double burden that isn't freeing for women.

This analysis of female journalists' life memories shows that they avoid speaking about their emotional relationships or their relationships with their life partners and memories of their moments together. They mention their partners only in the context of parenthood, household chores, and dealing with housing and other existential issues. However, they do not speak of emotions or potential relationship conflicts that may have been caused by traditional views of men and women's duties. The conclusion may be that the female journalists who participated in this study saw their marriage and partner relationships as fully part of the private sphere, which they assumed was not of public interest when speaking about their lives.⁴⁰

On the other hand, the study on family and professional obligations of female academic workers mentioned previously shows that the distribution

³⁸ Irena Fiket, "(I dalje) dupli teret na leđima (akademskih) radnica?" [(Still) a Double Burden on the Backs of Female (Academic) Workers?], in *Žongliranje između patrijarhata i prekarijata: usklađivanje porodičnih i profesionalnih obaveza akademskih radnica* [Juggling between the Patriarchate and the Precariat: Balancing Family and Professional Obligations of Female Academic Workers], eds. Jelena Čeriman, Irena Fiket and Krisztina Rácz (Belgrade: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Centar za etiku, pravo i primenjenu filozofiju, 2018), 42.

³⁹ Fiket, "(I dalje) dupli teret na leđima (akademskih) radnica?," 25.

⁴⁰ Milinkov, *Novinarke u Vojvodini*, 166.

of household chores is a real source of conflict between partners, and they both use available resources such as economic status and educational and time resources when discussing the amount of housework, while also following fixed and inherited gender roles. "Since the predominant model in Serbia is the model of a family in which 'Dad is the Dad, but Mom is the one in charge,' housework is almost explicitly divided into women's chores and men's chores (and men's chores are usually done less frequently than woman's), and men are believed to be obligated to put work ahead of family (which is not the case for women), it is not surprising that women are expected to be present both at work and at home."⁴¹

Maternity and Motherhood

As Blagojević Hughson explains, educated and professionally oriented women approach motherhood with a greater sense of responsibility and the high demands related to quality of parenting, rather than according to the default created by the traditional pattern of female gender roles.⁴² Because they have confirmation from outside the family, these women don't see motherhood as compensation for their subordination, lack of success, or isolation, but as an important determinant which provides quality, not social status.

The experience of female journalists who have children can contribute to the "interpretation of the change in women's roles within historical and cultural perspectives," as Višić states and which she believes is reflected in understanding the difference between maternity and motherhood. According to her, maternity refers to "the legal bond between the mother and her child, while motherhood is a set of practices through which a child is brought up (care, feeding, upbringing, and education)."⁴³ Thus, maternity always involves the woman herself, while the role of motherhood doesn't necessarily have to.

The female journalists' experiences start from maternity as a biological bond between the mother and her child.⁴⁴ However, there is freedom of choice in achieving motherhood because a part of the obligations regarding care and feeding is assumed by others (mostly women), while they take care of their children's upbringing, education, and entertainment (conversation, reading, playing, going to the theater).

Aware of this lack of time, some female journalists make efforts to spend quality time with their children, thus managing to avoid opposition from or dominance of motherhood over their professional identity, and

⁴¹ Krisztina Rácz, "Umesto zaključka" [In Lieu of a Conclusion], in *Žongliranje između patrijarhata i prekarijata: usklađivanje porodičnih i profesionalnih obaveza akademskih radnica* [Juggling between the Patriarchate and the Precariat: Balancing Family and Professional Obligations of Female Academic Workers], eds. Jelena Čeriman, Irena Fiket and Krisztina Rácz (Belgrade: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Centar za etiku, pravo i primenjenu filozofiju, 2018), 92-93.

⁴² Blagojević Hjuson, *Sutra je bilo juče*, 164-65.

⁴³ Tanja Višić, "Nacionalne populacione politike i konstrukcija materinstva u post-socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji" [National Populational Politics and Construction of Motherhood in Post-socialist Yugoslavia], in *Postajanje majkom u vreme neoliberalnog kapitalizma* [Becoming a Mother during Neoliberal Capitalism], ed. Ana Vilenica (Belgrade: Uzbuna; Novi Sad: Daniel Print, 2013), 97.

⁴⁴ Milinkov, *Novinarke u Vojvodini*, 167.

vice versa. In this area, there didn't appear to be a generational difference between female journalists whose children grew up in the socialist period and those who are raising their children in the modern age.

In that situation, grandma was in charge of feeding the kids. My mom, my sister, and my husband looked after them if I got stuck at work, and when I would come home, I would go for a walk with the kids, go to the theater on Saturdays, wander around, play, read to them, have fun. (J. Z., 1952)

If I wasn't with my kids during the day as much as I would have been if I'd had, let's say, regular working hours, then I would try to truly be with them when I could, not just near them. (Ž. S., 1953)

When I can, I dedicate myself to my daughters fully. So, that's some kind of ritual that I mentioned I enjoyed when my father used to read to me. (J. Č. G., 1981)

Still, some female journalists mention that they occasionally had "guilty consciousness" because they couldn't fulfill their role of the "good mom" completely in the way the traditional society could expect due to their professional obligations.

I had a **guilty conscience** because of that, but then I would soothe it by telling myself I had to do what I was doing, and that if I didn't, my son Lazar wouldn't have a place to live or a reason to stay in the country. And that I was more valuable to his future life if I did my job than if I was sitting and holding a baby rattle or making baby food. (M.S., 1965)

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This "guilty conscience" is even more understandable when compared to the findings of a study of Serbian citizens' attitudes toward gender equality, which found a strong belief among many that the family and household will "suffer" if the mother is employed. Half of the examinees (53%) think that pre-school children will probably suffer if the mother is employed; that it's optimal for the children's welfare if the man earns money and the woman takes care of the family (50%); and that childcare is more the mother's duty than the father's (45%).⁴⁵

Although grandmothers take over childcare due to the female journalists' professional obligations, this does not reduce the mother's need and desire to be close to her child. This is not usually presented as an important social topic because, when it comes to motherhood, the child's interests and needs are the focus.

Sometimes I missed him more than he missed me. That physical contact with your child, when they're little, you feel the need to maintain that contact on a daily basis. Often, I would leave him while he was sleeping and when I came home in the evening, he would already be in bed again. Then I would crawl in next to him and hold him, and we would exchange energy and love. (M. S., 1965)

⁴⁵ Laslo Čikoš, *Rodna ravnopravnost u Srbiji 2014*. [Gender Equality in Serbia, 2014] (Belgrade: Ministarstvo za rad, zapošljavanje, boračka i socijalna pitanja, 2014), 37.

Existential Issues: Socialism vs. Neoliberalism

A solid income and secure housing are important prerequisites for starting a family. According to testimonies of female journalists, journalists' salaries in socialist Yugoslavia were also sufficient to pay the rent, which is difficult to achieve in the modern age of neoliberalism.

If I compare rent and internship salaries with the possibilities in modern times, in my opinion, back then we were able to live comfortably from that salary, buy books, go to the theater, and everything else, which is getting harder and harder today, especially for the youth. From my point of view as a retired journalist, the position of our young colleagues is very uncertain. (G. Š. T., 1948)

I'm not one of those, but many of my colleagues received apartments while working in radio and TV, which they bought cheaply afterward. There were affordable loans, pre-schools were less crowded. In the 70s and 80s, we got paid regularly. In the 90s, we would get cookies and jam instead of a part of our salaries. (Z. R., 1949)

The female journalists stated that living standards and the quality of life in general was better in socialist Yugoslavia in comparison to the post-transition period.

Back then, when I didn't have time to make lunch because I had to attend an event, we would simply pick up the kids and go out for lunch. Now, there's less of a chance that we'll do that. I don't know about other people, but I think the average person or one who is socially below average, where I am, finds it harder to do so or won't do it at all. (Ž. S., 1953)

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Unlike older colleagues who started families in the 70s, when the state assisted with housing, in the past few decades of existential uncertainty, people now find it much harder to have their own apartment. Younger female journalists state that a journalist's salary in Serbia is not enough for basic living expenses, which makes them think less about having children and starting a family, and more about extra jobs that provide money.⁴⁶

I do my job only because I like it. Ok, it's easy for me to say that because I don't have a husband and kids. When I look at neighboring countries, a Croatian journalist is paid €1,500. In Slovenia, it's €2,000. And me at my radio station, I earn 42,000 RSD⁴⁷ and that's not enough for my living expenses because I also have a mortgage. Plus, there are bills, so how much is left for me to have a life? And that's when you realize the conditions journalists are living in nowadays. (I. S., 1977)

It is a fact, explains Vilenica, that the family in modern society went through certain transformations, and that everybody within neoliberalism who takes care of children is equally exposed.⁴⁸ However, women still carry the largest responsibility for social reproduction and childcare. Under neoliberal conditions of global crisis, mothers were returned to their homes in some cases due to dismissal, while men provided for the household, which

⁴⁶ Milinkov, *Novinarke u Vojvodini*, 169.

⁴⁷ Equivalent to about €360.

⁴⁸ Vilenica, *Postojanje majkom u vreme neoliberalnog kapitalizma*, 11-12.

brought about a new wave of re-traditionalization and follows an ideology of "intensive motherhood" that emphasizes that the role and work of a mother are more important than the paid work.

Conclusion

A comparative analysis of the life memories of female journalists of different ages, research on the position of highly-educated women in Yugoslavia in the 80s, and the 2018 study of the balance between professional and family obligations for female academics all point to the existence of the historical continuity of a division of *private* and *public* gender roles in the socialist period, transitional period, and the modern age of neoliberal capitalism.

Fiket concludes that, since the division of family obligations is not substantially called into question at the level of elaborate institutional mechanisms, by fulfilling multiple roles, women still live in a frustrating state of being double-burdened.⁴⁹ Thus, the old question on the relationship between the public and the private endures, and with it comes an immediate need to reconsider it in the context of consequences resulting from neoliberal politics. According to Blagojević Hughson's conclusion, professionally fulfilled women advocate for changes in family, education, social policies, or even in the whole social system, but they do not see themselves or women in general as initiators of those changes or as the ones responsible for them.⁵⁰ This study shows that that female journalists are also aware of the issue of gender inequality and how much it negatively affects society's development, but they have not reassessed their own position as women.

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These female journalists, as opposed to the professional segment to which they give significance, usually speak little of marriage, children, and their families. Based on this, a conclusion could be drawn that they believe these topics are a part of private life and thus not of public interest. In the interviews, they saw that segment of their lives mostly from the aspect of success in balancing it with professional obligations. Thus, the unequal distribution of family roles is not presented as an important issue.

This study shows that, among the majority of the journalists interviewed, gender identity is associated with the traditional view of women's roles. Due to an overlap with professional obligations, this contributes to either suppressing one's female identity or making an effort to achieve excellence—to be a good journalist and an equally successful mother, wife, and homemaker. Therefore, based on these interviews, gender identity is seen as a static male-female polarity with traditionally given roles, and not as a set of different components that make up female identity (a wife, mother, daughter, sister, lover, partner, friend, journalist, citizen, Romanian, Ruthenian, a woman from Vojvodina). This can limit a more effective merging of gender and professional identity through which the development of a gender-specified journalist culture is restrained. Thus, it also cannot significantly contribute to the improvement of women's social position.

⁴⁹ Fiket, "(I dalje) dupli teret na leđima (akademskih) radnica?," 43.

⁵⁰ Blagojević Hjuson, *Sutra je bilo juče*, 158.

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