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ECHOES OF CHILDHOOD: GROWING UP BETWEEN WORLDS OF QUIET AND SOUND

Abstract: The first steps toward organized state care and education for children with hearing and speech impairments in the former Yugoslav states began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia leading the way in establishing specialized institutions. In contrast, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), North Macedonia, and Montenegro only began opening such facilities after World War II. One of them was the Institute for the Education of Deaf Children in Reljevo, a suburb of Sarajevo, where the parents of Jasminka Proho, a fifty-five-year-old professional sign language interpreter, met during their schooling in the late 1950s. This article explores Jasminka's childhood and growing up during the 1970s and early 1980s in Sarajevo, as a hearing child in a family where both parents had hearing and speech impairments. Her parents, despite their impairments and with support from their close environment, developed creative, non-verbal parenting strategies to raise her. The article highlights how "silence" functioned not as a lack, but as a unique framework for care, communication, and emotional connection within the family. Entering wider social settings exposed Jasminka to both supportive and challenging experiences shaped by her parents' sensory impairments. Balancing the demands of two contrasting worlds—one of silence and one of sound—was a constant challenge for Jasminka, even from an early age. These experiences ultimately motivated her to become a professional sign language interpreter and an advocate for the rights and visibility of this social group. The article is based on data collected through interviews with Jasminka, as well as archival material and relevant scholarly literature related to the care and support for children with hearing and speech impairments in the former Yugoslav states.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jasminka Proho, history of disability, hearing and speech impairments, parenting with impairments

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Introduction

The establishment of the first specialized institutions for care and education of children with sensory impairments in the former Yugoslavia dates back to the late 19th century. This marked the first step in the development of formal institutionalization for this population and, although minimal, contributed to their increased visibility within the broader community and their social integration.[2]

The development of organized care and education for children with hearing and speech impairments, as discussed in the first chapter, progressed more quickly in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia (Medved 1927, 107–110) compared to BiH, North Macedonia, and Montenegro. While awareness about the importance of including these children in society began to grow in the latter three countries im interwar period, the first specialized educational institutions for them were not established until after World War II.

In the second and third chapters, drawing on an interview I conducted last year with Jasminka Proho — a fifty-five-year-old professional sign language interpreter from Sarajevo — I explore episodes from her childhood. Jasminka is a hearing child of parents with profound hearing loss. Her parents were educated in Sarajevo at the Institute for the Deaf in Reljevo (1957–1959) and later at the School for Industrial Students "Branko Lazić" (1959–1962). What stands out from her childhood are the parenting strategies of her parents, who, with the help of neighbors, worked tirelessly to provide a safe and supportive environment for her. Being hard of hearing, her parents often had to find creative ways to communicate, solve problems, and respond to their daughter's needs. Their approach to parenting was shaped by adaptability, showing that disability doesn't have to solely limit one's ability to care for and raise a child—in fact, it can inspire creative and thoughtful parenting strategies. Their everyday efforts highlight how creativity and community support act as adaptive tools, helping them overcome the challenges of raising a hearing child in a world dominated by hearing norms and ableism. These practices reflect how parents with impairments find practical solutions to care for their child and manage daily life, even in the face of social and structural barriers. Parenting, in this framework, becomes both a personal and social act shaped by lived experience, communication needs, and external support (Pituch et al. 2022). The neighbors, who also owned the apartment where Jasminka and her parents lived as tenants, played an active role in the family's life—not merely as passive observers, but as informal allies who helped them manage communication challenges and child-rearing. Their position went beyond that of inactive bystanders, becoming a form of mutual aid that redefined family and community. Their involvement

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blurred the lines between private struggles and shared responsibility, showing how collective support can transform the experience of impairments. Little by little, once she started school, she began to encounter societal norms and prejudices toward people with disabilities—things she had been sheltered from in the safety of her home.

The third chapter examines Jasminka's later childhood years and growing up, when she stepped into the world of adults far too early. Starting school exposed her to a growing number of comments and prejudices from the outside world—directed not only at her parents, but at her as well. Those comments became the spark that would later drive her to advocate for the rights of individuals who are hard of hearing or have profound hearing loss. Today, that advocacy is not just a personal mission but also a professional path—Jasminka works as a sign language interpreter. Alongside her career, she has also built a fulfilling life as a wife and mother. Despite their profound hearing loss, her parents played a crucial role in Jasminka's raising their children. People growing up in similar communities often find that their challenges shape both their personal development and professional paths, sometimes leading them to careers dedicated to helping others in similar situations.

First steps in Formalzation of Education for Children with Hearing and Speech Impairments in the Former Yugoslavia

In Croatia, the first initiative to establish an institution for children with hearing and speech impairments was recorded in 1858 in Zagreb, but the proposal was never realized. It wasn't until 1885 that teacher Adalbert Lampe opened the first school for these children. Two years later, in 1887, the National Foundation for the Education of Deaf and Blind Children was established, and in 1888, at the initiative of Imbro pl. Josipović, the Society for the Establishment and Maintenance of the National Institute for Deaf Children was formed. By the end of the following year, in December 1891, the National Institute for the Education of Deaf Children was finally opened in Zagreb. The Institute was initially located at Villa Socias on Vinogradska Street, and later moved to Ilica 83. One of the most significant directors of the Institute was teacher Josip Medved, who managed it from 1895 to 1926, a total of thirty-one years. During this period, Medved expanded the professional staff by adding ten new teachers, who were the first professionally trained surdopedagogical staff in Zagreb, and thus in Croatia (Juras 1979). The Institute still operates at the same location today and is named "Slava Raškaj" after the famous Croatian painter who was deaf-mute and attended the school for some time.

The first mention of a school for children with hearing and speech impairments in Slovenia dates back to 1886, when the Ljubljana daily *Slovenec* reported that the Sisters of the Notre Dame order, as part of their girls' public school, would open a department for girls with hearing and speech impairments in the village of Šmihel in Carniola. When the school opened, lessons were led by the abbess, Sister Marija Ivana Oblak. Initially, seven girls attended, and over time, the number reportedly grew to thirty. The school closed in 1906, after eighteen years of operation. However, there is conflicting information about the school's history, as most of the archival documentation was destroyed. What is certain is that it existed and was the first institution of its kind in Slovenia. At the same time, in January 1895, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education decided to open a school for both male and female with hearing and speech impairments in Ljubljana (Savić 1973, 11–12).

Radivoj Popović is known as a key figure in the development of special education in Serbia. In 1885, the same year Lampe opened the first school for children with hearing and speech impairments in Zagreb, Popović announced in the Belgrade magazine *Čas* that he was starting work on a similar school in Serbia. However, the school was shut down just twenty days later due to political opposition. Popović was forced to leave the country, but by 1886, upon his return, he opened a Private Institute for Deaf-Mute Children in Sremska Mitrovica. The Institute operated for twelve years before closing due to financial difficulties and unfavorable political conditions. At the same time, Veljko Radmanović, whose contribution to the development of Serbian surdopedagogy was significant, received approval from the Ministry of Education in 1896 to open a Private School for Deaf-Mute Children. This school was also soon shut down for similar reasons. Undeterred, Radmanović pursued his plans, and after World War I, upon his return from Bizerte, where he had founded a Department for Deaf and Blind Soldiers in 1917, he moved the department to Zemun, into the premises of a former cavalry school. In addition to providing rehabilitation for war invalids, the institution also educated deaf and blind children and youth. Among other initiatives, in 1897, at the suggestion of the King Dečanski Society, an Institute for the Education and Care of Deaf Children was founded in Belgrade (Ristić and Kovačević 2019, 395–396).

But the story wasn't the same across all former Yugoslav republics. In BiH — Jasminka's homeland — institutions for children with sensory impairments, including hearing, speech, and visual impairments, didn't open until after World War II. The first official mention of the need for such educational and social institutions dates back to August 7, 1919, when the head of the Department for the Protection of Children and Youth emphasized the urgency of establishing an institute for children with sensory impairments. At the time, the lack of local facilities meant that many children had to be sent to schools in Croatia or Serbia. These institutes were already operating at full capacity and could only admit a limited number of children. On top of that, the physical distance and lack of regular contact between the children and their families deepened the sense of separation and further contributed to their social isolation. Although the idea of opening an institute for children with hearing and speech impairments, first proposed in the summer of 1919, was never realized, it is known that the Department for the Protection of Children and Youth soon organized a census of children with sensory impairments. During the interwar period, several humanitarian efforts were also launched to support these children, with funds raised and partially allocated for their needs (Seferović and Dujmović, 2025, 76). While the establishment of formal institutions for the education of children with sensory impairments in BiH did not materialize during this period, the initiatives and actions taken at the time clearly point to a growing awareness among professionals about the importance of education and social inclusion for them. These early efforts laid the groundwork for postwar initiatives that eventually led to the creation of specialized institutions for the education of children with hearing and speech impairments. In BiH, the first Institute for the Blind Children opened in 1947, while the Institute for the Deaf Children (IDC) was established a year earlier, in 1946, in Sarajevo.[3] The latter was later relocated to Reljevo, a suburb of Sarajevo, where Jasminka's parents attended school.

In North Macedonia, the Institute for Defective Children was established in 1949 in Skopje. However, it is known that as early as 1930, a primary school for children with intellectual disabilities, 'Gjura Jakshiky' and 'Holy Mother of God,' operated in Skopje, enrolling sixty-two students. Another similar school opened in Kumanovo, with eighteen students. Much like the situation in BiH until the late 1940s, Macedonian children with sensory impairments, if their families were financially able and space was available, were often sent to specialized institutions in Croatia and Serbia for their education (Savikj 2006, 19).

In Montenegro, pedagogical development lagged behind compared to other parts of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia. While contemporary European educational trends were generally known to experts, they were rarely applied in practice (Zorić 2017, 28–29). Archival records and relevant literature suggest that during this period, there were no specialized institutions for children with sensory impairments in Montenegro.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked the beginning of the formalization of education and care for children with hearing and speech impairments in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia. However, BiH, North Macedonia, and Montenegro lagged behind in this regard. Despite this, during the interwar period, awareness began to grow about the importance of systematic care for this population. Immediately after the World War II, in socialist Yugoslavia, socio-economic conditions finally allowed for the establishment of specialized institutions.

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[3] "O nama," JU Centar za slušnu i govornu rehabilitaciju Sarajevo, pristupljeno 30. svibnja 2025., https://cersig.edu.ba/cs/about-us/

Growing Up in Silence: The Unspoken Language of Parents with Hearing Impairments

Jasminka Proho, a fifty-year-old sign language interpreter from Sarajevo, grew up in a family where both of her parents were hard of hearing. During our interview, she shared how their experiences shaped her own life. Her parents were educated at the IDC in Reljevo (1957–1959) and later at the Industrial School "Branko Lazić" (1959–1962). Before turning to Jasminka's childhood, it's worth briefly highlighting the history of these two institutions.

Until 1946, when the first IDC in BiH was opened at Skenderija 14 in Sarajevo, children with hearing impairments, as previously mentioned, were mostly sent to institutions in Croatia and Serbia for their education. Before the IDC was established, it was ordered that professional services visit orphanages, identify children with hearing impairments, and transfer them to this institution (Savić 1983, 310). In other words, children were placed in "regular" orphanages, where there were no specialized programs for their education and rehabilitation, nor was there an adequate professional staff. No archival records have yet been found that would allow for a more detailed reconstruction of their daily lives in those conditions, so we can only speculate about their experiences.

The IDC underwent various phases, and one of the changes occurred in the late 1950s, when it was decided to relocate to the Sarajevo suburb of Reljevo. However, it is evident that there were no consultations with all the experts at the time, nor was there unanimous agreement among them. In one of his addresses to the Federation for Social Protection – Sarajevo, the secretary of the Federation for Education, Mitar Papić, warned of potential problems that would arise if the Institute was moved outside the city center. According to him, "the pedagogical-psychological conditions for the development of deaf children require that the school for deaf children be located in a cultural and industrial center," and that "children cannot attend a school outside Sarajevo from their homes, nor are parents able to pay for their upkeep."[4] The issue of social exclusion of individuals with impairments through their relocation to isolated institutions has been a subject of social and political debates, both in the past and today. Spatially isolated institutions, located outside urban centers, raise questions about how society perceives and relates to individuals who deviate from the norms of the majority population. Such segregation not only physically separates people with disabilities from daily life and social interactions but also creates barriers that affect their identity, right to participation, and ability to establish social connections (Solis 2006; Freund 2011). Relocation to specialized institutions outside urban centers implies marginalization, as people with disabilities are often perceived as the "other," separated from the wider community (Claton 1997; Kitchin 1999). This approach is not only physical segregation but also a symbolic exclusion manifested in social relations, norms, and values assigned to this population.

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[4] Državni arhiv BiH u Sarajevu. 3637 – Savjet za školstvo NR Bosne i Hercegovine (1956–1958)

The building where the IDC in Reljevo was located initially served as an orphanage for children of World War I victims, and a similar trend of repurposing such buildings into institutions for children with impairments was present in other countries of the former Yugoslavia. The orphanage on Tuškanac in Zagreb was repurposed in the early 1970s for children with intellectual disabilities and continues to serve this purpose today. The children's home "Stjepan Sekulić – Jucko," as it was originally called, sent a request to the Council for Social Protection of the City Assembly of Zagreb in December 1972 to change the name and activities of the institution. The explanation provided was that, due to the lack of capacity in other specialized social institutions in Zagreb, the Home had been predominantly caring for children with intellectual disabilities for eight years, and its programs and work organization had been adjusted to this category of beneficiaries.[5] Although orphanages adapted their programs and work organization to meet the needs of children with intellectual and other types of impairments, the issue of professional care and service quality remained questionable due to the lack of adequate resources and qualified staff. However, compared to the interwar period, this era brought significant changes in terms of formal care and education for children with impairments.

The IDC in Reljevo operated at that location for five years, from 1958 to 1962. Despite positive progress in teaching methods, such as the introduction of the acoustic method, the training of teachers abroad, and the organization of professional seminars in surdopedagogy, the main intention during this period was to return the institute to Sarajevo (Savić 1983, 314–315).

In contrast, in 1964, in the center of Sarajevo, within the School for Vocational Students "Branko Lazić," departments were formed for children with various types of impairments, including children with intellectual disabilities, hearing and speech impairments, and children with delayed cognitive development. The school was initially located in the old part of the city, near the Drvenija Bridge, and throughout its history, it served as an Officers' Home, a Women's Gymnasium, a Secondary Physical Education School, a Primary School, and an Agricultural-Food School Center. In 1981, it moved to a new building on Azize Šaćirbegović Street 80, in the Hrasno neighborhood. Today, as the "Branko Lazić" Mixed Secondary School, it offers education in agriculture, food processing, veterinary studies, and service activities.[6] It was in Hrasno, where Jasminka lived with her parents as tenants in a private house.

When Jasminka was born in 1970, her relatives' first concern was whether she could hear. Parents with sensory impairments often encounter misunderstandings and the fear of rejection, with others questioning whether their child might inherit similar challenges. However, pressure can also arise

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[5] HR-DAZG-948 Assembly of the City of Zagreb. Address of the Children's Home Stjepan Sekulić - Jucko to the Council for Social Protection of the Zagreb City, 1973.

[6] JU Škola za srednje stručno obrazovanje i radno osposobljavanje Sarajevo. (2014, May 9). Dan škole. Retrieved from https://strucnoobraz.edu.ba/?p=484

from their own internal dilemmas and uncertainties (Rivera Drew 2009, 4–5). Most societies tend to strive for uniformity and adherence to certain norms (such as those regarding health, ability, or behavior). Individuals who do not fit these norms (such as parents with hearing disabilities or their children) are often exposed to criticism, negative social attitudes, exclusion, or marginalization (Cagulada and Koller 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that parents with hearing impairments, along with their closest ones, feel deep concern about whether their newborn will be hearing.

As with any new parent, the birth of a child brings a host of obstacles. For parents with hearing impairments, these difficulties are often more complex, shaped by their unique sensory limitations. Jasminka, an only child, recalls her parents as being very strict; by the age of five, she was expected to fold her own clothes. Her parents had no one in Sarajevo, so her mother asked her grandmother to take care of her. However, the grandmother refused because she believed that she needed to be with them, for them to meet each other. “Most of my friends always had someone to take care of them—grandmother, aunt, or uncle. But my parents raised me,” she says. She felt a special connection with her mother, who had something that perhaps other mothers didn’t have—“the softest hands.” Since Jasminka’s mother couldn’t communicate verbally due to her hearing impairment, she used physical contact — primarily touch — as her main way of expressing tenderness, love, and care. In this case, tactility became one of the main ways of establishing an emotional bond between mother and child. The absence of verbal communication didn’t imply a lack of connection or care, but instead fostered the development of a unique strategy for building emotional bonds through tactile contact and non-verbal cues. Despite the many challenges that marked her upbringing, it can be said that her parents, along with the landlords of the house they lived in, found creative ways to overcome these obstacles. Here’s one such story.

> “There is one situation. One night I cried, my mom says, everyone thought the child would die. In the morning, Aunt Vida came to our house. She was sleep-deprived and tired. She told my mom that I had cried all night, but my mom said she hadn’t heard anything. Aunt Vida suggested that she take a rope, tie it around her big toe, and pass it into the other room. She would pull it when she heard me cry, and then my mom would react. Later, we moved to the lower floor, and a key was made, which Uncle Milorad and Aunt Vida had. We became so close that Aunt Vida became like a second mom.”

The creativity in tactile communication (using a rope as a signal) becomes a crucial means for emotional interaction and protecting the child. Although distanced from sound signals like crying, the mother uses an alternative strategy to connect with her child’s needs. The use of the rope not only implies technical resourcefulness but also strengthens interpersonal relationships. Aunt Vida, who becomes like a second mother, is an indicator of the importance of social support that is essential for the adaptation of parents with hearing difficulties in raising a child. Although unable to rely on traditional forms of communication, these parents found creative solutions to navigate daily life. For instance, they used a rope to signal when their child was crying. Despite their non-verbal communication, they didn't appear incompetent; instead, they responded to their child's needs with creativity and innovation, overcoming clear barriers.

Another key aspect of Jasminka's childhood was her interaction with other children and the process of socialization. As she recalls, her parents' circle of friends also consisted of individuals with profound hearing loss, which shaped her early social experiences. If they had children, they would visit with them. However, when guests came over, they would switch on the TV to keep her from watching her parents communicate, fearing it might affect her ability to learn standard language. As she says, "I was actually stealing signs." Children acquire language from their surroundings, and communication is essential for developing their identity and emotional connections with others. Sign language is not only a means of communication but also a distinct cultural framework and identity for the community of individuals with hearing disabilities (Washabaugh 1981; Senghas and Monaghan 2002; Stebnicki and Coeling 1999). However, parents with hearing disabilities, faced with the norms of the dominant society that favor spoken language, may feel uncertain about their child's future. They fear that if the child learns only sign language, they will be excluded from the dominant social culture and labor market. Namely, the educational and professional systems are mostly designed for hearing individuals, and sign language is not accepted in these environments (Singleton and Tittle 2000, 225–226).

In conclusion, "silence" as an educational method, although unintentional and demanding, in this case became a stimulus for the development of creative and adapted parenting practices by the parents with hearing disabilities of my interviewee, who was a hearing child. In this context, silence was not just the absence of sound but a specific educational framework in which her parents had to develop alternative methods of communication, such as tactile communication or visual signs, to meet the needs of their child. Despite the limitations they faced, they managed to create a safe environment in which my interviewee grew up, developed her identity, and socialized.

The Mediator's Role: Hearing Children of Parents with Hearing Impairments

Like any other child, Jasminka had to step beyond the comfort of her home and enter the wider world of schools, institutions, and community life. But unlike most of her peers, she carried with her a responsibility that many children never face. As the only hearing member of her household, Jasminka took on responsibilities that extended far beyond typical childhood duties—interpreting for her parents, dealing with bureaucratic systems, and ensuring their voices were heard in a world that often overlooked them. There were moments of warmth—settings where difference was acknowledged with care, and people took the time to include rather than exclude. But there were also episodes that stung. In a society that largely relies on spoken communication, her parents' silence was sometimes misread as absence.

As she told me, "At school, they only noticed that I was struggling when I started acting out. I had a hard time dealing with these things." One of "those things" happened during a summer vacation when she was ten years old. She was camping with her parents and other individuals with hearing impairments, and a boy commented that they were "mute." After that, she didn't want to play with him anymore. To comfort her, a man told her that their situation was normal, just like everyone else's. Specifically, "he told me there was no reason to be ashamed. That's when I dared. Defiance kicked in. I used to say that when I grow up, I'll work for the rights of deaf people." Children, in the process of socialization, seek affirmation and acceptance from their peers, and encountering negative attitudes towards their family can cause frustration and insecurity (Pescaru 2018). Jasminka's reaction, having experienced such an event, and deciding to focus her energy on advocating for the rights of individuals with hearing disabilities, can be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen her personal autonomy and show empathy toward the population whose life circumstances she came to understand through her perspective as a child.

Speaking about her growing up, Jasminka told me, "At one point, I switched roles with my parents. I became their ears and their voice. I had to grow up much faster." The education of a hearing child of parents with hearing impairments has specific characteristics that differ from the typical educational experience of a child with hearing parents. For example, the approach to personal privacy and boundaries between family and the outside world can be "more transparent" than it usually is for other children (Schiff & Ventry 1976; Walton 2006). As she was raised with parents who had profound hearing loss, she often found that the boundaries between her personal space and family life became indistinct. In a household where communication was based primarily on non-verbal cues and tactile interactions, her role as a mediator went beyond simply translating words. She frequently had to facilitate her parents' participation in social situations which meant that her personal life was often open to external scrutiny. While this lack of privacy was occasionally uncomfortable, it also influenced Jasminka's early understanding of social roles and the balance between individuality and familial responsibility. This experience sheds light on the tension between personal autonomy and family duty, raising questions about boundaries in a world where "normal" communication is shaped by the needs of those who communicate differently. In the absence of traditional communication, the concept of privacy shifted, creating a new form of emotional intimacy, where Jasminka's individual identity became closely intertwined with the collective identity of her family.

Jasminka recalled that this dynamic extended into her school life as well. At one point she told me, "When I went to school, I went to meetings with my dad. I couldn't hide anything." This "extended parental presence" was burdensome in the sense that she did not have the usual boundary between her family and the social sphere. At the same time, it deepened their bond, but also led to frustration because she was constantly in a role that didn't align with her age. Hearing children of parents with hearing impairments often take on the role of a communication mediator, which merges the boundaries between their family privacy and the outside social world. This burden of responsibility, which is beyond their age and development, can jeopardize their autonomy because they are expected to take on adult roles in situations that are not appropriate for their age (Buchino 1993).

A similar situation occurred when she and her parents moved out of their apartment in Hrasno. She had to take on the responsibility of relaying information, but as she said, "I didn't know how to explain everything to my dad. I didn't know those words. No one understood how big of a burden that was." The apartment they were supposed to get, a studio, was arranged through her father's company, but complications arose. Namely, a colleague of her father's had broken into the apartment, and later, other issues related to the move emerged. As she mentioned, this colleague had a sick son, which further complicated the situation. During all these negotiations and upheavals, she, as a fourteen-year-old, actively participated. In the end, she was present when the director of "Sarajevo Stan" and the director of her father's company made the final decision. She remembers the moment when the director handed her the keys: "The director gave the keys to me. He said they were mine because I fought for that apartment. That was the first recognition for my work." Although hearing children of parents with hearing impairments often take on the responsibility of mediating communication, in this case, the simple act of handing over the keys wasn't just a practical gesture — it was a meaningful sign that her efforts, presence, and responsibility within the family were truly seen and valued. For Jasminka, that moment symbolized more than trust; it marked a quiet acknowledgment of her emotional labor and the invisible roles she had long carried. Children in families with parents who have hearing impairments often take on emotionally demanding tasks, such as managing communication, emotions, and mediating in challenging situations, yet their role often goes unrecognized. In Jasminka's case, the handing over of the keys symbolizes a rare moment of acknowledgment of her contribution. This example highlights the need for greater recognition of Children of Deaf Adults (CODA), not only as helpers but as equal individuals, rather than being infantilized (Papin 2023).

Today, Jasminka is married and the mother of two adult children, who, along with her and her husband, were raised by her parents with hearing disabilities. Despite their disability, grandparents with hearing disabilities can play a significant role in raising grandchildren. Even though they lack verbal communication skills, they can offer support and bond with their grandchildren through nonverbal communication, gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Sign language and nonverbal communication, although not the dominant forms of verbal interaction, represent equally important alternatives for establishing interpersonal relationships.

We concluded the interview by discussing the current situation concerning children with disabilities. My interlocutor commented, "Nowadays, parents of children with disabilities speak out about it, but they don't know what it's like to be the child of parents with disabilities. Our voice as children was never heard..." Although there is increasing discussion today about individuals with impairments and the barriers they face, the experiences of children with parents who have impairments remain largely underexplored. Research on their unique challenges is scarce and often overlooked, leaving their voices missing from the broader conversation on disability.

Conclusion

The development of formal education and care for children with hearing and speech impairments in the former Yugoslavia was a fragmented process, shaped by a complex mix of cultural, social, economic, and political factors. However, despite these challenges, a growing awareness of the need to integrate individuals with hearing impairments into wider society began to take root at the turn of the 20th century. The first such institutions were opened in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia. In contrast, BiH, North Macedonia, and Montenegro only opened specialized institutions after World War II, reflecting the unequal progress of the former Yugoslav states in this regard. In BiH, Jasminka's homeland, the first institution for children with hearing impairments was the IDC in Sarajevo, founded in 1946. Later, the institution was moved to the suburban area of Reljevo, though this decision faced resistance from experts due to concerns over the spatial segregation of pupils. As a result, the IDC was eventually relocated back to the city center, aiming to improve inclusion and visibility for its students. Between 1957 and 1959, Jasminka's parents, both with profound hearing loss, attended this school. They continued their education at the "Branko Lazić" School for Industrial Pupils from 1959 to 1962. In 1970, they had a daughter, Jasminka. Both, individuals with profound hearing loss, faced considerable challenges in raising their child, primarily due to the limitations of verbal communication. However, they managed to navigate these difficulties with significant support from their close circle of family and friends, whose assistance was crucial in allowing them to fulfill their parental roles. Growing up in this context, Jasminka, as a hearing child, was often placed in the role of intermediary between her parents and the wider society. This dynamic led her to assume responsibilities typically expected of adults at a young age. The experience of taking on emotionally and communicatively demanding tasks significantly shaped her emotional and social development. Additionally, Jasminka's upbringing exposed her to the stigmas and prejudices surrounding individuals with hearing impairments, as well as the institutional and societal barriers they frequently encounter. Rather than internalizing these challenges, Jasminka used her experiences as a driving force to pursue a career as a professional sign language interpreter. Through this role, she made a meaningful contribution to the social inclusion of individuals with hearing impairments. This trajectory highlights the resilience and agency of CODA whose roles and contributions are often disregarded in mainstream conversations about disability.

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Jelena Seferović

Odjeci detinjstva: Odrastanje između svetova tišine i zvuka

Apstrakt: Prvi koraci ka organizovanoj državnoj zaštiti i obrazovanju dece sa oštećenjem sluha i govora na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije započeli su krajem 19. i početkom 20. veka, pri čemu su Slovenija, Hrvatska i Srbija bile pioniri u osnivanju specijalizovanih institucija. Nasuprot tome, Bosna i Hercegovina (BiH), Severna Makedonija i Crna Gora počele su sa otvaranjem takvih ustanova tek nakon Drugog svetskog rata. Jedna od njih bio je Institut za vaspitanje gluve dece u Reljevu, predgrađu Sarajeva, gde su se roditelji Jasminke Proho, pedesetpetogodišnje profesionalne tumačice znakovnog jezika, upoznali tokom školovanja kasnih 1950-ih. Ovaj članak istražuje Jasminkino detinjstvo i odrastanje tokom 1970-ih i ranih 1980-ih u Sarajevu, kao čujućeg deteta u porodici gde su oba roditelja imala oštećenje sluha i govora. Njeni roditelji, uprkos svojim oštećenjima i uz podršku užeg okruženja, razvili su kreativne, neverbalne strategije roditeljstva kako bi je podigli. Članak naglašava kako je "tišina" funkcionisala ne kao manjak, već kao jedinstven okvir za brigu, komunikaciju i emocionalnu povezanost unutar porodice. Ulazak u šire društvene okvire izložio je Jasminku i podržavajućim i izazovnim iskustvima oblikovanim senzornim oštećenjima njenih roditelja. Balansiranje između zahteva dva suprotstavljena sveta – jednog tišine i drugog zvuka – predstavljalo je stalni izazov za Jasminku, čak i od najranijeg detinjstva. Ta iskustva na kraju su je motivisala da postane profesionalna tumačica znakovnog jezika i zagovornik prava i vidljivosti ove društvene grupe. Članak se zasniva na podacima prikupljenim kroz intervjue sa Jasminkom, kao i na arhivskom materijalu i relevantnoj naučnoj literaturi koja se odnosi na zaštitu i podršku deci sa oštećenjem sluha i govora u bivšim jugoslovenskim republikama.

Ključne reči: Bosna i Hercegovina, Jasminka Proho, istorija invaliditeta, oštećenje sluha i govora, roditeljstvo sa oštećenjima

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