SOCIOCULTURAL DIMENSIONS
OF CHILDHOOD
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Edited by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial

Petya Bankova. Childhood Research – Presentation, Problems and Guidelines / 7
Michelle Janning. East Meets West in Childhood Studies: Discovery, Diversity, and Changing Definitions / 10
Aude Le Guennec. What remains from our childhoods? / 13

Section 1:
Socio-Political History and Memory in Childhood

Petya Bankova. Childhood: Reconstructing, Remembering, Inventing. The Children’s Camp in Bulgaria during the Communist Regime / 15
Nevena Dimitrova. Education and Elevation of Tradition within Innovative Forms of Childhood Understanding / 25
Snizhana Zhygun. Social Change and Images of Children in 1920s-1930s Ukrainian Women’s Literature / 56
Lenka Jakoubková Budilová. The Child in the Family in the Old Demographic Regime. The Case of Voyvodovo, Czech Village in Bulgaria (1900-1950) / 67
Nadezhda A. Ivanova. Policies of the Bulgarian State in the Field of Culture and Their Reflection in Children’s Activities (1950s-1970s) / 78

Section 2:
Childhood in Institutional and Cultural Context: Folklore, Games, Museums and Schools

Iva Kyurkchieva. Childhood and Football: Memory and Identity (The Bulgarian Case of the End of 20th Century – the Beginning of 21st Century) / 107
Nayden Yotov. Rites of Passage at Waldorf Schools. First Day in School (Sofia, 2018). An Anthropological Perspective / 119
Nadya Terzieva. Educational Programs in Bulgaria’s Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute – Modern State and Future Prospects / 128

Željka Ivković, Željko Boneta, Lucija Kosić. The Role of Parents’ Attitudes in Accepting Male Teachers in Kindergartens in Contemporary Croatia / 136

Ina Pachamanova. Aspects of Children’s Socialization in Bulgaria (Late 20th – Early 21st Century) / 147

Marlene Barra. Researching the Voices of Those Who Do Not Know: Games, Play and Toys from Sao Tome and Principe / 162

Vlorë Fetaj Berisha, Ylberza Halili. Children’s Songs and Games in the Albanian Folklore: General Observation / 174

Aleksandar Krel, Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja. Socialisation of Boys and Traditional Children’s Competitive Games: Case Study Tovariševo / 185

Irina Kolarska. Children’s Games in the 21st Century and Their Connection to Folklore Culture / 194


Jurgita Macijauskaitė-Bonda. The Tradition of Riddling Questions in Contemporary Lithuanian Children’s Folklore / 218

Valon Shkodra. Children and Ethnological Museum in Prishtina, Kosovo / 227

Section 3: Risk and Vulnerability in Childhood

Elya Tsaneva. The Vulnerable Child and Its Contested Kinship Identities / 237

Bella Yasmin Mehrnissa. Experiences and Challenges of Transgender Children Regarding Gender Identity: Desk Research on Cases of Transgender Children in U.S., U.K., and Germany / 250

Valentina Marinescu. Violence against Children in Romanian Media / 267

Zhenya Ivanova. Lost Childhood – the Consequences of Growing up in Care. What is the Quality of Life Like for the Girls and Boys Growing up in Homes for Children in Bulgaria? / 281


Lilia Uslowa. The Second Generation of Hybrid Eastern Immigrants – Children and Young Adults. Integration, Adaptation or Assimilation and Their Variants / 300

Desislava Pileva. Children of Mixed Descent in-between Their Parents’ Cultures in Bulgaria (Language Acquisition and Religious Affiliation) / 314

Irandi Pereira, Claudio Oliveira Fernandes. Another Conception of Brazilian Childhood under the Optics of Social Protagonism: Is It Possible? / 326
Childhood research attracted recently the attention of a wide range of specialists in the field of history, ethnology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, literature, legal studies, etc., thus creating an innovative interdisciplinary research cooperation. Due to scholarly achievements topics like age and life cycle, gender and family, social development and culture, human rights and children at risk, policies and social practices are placed in the lime light. Crossing the methodological boundaries researchers explore the historical, political, social and cultural development of children in the structures and contexts of different historical periods and geographical areas.

Guided by the belief that childhood studies are among the most important problems of the present day, a group of scientists with various research interests who found their crossroads in the broad theme of childhood, set up a forum to present their most recent studies and “to synchronize their stopwatches” with leading scientists from around the world. The conference was hosted by the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Science – one of the leading Bulgarian research institutions that supports international cooperation in the field of humanities and social sciences. The members of the Organizing Committee were Petko Hristov, Albena Georgieva, Aneliya Kasabova, Elya Tsaneva, Mila Maeva, Iglika Mishkova, Violeta Periklieva, Ivaylo Markov, Petya Bankova, Irina Kolarska and Yuliya Popcheva. Their aim was to initiate a scientific dialogue within the framework of an international conference on childhood and to outline new perspectives for the analysis of its historical and contemporary dimensions at local, national, intercultural and global level. The expectations were that such forum would accommodate different cases that will contribute to the broader recognition of this research topic and will create conditions for its conceptualization in the contemporary scientific, political and social context. Their endeavour was supported by the Bulgarian National Science Fund. Bulgarian Academy of Sciences also provided financial and logistic support.

Between October 26 and 28, 2018 an international scientific conference on “Sociocultural Dimensions of Childhood” brought to the forefront of research and
public interest topics such as, Childhood and Adolescence in the European History, Politics and Culture; Children and Migration. Socialization and Acculturation of Immigrants, Emigrant and Refugee Children; Children In and Outside the Family: Parents, Relatives, Coevals and Friends. The conference took place in the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences under the auspice of the Minister of Education and Science Krasimir Valchev.

The thematic panels “Interdisciplinary: Integrating Knowledge and Methods from Different Disciplines, Using a Real Synthesis of Approaches” and “Cross-disciplinary: Viewing a Discipline from the Perspective of Another” speak of the ambition of the organizers of this largescale scientific event to attract specialists from different areas of human knowledge. They discussed Disadvantaged Children and Children at Risk, Experiences and Memory of Childhood, Good Practices and Educational Policies in Raising and Upbringing Children, Representation of Children and Childhood in European Cinema, Art, Music, Photography and Literature.

A special panel, moderated by Aude Le Guennec, was dedicated to the role and functions of the museum for the education and upbringing of children. The reports presented there played a decisive role in the structuring and operation of the Educational Centre for Children at the Ethnographic Museum that was opened a few months later.

78 researchers from 25 countries presented their achievements at the conference.

The broad international and interdisciplinary academic dialogue within the framework of the conference provided an opportunity for presentation of theses, exchange of thoughts and discussion on current issues of childhood. This open dialogue between established senior researchers and highly qualified and motivated young researchers contributed to enhanced transfer of scientific ideas.

The main directions that need broader understanding from the researchers, regardless of the geographical or temporal scope of their research, relate primarily to the methodological or disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) approach, which should be at the forefront of childhood research. Consensus on the basic theoretical concepts, terminological apparatus and sources of information used in childhood research is needed.

Since the middle of the last century childhood research appears more and more often in research areas such as history, ethnology and anthropology. The pedagogical and sociological parameters of the earliest stages of human life gain greater clarity if they are supported by analyses performed with research methods inherent to ethnology and anthropology. In parallel only the wide implementation of the interdisciplinary approach can lead to a complete disclosure of the individual and communal characteristics of the development of the individual and his/her “entry“ into the society. This requires a revision of the traditional approaches to the study of childhood and involvement of a toolbox of new techniques and methods in the work of the ethnologist.

The next round of problems that emerged from the discussion were related to the conclusion that the research in childhood studies shouldn’t be just Western
orientated and include various views from around the globe, as the conference has contributed to highlight.

Such large-scale scientific events are rarely organized in academia and the introduction of the subject of childhood was entirely innovative. So this is the first major contribution of this conference. The presentations that showed the need for the application of audio-visual methods and computer technologies in the study of topics such as children’s games, leisure activities, educational programs in school and home environment were another.

The conference also raised the question of the need for a new format for the collection and presentation of scientific achievements in the field of childhood research. International conferences of this magnitude are difficult to organize. Probably a suitable form of communication and sharing of ideas, topics and research highlights would be the creation of a portal for the exchange of publications, opinions and discussions. The conferences of groups of scientists, who would form teams, will help to create projects and seek funding for their implementation. The issue of creating scientific series, which would enable young researchers in their doctoral and post-doctoral studies to present their ideas to the academic and university staff, was also raised.

In my humble opinion this conference laid the groundwork for creating a new vision of childhood studies from an Eastern perspective. Unlike the Western model, in which parents and the family circle are crucial for the raising and upbringing of a child, in the East and especially in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, the role of the state and communist ideology in the formation of personality is necessary to be clarified. This makes life stories a very important source for researchers to interpret. It is through them that the major cultural differences between communities can be elucidated – differences that still create the preconditions for different patterns of childhood in the present.
East Meets West in Childhood Studies:
Discovery, Diversity, and Changing Definitions

Michelle Janning

It was January 1992, and, as a U.S. college student, I had just returned home from a political science course on transitions to democracy that took place in Eastern Europe. I spent that course learning about international relations, public protests, burgeoning capitalism, globalization, and post-Cold War leadership transitions. I fell in love with the places I studied, from Prague to eastern Berlin. As I continued going to school, I never lost the attachment I had formed with these places, and I never lost interest in historical and political transitions. What I was missing, however, was a way to think concretely and carefully about how family life (my eventual area of research and teaching as a sociologist) was always part of the story that state-centric studies in political science failed to capture. The private lives of parents and children and grandparents and siblings, and the locations where they live and work and play, have become what I study, but these were missing from my studies about those places I had visited that had undergone democratic transitions decades ago.

Fast forward to the 2018 Sociocultural Dimensions of Childhood conference in Sofia, Bulgaria – the conference that serves as the basis for this diverse collection of chapters. I had never experienced such a wonderful conference, in part because I learned so much from those presenting in a warm and supportive environment, and in part because the theme allowed for us to be simultaneously focused on the topic of the sociocultural dimensions of childhood, and yet flexible about the disciplinary and epistemological approaches we took in order to investigate the topic. As I listened to presenters and then followed their work as it made it into this edited volume, the private family lives in the places I had studied nearly thirty years ago came to life in the stories and findings shared about past and present childhoods in Eastern Europe and beyond.

In particular, I am struck by the ways that the authors interrogate nostalgia surrounding childhoods that need to be understood in the context of state-sponsored programs. Readers of this collection will get to journey with authors who ask what it feels like to look fondly back at a childhood spent in political turmoil, or who ask whether it is possible to have fond memories of a place where private nostalgia flourishes in the midst of public nostalgia that is avoided. These are important
questions to ask, because they help us understand not only the role of history in uncovering the cultural meanings of private family life, but also the importance of studying vulnerable childhoods today in locations such as foster care and refugee camps. After all, our memories – bad or good – are always about our own personal stories, but they are also always situated in social contexts that shape the stories.

Children – their actions, voices, bodies, and places – are often left out of research about our social world, except among those scholars who know the importance of studying the often hidden voices of intimate life. It is these scholarly voices whose words make up this edited collection. Across numerous disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, ethnology, folklore studies, and cultural studies, we know that childhoods have undergone shifting definitions across time and geography. Not only are children defined as more agentic as a result of research on their lives, they have become defined as agentic participants in the research that focuses on their lives and experiences. This means that researchers are not just examining how childhood riddles, fairy tales, dances, and scary stories might change across time and geography; they are examining them alongside children who revise the riddles and tales, who offer their interpretation of the dances in light of our changing world, and who redefine what scary means by telling their own stories. Children are not the research subjects; they are the ones shaping the questions we ask. Childhood scholarship is no long just about children. It includes children as agentic voices in the research process.

This collection not only offers a way to frame changing definitions of childhood from multiple geographic, historical, and disciplinary vantage points; it also offers the reader a chance to wrestle with epistemological questions. How do we know what we know about children’s lives? What constitutes evidence in claims we make about patterns? What is the best way to incorporate children’s agentic voices in research methods themselves? Because the disciplinary realms represented in this book are so varied, readers will be able to grapple with complex questions from multiple methodological points of view. Approaching the study of childhoods from multiple levels, from autoethnographic childhood memories to macrosociological accounts of migration patterns, the authors whose words fill this volume challenge the reader to stretch what they consider to be evidence, culminating in the notion that identifying the sociocultural dimensions of childhoods always requires stories alongside data, and data alongside the stories. Perhaps more importantly, in addition to offering the latest research findings on, and stories about, childhoods, these chapters also contain vivid descriptions of putting ideas into action in multiple geographic locations via captivating cultural exhibits, direct impact on policy and interventions, and curricula and programming for children across a variety of institutional fields including schools, sports, camps, museums, and homes.

A volume on the sociocultural dimensions of childhoods would be incomplete without a focus on precarity and vulnerability. Many of the chapters carefully juxtapose agentic and precarious childhoods. And while danger and risk are present in the stories told about children’s lives, it is in the telling of historical, political, economic, and cultural processes that create or perpetuate risk where the real danger lies. The precarity and vulnerability of childhoods are embedded not just in
children’s everyday lives, but also in structural inequality that extends beyond the boundaries of any household or family.

As I think back to some of the last days of my own childhood, including those spent studying post-Cold War politics in the early 1990s, I can’t help but wonder about how nostalgia may be operating in my own story. I remember the homes, toys, museums, and games that were tangential parts of my political study of early 1990s transitions to democracy better than I remember the historical documents and news stories about public demonstration, coups, and the influx of globalized capitalism. To me, the remembering of the past and the uncovering of present social patterns necessarily includes those materials and spaces of the everyday lives of families. These are the locations of childhoods. To paint a picture of any setting – past, present, or future, and here, there, or anywhere – we must uncover the locations of those who are often hidden in private domains or relegated to corners of unimportance. And we must enlist the voices of those hidden and relegated – children’s voices – into the very questions we ask as researchers.
What Remains from Our Childhoods?

Aude Le Guennec

A Christening outfit, a Sunday dress, a teddy bear; a couple of faded family pictures; and these intangible souvenirs of an almost forgotten history. From the individual to the group, these memories, witness the existence of a childhood culture, bonding the generations around common experiences and a shared heritage. They are also the distorted echoes of our lives, reflecting the way a collective imagination recreates a dreamt past, sometimes allowing a feeling of nostalgia to impregnate our societies.

Collecting the past from donations and acquisitions, welcoming the remains of family lives, – the ethnographic and anthropological treasures which have been kept through the decades – museums play a major role in the conservation of this social history and in the transmission of a certain picture from the past. To paraphrase the definition of the pioneer eco-museologist Georges-Henri Riviere, museums are the forums where society is looking at its reflection to create the future. The collections, communicated to the public through well curated galleries and educational programmes, convey their captive audiences around key questions and unavoidable debates, which are particularly welcome when communities are challenged by major social changes. The current issues faced by communities across Eastern Europe to succeed in their transition towards a post-consumerist society, is certainly an example of this time of uncertainty and mutation.

Hosted by the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore studies with Ethnographic Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the International Childhood Conference investigating the ‘Sociocultural Dimensions of Childhood’ has been an eye opener. As an early career researcher and museum’s keeper, educated to a Western focused approach of childhood studies, I have realised the necessity to study European childhood cultures as a polyphony allowing dissonant and unusual voices. It came to my mind that an approach solely focusing on the issues of a post-consumerist society could not possibly be considered as a comprehensive way to understand past and current childhoods across Europe. It is important to look at the challenges faced by the children confronted by new family patterns due to economical necessities. The explosion of nuclear families, sometimes living across Eastern and Western Europe and surviving thanks to digital communication, jeopardizes the transmission of family culture through the generations. Meanwhile, the older generations reassure themselves by re-imagining a confrontational past, living the nostalgia of their own childhood and mis-understanding the dreams of the young ones fighting for a sustainable and confident future. Echoing the Bulgarian
conference, the workshop ‘A forgotten consumer: children and material culture in 19th century South-East and Central Asia’ (Luxfass, Bucharest, July 2019), highlighted the lack of consideration for the study of Eastern European childhood history and the issues faced by researchers confronted by the absence of thoroughly collected raw materials and a Western orientated literature on the topic. In this respect, and as evidenced in this extremely stimulating collection of original researches on a variety of topics, the current sociological and historical investigations undertaken in Eastern Europe are shaping a completely different paradigm for childhood studies.

Coming to Sophia with a total absence of preconception on what the issues of childhood in Eastern Europe were, and certainly thanks to a lack of preparation on this matter, I was convinced of the importance of the material culture to support a renewed history and anthropology of childhood. My doctoral research on children’s fashion focused on the study of French and British museum’s collections from the middle of the 18th century onwards (Le Guennec, 2018). Despite stating the necessity to collect childhood material culture in a more rigorous manner to provide a true picture of the past, this research witnesses the importance of clothes in the socialisation of children as beings and becomings (Prout, 2005). The attempts to address the role played by the material culture in the education of children are rare and, even more unusual is the question: how can children’s material culture inform intergenerational relationships and influence the interactions within society? The Intercultural Childhood Conference, by allowing these questions to be asked in the introductive session and by attributing a full chapter to the interactions between children and museums as keepers of this tangible memory, is pioneer in this renewed approach of childhood studies. Toys, clothes, childcare furniture, baby boxes, books, films and pictures, are conveyed to tell the stories of children acting, dreaming and interacting in the society. They illustrate the role of the adults, as the designers of children’s world, driven by their educational values and a certain vision of the future. In reflection, they also reveal the way children spontaneously and constantly appropriate and recreate the material culture designed for them by the educator and the carer. Allowing this childhood material culture, neglected so far in childhood studies, to be introduced as one of the main evidence of children agency is extremely reinvigorating for museum’s professionals convinced in the importance of this tangible heritage for the development of our communities.

The role of museums in collecting the past to inform the future and engaging with the communities to heal a sometimes fragmented society, is key in the education of children. Their importance in interpreting the objects, prompting debates and reactions in their young minds also contributes to alternative learning methods. The narrative behind the museums’ collections, as well as the stories told by the intangible heritage communicated to the public, reveals the sometimes unpredictable interactions between the children and their peers. These collections communicated through well considered educational programmes as demonstrated in these proceedings, inspire children in their ability to engage with the world. Collecting childhood material culture, creating alternative learning opportunities, gathering the communities around common debates, stimulating the engagement of the younger generations in the conception of a sustainable future; collecting data as well as generating them; museums appear as the obvious forums for a renewed approach to children’s education, as well as a place where innovative childhood studies are held.

And it is definitely in Sofia, that this story is being shared… To be continued…
Abstract: Studies of childhood provide the key to understanding the culture of any society. For a better understanding of the human – culture relationship, it is imperative that childhood should be studied in different contexts – social, cultural, institutional, and economic. This chapter presents some of the principal research theories and practices in the field of ethnology and anthropology that address childhood as a socio-cultural phenomenon. After a brief critical review of the research of Bulgarian experts in this field, the main themes and approaches to studying such processes like socialization and enculturation, behavioural deviations and marginalization of the personality, education and child subculture had be outlined. The main empirical material, systematized and analysed in the chapter, refers to one of the most common phenomena during the communist regime in Bulgaria as a form of group socialization outside the family environment – the children’s camp. Such material seldom falls within the field of ethnographic interest and so far has not been collected, systematized and analysed purposefully by period researchers. Based on the biographical method, the author attempts to present the memories of childhood as an important element of the (re)construction of the human personality. From this point of view, they are also a major source of information about interpretations of specific periods in the development of each human community.

Keywords: Childhood, Family, Communist party, Socialization.

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Introduction

Research of childhood puts high professional demands on scientists who need to improve continually their research methods while expanding their base of different origin and characteristics sources of information. Children’s issues, their place in society, and their relationships with peers, adults, parents, and institutions, reviewed in heterogeneous context, have long outstripped the limited framework of the Interdisciplinary. The topics studied so far in Bulgaria have largely reflected the need to support state institutions (nurseries and kindergartens, schools, extracurricular forms of childcare) in their pursuit of raising, upbringing and education. Therefore, most researchers were either trapped in the narrow academic fields of their scientific disciplines – pedagogy, sociology, medicine and psychology, or dared to cross those boundaries only between closely related research fields.

The World of Children is too wide to be “restrained” in any frame. It requires researchers from different fields to work together, each drawing on their disciplinary knowledge (Multidisciplinary) as well as creating a unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives (Transdisciplinary).

In the last four decades, Bulgarian ethnologists, anthropologists, and folklorists also faced this challenge (Bankova, 2012). Initially, they gave children a marginal position in the periphery of research and limited them within the boundaries of the well-known and described in detail cycles of customs, beliefs, and practices related to the birth and rearing of children in the traditional culture. Childhood issues were addressed by some of the most popular Bulgarian folk culture researchers in their work on some of its individual aspects (Bankova, 2011). Attempts in this direction were made by Genchev (1985, 1985a), Drajeva (1980, 1986) for Pirin and Plovdiv regions, Vodenicharova (1999) for the Lovech region, Tsaneva (1994) for the Rhodope Mountains and Milcheva (1996) for Strandzha as well as by other local studies. Contributions were made, although sporadically, in the scientific literature on the adoption in traditional and contemporary culture (Tsaneva, Nikolova, Kirilova, 2010), in the field of socialization of children (Vodenicharova) and on the life of children in the homes “Mother and Child” (Kasabova, 2011). The contributions of Bulgarian folklorists situating the problem in the domain of ethnology and folklore studies (Bokova, 1999, Raicheva, 2002, Stanoev, 2012) should not be omitted. I greatly appreciate the research of a team of authors titled “Childhood in Socialism. Political, institutional and biographical perspectives upon” (Gospodinov, 2007), which is perhaps one of the best examples of a holistic approach to childhood problems in Bulgaria over a specific period.

In contemporary Bulgarian society, there is still no clear and categorical assessment of the communist regime that governed Bulgaria in the period between 1944-1989. A large part of the archive documents concerning the policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party have already been published. Researchers from different humanities make analyses and interpretations on them. In this chapter, I try to analyse unpublished (until now) ethnographic material based on personal testimonies. I am guided by the understanding that childhood in Bulgaria during this period is radically different from childhood in Western democracies. I completely agree with the opinion that “The attitude of Bulgarian socialist state towards
children and adolescents is contradictory. On the one hand, the state sequesters the role of the parents as caretakers and educators and liberates the adolescents from the control of the family and the rural community, placing them under the control of brigade management. On the other hand, mature conduct and attitudes are demanded from them, as well their quick coming of age to get integrated into newly built socialist society” (Koleva, 2007: 217).

Methods and Data

This study can be placed in the tradition of the “New Social Studies of Childhood”, or the Social Studies of Childhood, as Samuelsson (2008: 9-10) prefers to call it. In this tradition, researchers try to see children as individuals and foreground their different competencies, capabilities and strategies. Within this approach, childhood is understood as a social construction that implies that the definition of childhood and how children are supposed to behave depends on the social and cultural context. Researchers in this field also try to study the child as an agent, as a social being, and as a co-creator of its own position.

In 2010, I started an individual research project titled “A tale about childhood”. My main task was to do an ethnological interpretation of early childhood in the traditional and modern culture of Bulgaria. Over the course of the study, I did 38 semi-structured interviews, which covered topics such as family, school, leisure, peers, friends and games. My oldest respondent was 92 years old, the youngest – 14. Some of the respondents were not born in Sofia, some of them are not currently living in Bulgaria, but all at some stage of their life (between 5 and 18 years of age) lived in the capital. They differ in gender, age, education, and social status. What they had in common was that they had the desire to tell not only about their childhood, which they had experienced at different times, most commonly referred to by them as “before and after September 9” (referring to the political upheaval, which took place in Bulgaria on 09/09/1944). But also, to compare themselves as children to their children and grandchildren (Bankova, 2014).

I also used the collection of narratives under the title “I lived socialism” which focuses on the stories, collected through the Internet between 2004 and 2006 in the framework of the project “I lived socialism” as a valuable source of information. Special attention to the stories about childhood, which make up 80% of all stories on the website, and to the way childhood is narrated by different authors from two generations – 20 to 29 year-olds and 30 to 39 year-olds (the most active generation in storytelling in the project), is paid in the book’s (Gospodinov, 2007) multiple editions.

In many of the interviews that I conducted, respondents talked about the ways and forms of spending their free time during vacations that they did not spend with their family. This attracted my interest to another topic: children’s camps during communism. One of the stories published in the above mentioned book can be seen as emblematic for the period of socialism: “10-year-old at the Brezovets pioneer camp: Maybe it’s stupid, but I think that at that time we were really taught to be afraid” (Gospodinov, 2007: 216-217).
I cannot ignore my own experience as in many cases the research interest is associated with personal experiences. During my childhood in my school age (1971 – 1983), I attended school camps annually, sometimes even several times a year. I can boldly state that I have a solid “camp experience”. I have the incredible chance to retain extensive diaries of my days spent in camps. This is because in the years of my primary education at “St. Patriarch Evtimii” school in Sofia, we had the obligation to provide a detailed diary of our activities during the summer at the beginning of each school year. The fact that these diaries were kept by my mother, gave me the opportunity to compare much of the collected information with my personal stories.

In the period 2017-2018, my research was supported by professor Margarita Karamihova, who together with her students from Veliko Tarnovo University “St. Cyril and Methodius”, carried out field studies and interviewed respondents from cities in North-eastern Bulgaria on the topic of forms of spending leisure time in the years of communism in Bulgaria. Our idea, which turned out to be extremely viable, was to check and build on the information we both received through different channels about the shared childhood memories of the people who survived the communist regime in Bulgaria. The approbation was through discussions, comments and evaluations of students who did not have personal experience with this type of life stories.

The Camp – a Place for Relaxation, Physical Preparation, Training and Education

In the spring of 1990, just five months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the former cinema “Mlada Gvardia (Young Guard)” was screened as the Bulgarian feature film “The Camp” directed by Dyulgerov. The script of Danailov and Dyulgerov follows the well-known, almost biographical for several generations, storyline: 12-year-old children in a pioneer camp near the sea, trapped in the ideologized to absurd levels thinking and behaviour of the adults. Adults, who, like in every other totalitarian regime, try to impose complete depersonalization on them. The script recounts events with no exact dating, but presumably in the early 60s of the 20th century. Ten years later the same, already grown children are again in a camp, this time as voluntary unpaid workers, and once again facing the difficult choice – whether to preserve their personalities or to go with the flow, that will allow them to fit successfully in the totalitarian regime, which has become even more pernicious and ominous. Even during vacations, pupils were organized in collective forms of recreation and relaxation. From these forms, the camps were the most widespread. They were different in form and content.

The most common and numerous were the so-called pioneer camps – children colonies of the capital districts‘ and of the regional people’s councils situated in the mountains or on the seashore. Many of the camps were clustered around the villages Dolna Banya and Govedartsi in the Sofia region as well as Ravda and Obzor in the Burgas region. The organization of such camps began in the 1950s and continued throughout the communist period.
The information gathered from interviews, shows a very controversial assessment of the time spent in these camps. On the one hand, there are completely positive memories of the respondents who describe the pioneer camps as “a place to rest where the atmosphere is unique – holidays, activities, many friends.” Although everyone mentions terms like “regime”, “supervision” and “control”, as well as the ideological training sessions, they are clear that the camp was very useful because “These camps gave us many skills; engagement; have shaped our decision-making skills, responsibility and independence/away from parents and home/, personal and public discipline; formed regime and style of eating; Thematic camps (for example tourism or sports oriented) gave relevant knowledge and skills; formed the mind of a competitor, a fighter; pointed to a possible life path; you have the opportunity to get to know yourself and to understand what you are good at”.

At the other hand are the negative assessments, of this type of organized and controlled leisure time spending. A respondent shares “I was only once in a pioneer camp, I did not feel well, and I went home prematurely. They did not allow us to go to the toilet at night, they restricted us.” Another unforgettable memory: “Every day I wrote to Mom. I suffered because I could not see her. Daddy came and they did not let him in the camp. I saw him only briefly over the fence, we cried all the time. It was very cruel.” Another testimony of respondent confirms “I was chubby, and I was very anxious especially among strangers. Moreover, the purpose of the camps was exactly that – being among strangers. They were mocking me; I could not go fast during the marches. Once we had to go to Venetitsa hut – 10 kilometres in August heat. When we reached it, I got sick. And then at the evening of the talents the kids presented a sketch in which I’m fainting.” (Bankova, 2014).

There are, of course, opinions that try to take into account both the good and the bad sides of the pioneer camp. “I was a pioneer in the 8th grade. The school camp was in the town of Gabrovo. We played different role-playing games; we went on excursions. We’ve been studying a story about communism, and about child heroes like Mitko Palauzov....” (Bankova, 2014).

The assessment of the contemporary researchers, with respect to these camps, is diametrically opposed. On the one hand, are those who highly appreciate the Party and the State care for children and adolescents: “I remember with nostalgia how we once went to camps. I was looking forward to this moment. We lived royally, no matter how vigorously we were monitored by the teachers. After breakfast, we went to the beach together. At noon, we went to the dining hall in the open air and we whistled ‘bean stew, bean stew, warm bread’. Then a nap in the barracks and during the night – stories and tales till dawn. We created new friends, there were first love affections. It was very funny when once the cook with a hangover coated the fish with washing powder instead of flour. Bubbles were coming out of our mouths. So, we remained half-fed.” (Mihaylova, 2017).

The topic of pioneer camps could be explored based on different sources. For example, an interesting source of information are the letters in which the children shared their daily lives in these camps. The everyday life of the children in these camps was closely monitored by the senior party functionaries, as in fact was every aspect of everyone’s life during the communist regime. Some of the results of this monitoring are controversial to the above stated positive opinion. Dimitrov (1963)
– secretary of the Central Committee of the Dimitrov’s Communist Youth Union, in his speech in front of the meeting of the Party and Youth Bodies Department of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party with the heads of the organizational departments of the regional Party committees, on the 2nd of April 1963 stated that a child from the Pleven camp wrote: “What are the fun and interesting activities in our camp? Rehearsals, rehearsals, endless, boring rehearsals for the camp assembly – rejoicing, dedicated to the camps Patron. The girls rehearse while the boys stay on the side looking for a convenient moment to escape and play to exhaustion. Near the camp, nature is wonderful and beautiful, but hiking is not allowed by the pioneer group leader. The pioneers are bored and are waiting for the last night when at least they will have a toothpaste fight and get dirty and it will be finally fun, and on top of that, there will be no one to shout at them. In this camp, everyone is shouting at you. The nurse walks with a stick and when you sleep, if you raise a hand – you are hit with the stick. So, how can there be laughter and joy where everyone shouts at you and tames you with a stick?”

On the next higher hierarchical level were the pioneer and Komsomol activists’ training camps. They were located in well-known and developed mountain and sea resorts. The subsistence of the privileged was subsidized by the state, unlike the other camps where the child could enrol only if his/her parents pay the corresponding fee (which was several times higher than the one of the activists). The most famous were the National pioneer complex “Yastrebino” and the Komsomol activists training camp “Lilyana Dimitrova”.

In the letter from the summer of 1978 written by Gergana, 6th-grade student, we read:

They called me that I was chosen to be a delegate of the National Pioneers meeting, which was going to take place on Shipka peak. We headed out on the 10th of August at 7 am by bus. We got off the bus in Pliska. There, an inspection of the battle and labour flags was conducted – we were the third vector (Razgrad, Varna, Targovishte, Silistra). There, we had lunch and headed out for Yastrebino. There Grigor Savov, a former guerrilla fighter, told us about the six children from Yastrebino who were killed on the same meadow on which we were standing. Then we slept there in tents. In the morning, we headed out for Shipka. After we set the tents and settled down, the National pioneers meeting “Zdrastvuite Bratushki!” (Hello Comrades) took place. Upon the meeting, pioneers who arrived in five vectors from the whole of Bulgaria (25 regions) and comrades Boycho Shteryanov, Peter Balkanski and Ivanka Vassileva, as well as many other guests, were present. At Shipka monument we offered garlands. There were fireworks and awards. I was awarded a badge for “Versatile pioneering activity”. The meeting was then closed. It was filmed by a television crew and maybe they would later broadcast it.

It is worth mentioning how thoroughly the girl described the events as if reporting to a party forum about the solemn situation and the high-ranked comrades that were present. It is almost shocking how ideologically well devised this text is and that there is not a word about games, joy, or childish frenzy.

Here the respondents’ assessments are similar. “I know from my sister that the Komsomol camps resembled very much a Plenum or Conference on the Bulgarian Communist Party.” “I was in the Komsomol camp during the school year, so we
also studied.” “It was completely stupid. In the morning and in the afternoon, we had two-three hours of training. Some ‘suits’ from the Central Committee came to hammer in our heads scientific communism and how to persuade our comrades that the bright communist future is coming.” “We had a lecturer from Sofia who thought that he is really ‘slick’, and he was hitting on every single girl. Later we understood that he had put a mark on the door of his room for every girl he slept with. In the meantime, he lectured us on the high morale of the Komsomol activist.”

Even higher in the ranking were the International camps, like the ones in Ravda, Burgas region and Kranevo, Dobrich region. They were by default named after “the leader and the teacher of Bulgarian people Georgi Dimitrov”. They were called “international” because children of members of the fraternal parties of the Bulgarian Communist Party from nearby and distant countries as well as children of Bulgarians who were working and living abroad spent time there.

In principle, the right to attend such camps had only children with special merit in pioneer and Komsomol life. “International Camp, Czechoslovakia – prize for efforts in public activities. I was then a child who was rewarded for her activity in school and public life”, shares a respondent. “The international camp was a trip abroad. It was only possible to go to the countries that were included in the Soviet Union”, another respondent concludes. Again, letters are an interesting source of information. In the correspondence that the children exchanged during their summer vacations, they compare their experiences at summer camps. This is exactly what makes letters an important and interesting source of information. They can replace lost or never written diaries – a practice that is well known and widely practiced in Western culture, but lacks in the experience of Bulgarian children who survived the communist regime.

One of the interesting memories of a respondent reveals the complex framework in which the paramilitary daily life of children fits into one of these specialized camps. One of my respondents had a very interesting story. “I was in the International camp in Ravda three consecutive summers (1976-1978). My mother found some connections in the Committee for Bulgarians living abroad. I think it was some secretary of Pavel Matev, so her daughter and I were sent to the camp the first time. After that, she stopped coming, but I went two times more”. The children in the camp were divided into five battalions and trained in different skills with the goal to be more prepared for a future profession. The first time he I was enrolled in the battalion of the Ministry of Interior. The second time he was a firefighter. The third time he was admitted in the “Young border guards” battalion, where he found it most interesting because they allowed them to play with real border guards’ dogs. At the end of the training, the children had a staging of capture of saboteurs who crossed the Bulgarian border.

At the highest level in the hierarchy of the camps, as well as in the conditions offered for recreation, were the camps for children of the Ministry of Interior officials and for children of the members of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. These camps had swimming pools, well-arranged sports halls and playgrounds as well as catering of higher quality. Sightseeing tours to nearby tourist sites were organized for the campers. At the end of the stay, prizes for excellence in the training were awarded.
The daily routine was not intense for the children residing in the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party camp in Dolna Bania, Sofia region. In a letter from the summer of 1978, Maria, a student in 7th grade, shares: “It’s sometimes so boring here that I’m dying of anger as to why I’ve come. Yesterday evening we went to a bar. We drank coffee. However, it was not good at all. It was so bitter. I almost died of sorrow as to why I bought it. The evenings are very funny. Vessela, from last year, and I (the respondent was in the same camp together with Maria and Vessela in the summer of 1977) are great friends. We recently went two times to a party to the Kolarov region. [This is another camp in Dolna Banya, which was on the other side of the road, it was a long way from ours and we went there only if accompanied by one of our group leaders. It was a simpler camp, it did not have a pool like ours and the Ministry of the Interior’s, but there was a very large meadow and a playground on which we played with the children from the camp]. They are having so much fun. Moreover, the music they were playing was so cool. I was going crazy. What flirting we did. Flirting with our boys is out of the question. Many of them are just goofy. I am not crazy enough to go out with any of them. We have one very sweet boy, but he is shorter than me.” In addition to the information in the letter, the respondent who shared it mentioned the following, “obviously the future party functionaries were total losers, while the ‘mortals’ from the capital Kolarov’s district were cool dudes”. I would add that the life in the mentioned camp was with a much softer and looser regime, given the music, the fun, and the more free behaviour between boys and girls.

Conclusions

Children’s camps during the communist regime in Bulgaria are an extremely interesting subject from the point of view of ethnology. First, they raise important questions about the modernization of the methods and techniques of ethnographic/anthropological research, because the investigator has to comply with the new legal provisions on the collection of personal data on the one hand. On the other hand there are the natural attempts of the respondents to reconstruct their childhood according to their political bias as adults. Here is the place to recall the opinion of psychotherapist Ieroham (2018), who analysed Miller’s contribution (2018) to the research of child psychology and wrote: “The main object of study by Alice Miller is neither the child by itself nor the parents; the main object is adults. All those who are struck by the effects of a vicious, totalitarian, instructive discipline, ensuring that the child enters a society that destroys natural genius, turning it into monstrous mindlessness. Here comes the question of who feels how about their own childhood and whether they believe it was ‘magical and wonderful’ or by definition marked by the repression that has greatly impacted one’s ability to live creatively and to develop one’s natural talents for a more intimate and meaningful life.”

The next interesting moment in these studies is undoubtedly related to the ideological side of the totalitarian regimes not just in Bulgaria. Similar forms of group socialization, in a non-family environment, are found in all countries of the former Soviet bloc, and their research provides valuable information on the
reconstruction of the entire period. Thought provoking is the relationship they have with earlier forms, such as the children’s colonies existing in democratic societies, as well as with current similar objects. Finally, yet importantly, there are problems with the sources of information. In recent years, the usage of the Internet and social networks have become increasingly widespread in our research, which in certain contexts, creates conditions for distortion and manipulation of information that the researcher must skilfully interpret. I hope that this publication will attract colleagues’ interest in these and many other issues related to the research of childhood.

I am convinced that it is high time to look at the problems of childhood in Bulgaria beyond what is offered to us as a macro historical framework. So far, most researchers have analysed the role of institutions for the education and upbringing of children, as well as the place of the family in the process of socialization. It is time to pay attention to the individual development of the child as a person, to the different perception by the individual of what he or she experiences in the different forms of extra-family group socialization. This, on the one hand, will show us the individual life strategy for the survival of the individual, but also the attempts of the totalitarian system to channel and hinder the manifestation of early childhood individualism.

References:


Education and Elevation of Tradition within Innovative Forms of Childhood Understanding

Nevena Dimitrova

Abstract: Being a teacher is a noble occupation. I have experienced years of teaching kids at different ages from 10 to 20 years old. This experience helped me realize some basic challenges in the Bulgarian education system during the recent epochs. The shift from understanding teaching as a “dogmatic” discipline to a more relational category of “participatory pedagogy” is one of the basic themes I will address the so called P4C: philosophy for children – a relatively new but quickly developing field in academia – as well as other alternative educational systems will be at the center of this research.

Another interesting and equally important part of this chapter will focus on children and folklore: how childhood exists and is present in documents and in the living tradition. What is included in the definition of childhood: where does the dividing line between childhood and adulthood stand? It is no longer tolerable to consider childhood just a biological phase in human life. Rather it is looked upon as a “structural space”, a source of diversities and commonalities that should be supported as the basis of a healthy democratic society.

Key words: Childhood, Education, Philosophy for Children (P4C), Learning

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“Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it”

(Hannah Arendt)

“To be a teacher in the real sense is to be a learner”

(Soren Kirkegaard)

An encounter with a child is an encounter with someone yet-to-become. How one approaches the scientific study of a child is impacted by the fragility of the subject matter. I aim to study childhood via diverse questions – not to answer them, but to enhance childhood studies by highlighting the multitude of paths we can follow to understand the topic in innovative ways.

It is not yet completed, not yet a grown up adult, not yet having its voice (infant, or child in Latin means someone who still cannot speak), and the intermediary position it has settles its fluid boundaries. And fluid matters are very sensitive even if they also fall into categories of what, where, when, how…

Let us begin with that…

1. Definition

Childhood: “Old English cild ‘fetus, infant, unborn or newly born person,’ from Proto-Germanic *kiltham (also of Gothic source kilpei ‘womb’, inkilbo ‘pregnant’; Danish kuld ‘children of the same marriage’; Old Swedish kulder ‘litter’; Old English cildhama ‘womb’, lit. ‘child-home’); no certain cognates outside Germanic. ‘Apparently originally always used in relation to the mother as the ‘fruit of the womb’. Also in late Old English, ‘a youth of gentle birth’ (archaic, usually written childe). In 16th c. – 17th c. especially ‘girl child’. The wider sense of the definition: ‘young person before the onset of puberty’ developed in late Old English. Phrase with child ‘pregnant’ (late 12th c.) retains the original sense. The sense extension from ‘infant’ to ‘child’ also is found in French enfant, Latin infans. Meaning ‘one’s own child; offspring of parents’ is from late 12th c. Figurative use from late 14th c. Most Indo-European languages use the same word for ‘a child’ and ‘one’s child’, though there are exceptions (such as Latin liberi/pueri).”

1 Here’s what stands for a child in the Oxford dictionaries:

1. A young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority. “she’d been playing tennis since she was a child” “the film is not suitable for children”


1.1 a son or daughter of any age. “when children leave home, parents can feel somewhat redundant”
1.2 an immature or irresponsible person.”she’s such a child!”
1.3 a person who has little or no experience in a particular area.”he’s a child in financial matters”
1.4 children (archaic) The descendants of a family or people. “the children of Abraham”
1.5 child of a person regarded as the product of (a specified influence or environment) “a child of the Sixties”
1.6. a task which is easily accomplished. “tapping telephones is child’s play”
1.7. from a child. Since childhood. “from a child she had taken ballet lessons”
1.8. with child. (archaic) Pregnant

It is in Valerius Maximus (Rousseau, 1979: 44) where we find the expression puerum infantem. In-fans in latin meaning not-talking. It comes from the verb for, foris, fari, fatus sum meaning talking, using words. Verbaliztion then becomes the core element of the language theory that explains the different stages of child’s growth and development.

There are philosophers and language theorists that work on this matter. Noam Chomsky (1972) in his language theory presents his main concern: what does a baby know? What he has in mind is that according to the ancient tradition (i.e. the understanding of knowledge as reminscence) a young human being already has certain knowledge. Plato argues that infants retain memories of past lives and thus come into this world with a grasp of language. John Locke (1996), on the contrary, countered that a baby’s mind is a blank state onto which the world etches its impression. The agreement of those theories could be seen in Rousseau’s Emile. It is said there:

“‘Reasoning should not begin too soon’ Locke’s great maxim was that we ought to reason with children and just now this maxim is much in fashion.” (Rousseau, 1979: 52)

“Proceed slowly. May I venture to state here the greatest, the most important, the most useful rule in all education? It is, not to gain time, but to loose it. Forgive the paradox, O my ordinary reader! It must be uttered by any one who reflects, and whatever you may say, I prefer paradoxes to prejudices.” (Rousseau, 1979: 57)

“The earliest education ought, then to be purely negative. It consists not in teaching truth or virtue, but in shielding the heart from vice and the mind from error…Without a prejudice or a habit, there would be in him nothing to counteract the effect of your care” (Rousseau, 1979: 57)

3 See Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. Emile, or On Education, (ed. and trans by Allan Bloom). New York: Basic Books (1979) p.44: “To avoid being misled, let us remember what really accords with our present abilities. Humanity has its place in the general order of things; childhood has its place in the order of human life. Mankind must be considered in the individual man, and childhood in the individual child. To assign each his place, and to establish him in it – to direct human passions as human nature will permit – is all we can do for his welfare. The rest depends on outside influences not under our control.”
The apophatic approach to the question of education then, is the most relevant attitude towards “fragility” of childhood and to yet-to-become someone.

“I am teaching my pupil a very tedious and difficult art, which yours certainly have not acquired, – that of being ignorant. For the knowledge of one who gives himself credit for knowing only what he really does know reduces itself to a very small compass” (Rousseau, 1979: 92)

After years of research Chomsky proposed that newborns have a hard wired ability to understand grammar. “Children know quite a lot of a language, much more than you would expect, before they can exhibit that knowledge.” Chomsky’s vision was widely discussed and provoked debates in the late 1970s, but we could not agree more with him on the fact that childhood existst and is regarded in a certain context only. Nevertheless, the warning sign of such vision is what later Einstein will also explore – the usage of imagination: everyday objects keep active not the imagination but the memory, and imagination should stay awaken in every possible context.

2. The Context

Historians, sociologists, and ethnologists insist on the necessity to observe childhood in its special respective context: social, religious, economic, and demographic. But it’s equally important to engage our research within a more global context in order to conclude about a certain progress.

According to a UNICEF article in “Defining Childhood”, childhood is an important stage during which the children experience the shadow of fear and violence and needs to be protected against abuse and exploitation.

This means that childhood is defined then on the basis of the quality of life conditions.

The main characteristics that appear are as follows:

- a notion of family
- a notion of fragility
- a notion of dependence
- a notion of the rights
- a notion of discernment

In 19th century, a child was considered to be someone below 15. In the next hundred years – a child was someone under 13, and cannot be accused by the law. For about 200 years the concept of childhood was allined with the limits of time...

The more recent research is focused on specific topics like arguing with Ariés on different cultural and individual differences in looking at childhood. Others designate the existence of violence against children during 17th, 18th, 19th centuries.

Postman states that childhood being both the structure of society and a psychological state, occurs c.16th century. The time of the middle ages is called

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the dark ages and according to Postman childhood then “disappears”. We cannot accept the view that in the so called by Postman dark ages childhood does not exist, education “disappears”, etc. (Postman, 1982).

During the Enlightenment Rousseau develops the idea of childhood as individual topic by his Emile, or on Education.

Afterwards the understanding of childhood is regarded within the so-called socio-pedagogical determinism. Those who defend this view claim that the child is neither good, nor bad – regarded as a tabula rasa on which the teacher or society “write” their ideas. Opposite of this view is the one of biological or post birth determinism. There is also a Renaissance vision that the child is full of virtues when coming to life and then vices destruct it in time.5

In the new dictionary of primary education and pedagogy, Durkheim and Buisson (1911) define the childhood as a period of growth, in other words this period when the individual not only physically but also morally is yet-to-become, it acquires its “form” in a sense. That is why the child is a being-yet-to-become, incomplete. Therefore, it’s fragile. For quite a long time sociology adopted the vision of Durkheim about childhood: the approach where the child or childhood is considered not as an object of research in itself but as part of sociological, institutional modus, part of family or school, or justice.

Philippe Ariès in 1960 wrote his famous work “L’Enfant et la vie familiale sous l’Ancien Régime”7 that changed the perspective. He presents a new vision on childhood as a social construction, related and dependent on the social context and the scientific discourse but regarded in its own value as a distinct object of research.

The conclusions of Aries have been criticized because of the sources that have been used for them, i.e. art images, not so much written documents. Nevertheless, his oeuvre has its own value for focusing on childhood as a separate problem, as a subject of historical anthropology.

According to P. Bankova: “the development of the nuclear type of family and the separation of the educational system from the family leads to the slow alienation of child’s world from that of the elders. Children are treated like ‘socially alienated’ when they enter in the realm of education or outside of their homes.” (Bankova, 2011:123).

These different types of approaches to the theme about childhood and its definition reaffirm the need to broaden the perspective when dealing with such a delicate topic. Language and philosophy as universal forms of abstractive thinking have always been in the core of developing methodologies in working on the childhood concept.

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3. Ethnographic and folklore research

Although abstractive forms of thinking help conceptualize the different approaches to the topic of childhood, the concrete everyday life experiences that could be observed in folklore and ethnographic fields determine its inner richness and specific forms. The crucial research in the field is available through the works of scientists in the field of folklore studies, ethnology, philology: Petya Bankova, Irena Bokova, Elena Tsolova, Tzvetana Manova.

The method of ethnographic research both presents the detailed picture of the childhood as a subject of socio-cultural observation, and draws attention on defining, redefining and eventually developing the idea of childhood in society. The ethnographic conclusions are very important for any future explorations on this question.

Indeed, the focus on childhood as a separate segment of human life is a result of two amends: the different attitude towards so called “little adults” taken basically as the working power in the family, to the childhood as a free human being with a possibility that envisions and chooses at a great degree its own direction of evolution and elevation. The interest drawn into the subject of childhood has its foreground in the differentiation of ages – young / old which is well known from ancient times. It is important to note also that the child’s age is measured by life practices typical for the respective period. (Bokova, 2002: 52).

A more philological perspective on the topic of childhood and folklore tradition is taken by Elena Tsolova (1999) in her book “Archaic Levels of Children’s Folklore” from where we draw the conclusion that the childrens’ games or cumulative rhymes represent a unique depot to safeguard and transmit the archaic features and relic centers. Another approach is taken by Tz. Manova (2013) in her research on rituals that originally do not include children in those sacred practices. Within time the allowance of children participation shifts the accent from sacredness to the playfulness of the festive activities. (Manova, 2013: 267). All of these examples manifest the importance of childhood in its own validity being a part of human life but also in its role within the sociocultural context and its main role as a tool of measuring and evaluation of folk traditions and practices.

The whole period of mythology is regarded as the childhood of human history. It is the time before the Logos, before the order and Word with a capital letter. Surrounding world begins to speak the same language and therefore becomes known. The naïve regard later gives way to the classified way of understanding – when logos steps on the scene of representation. The similar consequence could be traced in human life: the time of not-yet articulated, the time of becoming is in a sense the time of the myth-full-of-potential that turns into logos-actualized possibilities. Therefore, from a pure state in human life that is scientifically observed as a separate subject, childhood becomes a kind of “tool” itself for looking at different

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sociocultural realities. Through childrens’ eyes, an ethnographer understands many of the typical characteristics of various cultures: the childhood-memory becomes interpretative scheme. (Bokova, 2002:51-65).

4. Education

Inductive methodology of ethnographic research and deductive direction of philosophical approach cross their paths in the system of education.

The fact that the interest towards childhood has been brought up relatively late in human history (according to Ariès: circa 15th century) seems to be in concert with the fact that new forms of education enhance in the late middle ages: namely, the establishment of the first universities in Europe (Bologna, Oxford, Paris).

As it was mentioned above here, the development of educational process outside of the inner family life is a step towards differentiation of childhood as a distinct period of human life.

“...Education comes to us from nature itself, or from other men, or from circumstances. The internal development of our faculties and of our organs is the education nature gives us; the use we are taught to make of this development is the education we get from other men; and what we learn, by our own experience, about things that interest us, is the education of circumstances…. Now of these three different educations, that of nature does not depend upon us; that of circumstances depends upon us only in certain respects; that of men is the only one of which we are really masters, and that solely because we think we are” (Rousseau, 1979: 12-13).

As such the educational system must be the most sensitive organ for catching up with social and cultural changes, contexts, situations, etc. In other words, it must be very flexible (as a child is) and even fluid (in the modern sense of the word) for keeping up adequately to child’s needs, wills, or won’ts.

5. Philosophy for Children (P4C)

The following examples are based on P4C practice.

In all sorts of methods of education dialogue plays a crucial role. As Bakhtin (1984) points out: “Two voices are the minimum for life, the minimum for existence.” (Bakhtin: 252). Dialogue is the basis for any philosophical, ethnographic, scientific research: working with open minds is at the bottom of each serious research with positive practical results.

In International Education policies, issues, and challenges Nicholas Burnett (2014) reminds us that education, especially elementary education, is a human right, enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There are four promising properties of the education niche which he describes and these are: creating turbulence, promoting rights, building argumentative confidence, and providing a platform for networking. From my own experience as university lecturer I couldn’t agree more on the fact that learning critical thinking is the best
way to grow independent minds. A particularly important part of this account is the focus on doubleloop learning. This involves moving beyond competent performance to ask more critical questions, redesigning systems or reframing experiences. Students have always needed to be creative and resilient if they are to thrive in higher education. (MacNaughton, Koutsioumpas, 2017: 15-33).

There is increasing discussion and academic debate about changing and improving learning and teaching praxis as widespread and increased digitization continues to impact life of individuals and society, both locally and globally. Widening the access to higher education is high on the global agenda not just in the field of education but also from the perspective of employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and innovation in the labor market. An open education for all learners is key to maximize the impact of education on society and to ensure its success and sustainability. Opening up education requires a change in attitudes and mindset that emphasizes flexible growth instead of fixed traditions. Enhancing quality in open education requires a system-based approach in which contingency provides for the integration of digitization and technology in both management and leadership. An open education pedagogical approach, or a more self-directed approach is likewise essential to foster openness in both praxis and culture. (Ossiannilsson, Altinay, 2016:159-177).

Opening up education requires the adoption of practices and cultures that foster academic research and collaboration to enhance learning and teaching. There are several definitions of open education, but that developed by the Open Education Consortium is the most frequently used globally and is the most relevant for the present study (Open Education Consortium, 2016). According to the Consortium, open education is:

[...] a mode of realizing education enabled by digital technologies that are accessible to as many people as possible. It offers multiple ways of learning and sharing knowledge and a variety of access routes to both formal and non-formal education.

Furthermore, the Open Education Consortium (2016) has defined open education as comprising the “resources, tools and practices that employ a framework of open sharing to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide”.

The Open Education Consortium (2016) emphasized that the most basic characteristic of education is sharing, which is the foundation philosophy of education:

Sharing is probably the most basic characteristic of education: education is sharing knowledge, insights and information with others.

There is a growing need for engaging staff and students in praxis.

Philosophy for children gives such opportunities. It begins at the same place where philosophy itself begins: at the level of pure wonder; no definitions, no predications, no prejudice…

Double-loop learning is an educational concept and process that involves teaching people to think more deeply about their own assumptions and beliefs. It was created by Chris Argyris, a leading organizational trainer, in the mid-1980’s, and developed over the next decade into an effective tool.
Philosophy for Children (P4C) can be conceptualised as a dialogic, participatory mechanism, that is an example of “authentic participation”. (Barrow, 2010:61-69). Philosophy for Children was developed by Matthew Lipman based on the Socratic tradition of dialogue. The classroom becomes a community of inquiry focused on exploration and questioning. All discussion in Philosophy for Children sessions is generated through children’s questions in response to stimuli such as poems, pictures or stories. Democratic processes determine which questions are given most discussion time and the teacher’s role within the discussion is facilitative rather than authoritative. It was established as an educational program in the 1970s, but has received more attention in the last decades.

Philosophy for Children emphasises logic and criticality and has been identified as a key thinking skills approach. This kind of education is built on the basis of Habermas’s (1981) theory of society, which regards communication as central to participation in a democratic society. Habermas’s notion of democracy widens the scope of political participation beyond the formal institutions of politics across social and cultural institutions and organisations, such as schools. This suggests that there is a need for a “transformative, dialogical and participatory” pedagogical approach in schools to support children’s development and prepare them for participation in the various public arenas in which democracy is enacted.

The development of dialogic ontology has been heavily influenced by Bakhtin (1984). Bakhtin’s position is paradoxical and dialogic for him, it involves the coming together of opposing positions, yet maintains the differences between them. The aim of dialogue from this perspective is not to reach a convergence of self and other in intersubjective agreement. Dialogic space is a space in which different perspectives are held in tension in a way which does not lead to resolution but produces sparks of insight, learning and creativity.

There is evidence that students’ confidence is improved when their reasoning abilities are strong. They can see contradictions in human actions and challenge purely dogmatic moral principles.

In 2014, UNESCO published a pedagogical guide to philosophy titled PHILOSOPHY MANUAL: A SOUTH-SOUTH PERSPECTIVE.

In essence, philosophy education aims to prevent ideological indoctrination, to encourage inquiry and the pursuit of truth and the rejection of political despotism.

A pivotal discipline in the social sciences and humanities, philosophy finds its place at the crossroads of the development of individuals, for beyond just knowing, it is definitely a matter of “knowing how to be”.

Just as there is an art of knowing, there is also an art of teaching. This is why UNESCO today proposes to present a study organized into three phases: a taking into account of the contributions of previous studies of the subject, an outline of this teaching as it is practised today, and a sketch of prospects for the future. (Sané, 2007: 1-13).

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An interest in Philosophy for Children (P4C) naturally leads to a consideration of the legal corpus relating to children’s rights, and in particular to each child’s right to develop personal opinions and to be assisted by his or her school in this process. Here we are drawn to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, which among other specific rights accords the child “the right to express [his or her] views freely” (article 12), “the right to freedom of expression […] to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds” (article 13) and to “freedom of thought”, (article 14). The text of the Convention is resolutely innovative on a philosophical and political level, in that it proposes a concept of children as not only needing of special protection, but also as requiring specific services and deserving to be considered active participants in their own lives.

A variety of terms are used to discuss the teaching of philosophy to children. “Philosophy for Children”, often abbreviated to P4C, is the term preferred by Lipman. This covers the whole stretch of primary through secondary instruction. Others prefer to speak of “Philosophy with Children” (PwC), which has given rise to discussions about whether “children” designates just another audience for philosophy, one of many possible audiences, or whether it refers to a specific group, for whom teaching philosophy requires specially adapted methods and tools: in this case there would be one philosophy “for children”, for childhood, and another philosophy “for adults” (or for adolescents, if we consider them to be a separate group from children). Philosophers differ on this question. Some, like Karl Jaspers or Michel Onfray, believe that children are “spontaneously philosophical”, because of their continual and sweeping existential questioning – to these philosophers, to philosophize is considering a question as if for the very first time. Others argue that, while there may have been a childhood of philosophy (for example, the rise of European philosophy with the pre-Socratics), there cannot be a child-philosopher, because to philosophize is precisely to leave childhood behind (for example, Descartes). This raises the philosophical question of the proper age for philosophizing. Plato has been interpreted as being opposed to philosophy with children, on the basis of a passage in the Republic, however others point to his dialogues with adolescents – for example, in the Lysis. Those who practice P4C have observed that when a child wants to express an idea, he or she searches for words, and in doing so those words become functional elements of his or her thought. Children’s thought processes can in this way be improved by developing their language skills, but their language skills can also be refined by developing their thought processes. This is especially true because a community of enquiry essentially exists in an oral form: it allows us to learn to think through discussion. This allows children who do not yet know how to read and write to begin thinking more deeply. By encouraging oral and verbal exchanges, children who have difficulties with writing can express themselves and maintain pertinent positions in discussions that would be very difficult for them to write down. For them it is a chance to have access to a level of language that does not obstruct the communication of their thoughts, but which on the contrary stimulates the development of their thought-processes through being directly confronted with the ideas of other children. P4C is based on the principle
that we should not mythify childhood. Many children live through very difficult situations from the moment of their birth – children experience famine, slavery, child labour, incest, prostitution, maltreatment, bombings, the loss of loved ones and more. Even in developed countries, in peace time and among families that are comfortably off, many children live with parents who are unhappy together, for example, and many children experience separation and divorce. In addition, all children question the nature of death from around the age of three. Psychologists can help children cope with these issues by encouraging them to put their experiences of suffering into cathartic words, but children can also learn to think through such questions themselves, to approach existential questions through philosophical reasoning – allowing them to take a step back from their emotions and turn difficult situations into subjects for serious thought. This approach is even more effective in the context of the classroom because it becomes a collective process; the children can break free from their existential solitude by recognizing that the questions they each raise apply to them all. This can produce a sense of reassurance, and a feeling of belonging to a shared human condition, of growing up within a community. Philosophy has therapeutic virtue, as the sages of antiquity rightly remarked, because it “cares for the soul”. Not that it seeks to treat problems directly (today that is the realm of therapists and different kinds of therapy), but many argue that in thinking about how to understand life and death, sorrow and the conditions of happiness, the philosophical approach can bring a certain peace or consolation. While teaching how to philosophize is first and foremost a learning – not a therapeutic – situation, philosophizing is, however, an exceptionally therapeutic activity. Others feel that, because children ask so many questions, sometimes with a great deal of apprehension, it is better to give them the answers so they feel more secure when confronted with the problems of existence. Nonetheless, one can never make children’s existential questions go away, because they are adult questions that will resurface periodically over the course of their lives.

To provide answers to a child’s questions is justified when the questions are technical, historical, legal or scientific, because we are transmitting knowledge to the child. It is the role of schools to transmit humanity’s scientific heritage to the next generation, as this heritage is a rationally developed response to questions that humanity has asked itself over the course of its history. However, simply providing answers to the philosophical questions that science cannot answer, such as those concerning ethics, can keep children from thinking for themselves.

The apophatic attitude and the freedom of letting the child’s choices show the way seem to be a characteristic of the French educational system. It is worth it to emphasize the great level of tolerance that French society enculturates. Emmanuel Levinas (1991) and his theory on the space we give to the other person in our own attitude is a part of these educational methods and views. Educating openmindedness is the basis for having cultural and caring citizens and to grow a healthy civilized and enculturated milieu of growing youth.
References:


“My Dear Child, My Soul, My Life, My Hope”: Mapping the Changing Patterns of Parenting in Early Republican Turkey (1920-1960) through Private Letters from Fathers to Children

Nazan Çiçek

Abstract: This paper seeks to locate, identify and sample the manifestations of the modern, Western-based notion of childhood in the intellectual and discursive cosmos of the early Republican era (c. 1920-c.1960) in Turkey through the investigation of a series of private letters that were written by pro-regime prominent male figures to their children. The letters give invaluable insights into the ways in which two vitally important and heavily gendered statuses in the human life cycle, namely childhood and fatherhood, were re-discovered and re-conceptualized along the lines and dictates of the modernization project. Apart from delineating the changing patterns that came to characterize father-child relationships in middle-class, Western-style educated strata of Turkish society in the first half of the twentieth century this paper also hopes to draw attention to the plastic and socially-constructed nature of these categories. Each category underwent a remarkable discursive transformation as the founding elites of the Turkish Republic set out to replace the Islamic/Eastern Weltanschauung of the country with a Western-oriented one.

Keywords: Turkey, Turkish Republic, Early Republican Era, Childhood, Fatherhood, Child-rearing patterns

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As a historian whose main area of interest is the parameters and transformations of the value systems of Muslim Turkish society in the late Ottoman and early Republican Turkish era, I have looked at how childhood has been conceptualized, re-discovered and re-constructed in order to better understand Turkey’s century-long struggle with modernization, Westernization and nation-state building. Although I did not start out as a historian of childhood, the idea of re-mapping the supposedly over-researched modernization process of Ottoman/Turkish society through an alternative narrative – one based on a subaltern group namely children – has allowed me to become profoundly familiar with the subject. It was my contention that in the Turkish case the adaptation, internalization and reproduction of major Western notions and values, or their rejection, by policy makers, intelligentsia and the general public could be better grasped by analysing how children were perceived, treated and discursively instrumentalized as modernization/Westernization played out.

As the literature on childhood firmly suggests, the concept of childhood is contingent and ever changing. It is constantly being reinvented, rediscovered, and restructured by each society over time in accordance with the prevailing worldviews supporting those societies. In tandem with the expansionist qualities and universalist claims of Western interpretations of modernity, it is certain that a particular understanding of childhood has been generated as a social and cultural construct of the modern times in the Western world. It has proved its hegemonic power as having an impact on the de-construction and re-construction of the idea of childhood in non-Western political landscapes with modernization agendas.

Throughout my publications regarding the history of childhood in Turkey (Çiçek, 2018; 2016; 2014) I have invariably concluded that aside from placing the child in the centre of their nation-building and citizen creating project, Turkish modernizing elites (known as Kemalists) also tended to regard, at least discursively, the handling of children by society, in the broadest sense, as a benchmark in the progress of modernization and civilization. The child for the Kemalist elite, in other words, metaphorically stood for the Turkish Republic as well as the Turkish nation. This metaphor was constituted both visually and discursively in many texts representative of the zeitgeist of the early republic.

In this paper I shall seek to locate, identify and sample the manifestations of Western-based/modern notions of childhood in the intellectual and discursive cosmos of the early Republican era (between the 1920s and the 1960s) through the investigation of a series of private letters that were written by pro-regime prominent male figures to their children. In so doing I shall try to capture the transformation that the normative meaning and ideal model of childhood as well as prerequisites of parenting, fatherhood in particular, underwent in the cognitive map of the decision making elites- be they intelligentsia, statesmen or educational professionals- in the first half of the twentieth century in Turkey, a country with avowed aspirations to catch up with the “modern world”.

1 By the term subaltern I refer to those categories that are precluded from playing any meaningful role in a regime of power, the people who on the basis of their class, age, caste or gender are deemed inferior and are denied to have a say and control over their lives.
The three sets of letters I shall use in this paper belong to Ziya Gökalp (Nüzhet, 1931), Memduh Şevket Esendal (Esendal, 2001; Esendal, 2003 and İsmet İnönü (Özel, 1988), all of them famous members of the Republican establishment circa foundation. The letters under examination here, edited and published within a span of almost seventy years by different Turkish publishers, have been available in print for quite a while. Although some of these letters might have been used by researchers working on the life and career of each of those political figures, they have not yet been explored in order to canvass the so-called new fatherhood that the republican regime apparently promoted. In the process of sifting through hundreds of letters for this paper, some easily recognizable trends and frequently appearing themes that characterize an authoritative-compassionate parenting style began to surface in all three sets of letters. This, in turn, informed the backbone of this paper.

Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) was a Turkish sociologist, writer, poet, and political activist. His thinking, which has been described as a cult of nationalism and modernization, was particularly influential in shaping the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk was reported to have referred to Gökalp as his ideological father. When İstanbul was occupied by the Allied Powers after the First World War, Gökalp was arrested for his political activities and briefly exiled from the country to Malta. The letters I will be quoting here were all written during his exile, starting in 1919 and ending in 1920, and addressed to his three daughters: Senihe, Hürriyet and Türkân. The youngest daughter was born in 1918, so although her name was included in some of the letters her older sisters were the actual recipients.

Memduh Şevket Esendal (1883-1952) was a Turkish writer, diplomat and politician. He was four times deputy to the Turkish parliament between the years of 1939 and 1946. From 1942 to 1945 Esendal acted as secretary-general to Republican People’s Party, the main political vehicle through which the Republican modernization project was carried out. He also worked as the Turkish ambassador to Baku (1921-1924), Tehran (1925-1930) and Kabul (1933-1941). His letters to his two sons Mehmet Suat (b.1912) and Ahmet Şevket (b.1915) and his daughter Emine (b.1923) were written throughout his diplomatic mission years.

İsmet İnönü(1884-1973) was a Turkish general and statesman. He served as the prime minister of Turkey several times during the consolidation years of the Republican regime and was elected the second president of the country after Atatürk’s death. Until 1950, when free and fair elections were finally held to end the single party era, he enjoyed the title of National Chief. His letters that I use here were addressed to his middle child and second son Erdal (b.1926), who was attending graduate school in the United States from 1947 to 1951.

The fact that children were regarded as individual beings who deserved to be the recipients of private letters, not mere extension of their parents, appears as an indicator of the existence of modern and largely romanticized notions of childhood among the founding elite of the republic. Instead of including their names in the letters addressed to their mothers and talking about them, these fathers chose to write separate letters to their children and talk with them. They were cognizant that in modern times, children, rather than being transitory inhabitants of Lilliputian world, came to be regarded as a suí generis group separate from adults who deserve
special treatment and care. As a result of their supposedly essential “otherness” and inherently vulnerable status, children increasingly became subject to an entirely different consumption regime that included the production of food, books, magazines, clothing, recreational spaces and living arrangements specially designed for them. These letters, replete with “nice and pretty” incidents and artefacts, which the fathers under question saw befitting the *sui generis* qualities of childhood, are evidence of the emergence of a new understanding of children and childhood in the cognitive map of modernizing Turkish elites. The letters skilfully limit the narrative to “children’s topics”, which range from school, fun, toys, pets, sweets, friendship, healthy living, and games, and try to keep the children away from adult concerns. Gökalp, as a prisoner in exile, with no chance of supervising his family’s wellbeing, seems to be at pains to ensure that his daughters carry on their life as normally as possible. He portrays his living conditions in Malta as almost idyllic, and exhorts his children to do their homework, get on well with each other, draw pictures, and play cheerful games (Nüzhet, 1931: 15-16). Likewise, Esendal’s letters (Esendal, 2001; Esendal, 2003) frequently talk about cute puppies, adorable kittens, beautiful flowers and gardens. Even in İnönü’s letters (Özel, 1988: 150-170), although his son Erdal was in his late adolescence, the father creates a sheltered world with almost no reference to the brutal realities of the adult world and mostly conceals political and personal hardship he himself was going through at the time. In all three sets of letters, the fathers promise (and sometimes send) gifts along with the letters to reward their children’s small successes or to merely celebrate them being good children.

In these letters emerges a new type of masculinity and concept of fatherhood that informs the cognitive repertoire of the Western-educated young male strata of the Muslim Turkish population of the era. Although my focus in this paper is on the history of childhood, the very same letters can be also used in documenting the history of fatherhood in Turkey, which remains almost entirely untouched by the contemporary scholarship. As opposed to the traditional authoritarian patriarch – who avoids any public display of his feelings, maintains hierarchical relations with family members, expects absolute obedience and respect from subordinates, typically resorts to corporal punishment in his child-rearing practices, never concerns himself with the inner world and psychological needs of his children, and regards a child as an economic investment in the future – the fathers in these letters represent the Turkish vanguards of “disciplinary intimacy” (Broadhead, 1988: 71-73) that characterized the middle-class domesticity in the Western settings since the nineteenth century. “Through a strategic relocation of authority relations in the realm of emotion and a conscious intensification of emotional bond between the authority figure and its charge” (Broadhead, 1988: 71), this new notion of domesticity brought about a new image of a father figure, one who does not refrain from incessantly expressing his love and affection towards his children and feels responsible for their happiness. Since the new type of masculinity favoured by Kemalism took its inspiration mainly from the European middle-class values of the time, it was not surprising that in the early Republican era, the role of the father as an intimate participant in family life attracted as much attention as his functional role as provider and the head of the family. The young male Kemalists regarded
Western civilization as the main point of reference in construing the components of new Turkish *habitus*, and the ideal fatherhood propagated by the advice literature in the Western world at the turn of the century naturally influenced and informed their understanding of normative framework for proper, scientific, civilized and modern fatherhood. Regardless of whether the rigid advice and ideals that were imposed upon by child-rearing manuals were in fact practised by their targeted audience, and also whether the type of ideal father portrayed in the manuals could actually be found in real life, one can safely suggest that nineteenth-century, middle-class, Western fatherhood depicted by discursive texts of the era appeared as loving, caring and intimate. That loving figure was what the Kemalist elites saw when they sought their reference point in fatherhood. As Shawn Johansen convincingly argues in his work on the fatherhood in antebellum era America, “When long-standing patriarchal structural supports based in law, church and community began to erode under the pressure of nineteenth-century economic and social changes, fathers turned to newer means of control: Love” (Johansen, 2001: 100). The letters written by American fathers in early industrializing America that Johansen samples in his *Family Men* express their love and concern towards their children in almost identical words with that of the letters I use in this work. In both cases, fathers repeatedly and extensively express their love and emotional attachment to their children and in the meantime expect to exert control over them through obligation that accompanies love.

While families had always been a location of affection and love, in the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these emotions began to replace production as the primary purpose of the family unit. Family members came to expect emotional fulfilment from each other, and not surprisingly, expressions of love increased in intensity and meaning during this time. Parents found this new intensity useful in inculcating obligation in children (Johansen, 2001: 100).

In most of the letters, fathers call their children pet names, which are usually accompanied by a great deal of endearment. Esendal addresses his daughter as “sugar pie”, “my little lady”, “my diamond”, “my soul”, “my pretty girl”, “my pearl”, “my flower”, “the light of my eye”, “my reason to be proud”. His son, Ahmet Şevket, is referred to as “my little baby”, “my precious”, “my boy”. Likewise, both İnönü and Gökalp always use tender names, such as “my dear” and “my precious”. The letters are couched in an extremely affectionate tone. Their writers do not seem afraid of articulating their feelings openly and honestly. When writing to his beloved son, the extremely serious-looking National Chief İnönü confesses time after time that he often cries as he touches his son’s picture or his latest letter, and that his eyes water at the mere mention of his son’s name. He wonders if Erdal eats hot meals, he gets upset if he himself eats something that he knows Erdal is particularly fond of, he frequently asks what Erdal eats for supper. He never fails to mention how much he misses his son and how he wishes he could see and hug him. Erdal’s birthday offers a special occasion for İnönü to celebrate his son’s life and declare his fatherly love and pride. Devotion and tenderness percolate in all of the 400 letters written by father İnönü to his son Erdal and all letters end in “I kiss you in your eyes, in your face and in your hair”.

41
All the letters under examination nicely fit in the description of “intimate father” that John Tosh (1999: 99) provided in his work on middle-class Victorian fatherhood:

The intimate father set more store by the transparency of spontaneous relations than by the disciplines of restraint. Through anxieties about the future and tensions between parental roles, the intimate father held to the value of tenderness and familiarity, both to himself and to his children. He wandered into the nursery at will, instead of requiring formal presentations. The intimate father praised, he laughed, he romped.

Not surprisingly, fathers under investigation never fear they might look emotionally dependent upon and even addicted to their children. They actively seek their children’s affection and attention. They invariably yet gently reproach the daughters and sons alike to write more detailed letters and to send them more regularly. For example, although Erdal İnönü wrote a letter every week for almost 4 years to his father in addition to occasional postcards and telegrams, he nevertheless was pestered for more (Özel, 1988: 91). Esendal complained that his older son was no longer writing as frequent as he used to and added that he would be happy even if he received a blank page with his son’s signature on it (Esendal, 2003, 24). Similarly, Gökalp constantly exhorted, even almost emotionally blackmailed, his daughters to write more than one letter a week and jokingly blamed them for being lazy if they did not.

I have not received any letter from you this week. In the past weeks you used to send me several within the same week. Yet recently I am lucky if I can get my hands on only one letter. Let me remind you that I cannot survive this place without your letters. I am in perfect health but if I am deprived of information as to your wellbeing the whole world loses its light and I fall in deep darkness (Nüzhet, 1931: 16).

Again, letters reveal that parental affection does not veer according to the child’s gender. Both girls and boys receive compassionate fatherly counsel and are equally adored and doted upon. Fathers seem very much concerned about their daughters’ education and closely watch their talents and inabilities in order to guide them to a future occupation that might keep them happy and fulfilled. They never, not even slightly, imply that a girl should adjust her expectations from the world due to the dictates of prevailing gender inequality. None of the letters contain any sort of gendered advice reminding the girls of their disadvantaged position in the society. Daughters of Gökalp and Esendal are given the impression that they are equal, if not superior, to opposite sex.

As his exile days draws to a close Gökalp writes in one of his last letters from Malta:

My Daughter Seniha,

I have never resented not having a son. I am not one of those narrow-minded, old-fashioned fathers who value sons above daughters. Since the early days when my intellectual adventure began I have believed in the equality between women and men. It has been my contention that daughters and sons are equal in terms of continuing his father’s lineage. I have written many texts on this subject with the hope of convincing others to share my opinion. Nevertheless, if I am to be honest, when this tragedy befell me I was surprised to see that you achieved to comfort our
family that I, as the head of the family, was forced to temporarily abandon, even more powerfully than a son. I was surprised because you were just a child and your education was not completed yet. Your conduct in this process vindicated my belief in the value of women one more time. You managed the housework that your sick mother was not capable of doing, you made sure that we kept in uninterrupted postal communication; you looked after your mother and your siblings. You never failed to keep me informed. You were the one who consoled and cheered all of us in those troubled times. I am so grateful (Nüzhet: 1931:107-108).

I should mention in passing that it is always saddening, and even daunting at times, for the historian of childhood not to be able to hear and retrieve the voices of real children, whose cries and laughter were alike forever lost in the dark corridors of the past, and instead try to patch up a story through the voices of adults who had talked about and written on children. As in most societies, late Ottoman and early Republican Turkish children did not leave much written evidence behind that reflected their vantage point in life. In the case at hand, it would be enormously exciting as well as illustrative to find and dissect the letters written by children of these three prominent political and intellectual figures to their fathers and not only capture the dialogical nature of their communication but also directly penetrate into the emotional inner world and intimate process of thinking that dominated their lives. Yet as is the case with historians, it is still exhilarating to find some sort of primary and archival material that carries the echoes of past children’s voices and allows us to appreciate and make inferences as to their possible life experiences as the letters I examined in this paper do.

In conclusion, I repeat my assertion that treatment of children was seen as a litmus test for the Republic’s march in the path of modernization and Europeanization. Attempts at incorporating the modern child-rearing practices imported from the Western world into the realm of Turkish childhood and constructing a new understanding of child informed by the modern notion of childhood were mutually constitutive in Turkish case. Although the emphasis was mostly and ineluctably on the re-discovered and indispensable value of the child for the future of the nation and the Republican regime, the child as a value in itself was also of interest to modernizing fathers of the era with cultural and symbolic capitals. These fathers, as the embodiment of new and ideal masculinity that the Republican regime wished to promote valued dialogue in interpersonal relations, believed in individual liberty and agency, and most importantly regarded a father’s love and affection for children not only as a personal achievement but also a political commitment to the project of modernization, scientific thinking and Republican value system.

References:


Apprenticeship in 13th-Century Paris: Training Process, Learning Ability and Evaluation of Results

Ekaterina Kirillova

Abstract: This chapter is devoted to the apprenticeship in the 13th century’s Paris according to the famous “Book of Crafts” (Livre des métiers). The history of apprenticeship is one of the most important parts of the history of children and childhood, and one of the key subjects of the craft history in the Middle Ages. But craft regulations usually focus on the basic characteristics of a craft training (its term, tuition fees, fees for professional community, etc.), and historians hardly address the process of the apprenticeship in the Middle Ages – its course, stages, intensity, intermediate and final results, master-apprentice relationship, etc., due to the lack of sources until the 14th century, but rather even until the 15th and 16th centuries. On the basis of the analysis of Parisian regulations, of a series of calculations, and of the identification of the typical and the special, this chapter examines the “Book of Crafts” in order to focus on the apprenticeship process and the evaluation of the abilities of different children and the results of craft training.

Keywords: “Book of Crafts” of Paris, Crafts, Apprenticeship, Process of training, Learning ability.

Biographical note: Dr. Ekaterina Kirillova is the lead researcher in the Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), and Vice-Director of the Institute. The main field of her research is the history of crafts in France in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period, she is the author of three books (2007, 2011, 2019) and of more than 110 articles on crafts in Paris and Reims, on social history, urban history, family and gender history. The famous “Book of Crafts” of Paris occupies a special place in her research.


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Apprenticeship is an integral part of every master’s life, and the history of apprenticeship is one of the most important part of the history of children and childhood and one of the key subjects of the craft history in the Middle Ages. But historians hardly address the process of the apprenticeship – its course, stages, intensity, intermediate and final results, master-apprentice relationships, etc., due
to the lack of sources until the 14th century, but rather even until the 15th and 16th centuries.

Unique opportunity is given to study craft history of the 13th century’s France by the “Book of Crafts” – “the source par excellence on the medieval crafts” (Bernardi, 2009: 57). Even on the basis of its data, the study of the apprenticeship as a process is not an easy task. In this chapter, I will investigate the Parisian regulations of the 13th century in order to focus on the training process and the evaluation of its results, on the basis of the analysis of texts, of a series of calculations, and of the identification of the typical and the special.

The “Book of Crafts” of Paris (Livre des métiers) is a famous compilation composed of a hundred Parisian regulations of the 13th century (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879) – really, under Louis IX, about 60 regulations, as the last research confirmed (Bourlet, 2015; Kirillova, 2006). It was the first record of the most Parisian crafts’ statutes, and the only one in Europe of the 13th century such a representative set of regulations. The “Book of Crafts” can be considered as mass data that allow to study the typical. At the same time, the Parisian regulations of the 13th century have vivid medieval feature, which consists in many exceptions to the general rules, especially noticeable on the background of massive material, and in many explanations of specific incidents and different positions.

**Apprenticeship in Paris in the 13th Century**

Apprenticeship was one of the most important subjects of regulations. Their purpose was to regulate the criteria for proper training: its terms, tuition fees, fees for professional community, etc. But first a few preliminary remarks.

The “Book of Crafts” does not contain any information about the age of the beginning of apprenticeship. Later regulations determined this age only in exceptional cases (Kirillova, 2019: 130-133, 191-194, 206), for example, when the apprentices were required physical strength (bakers, cloth cutters) or knowledge (printers, flex., as in Paris in 1618 (Lespinasse, 1897: 712). For Western Europe of the 15th century, the age of the beginning of apprenticeship was from 6 to 16-18 years (Beattie, 2014: 58-60): from 5-6 years (for Italy of the 15th century), from 4 to 12 years (for England of the 17th century). Bellavitis (2014: 104-105) said that 14 years was an average age to learn different crafts in the 15th century’s Europe, with a plurality of local and situational options. “Articles concerning the general police of the city of Reims” (1627) required artisans to look after their children who should not stagger idly, but from the age of six should go to school or learn the craft.1

Medieval apprentice was almost always a boy, although a direct ban to teach girls of was rare for the medieval crafts. There is only one prohibition in the “Book of Crafts” – for the makers of saracen carpets (tapiossiers de tapiz sarrasinois; LI

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1 Art. VI “Sy tiendront la main à ce que leurs enfans depuis l’age de six ans soient envoyé aux escoles, et au sortir d’icelles, employez en mestiers sans les laisser oysifs et fénéans...” (Varin, 1847: 495).
statute2 (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 102)). It is a very important issue that deserves detailed consideration, and in this chapter girls as apprentices will be mentioned in cases where the statutes named them.

In the 13th century, the apprenticeship lasted from two years, as for cooks (cuisiniers; LXIX), to twelve years, as for makers of beads of coral and shells (patenostriers de coral et de coquille; XXVIII). Usually the term was six-eight years. The average duration of the apprenticeship was seven years, according to my calculations, based on 46 statutes of the “Book of Crafts”, where the terms of apprenticeship had been recorded. The master received a tuition fee, which was usually determined in the statute or less often – by the agreement between the master and the parents or guardians of the child3.

It was strictly forbidden to reduce the term established by the regulation. But it could be increased, if the parties came to such an agreement. Only masters who embroidered hats with gold and pearls (feserresse de chapiaux d’orfeis; XCV) forbade the increase of the apprenticeship term4 – and it was the only case in the 13th century Paris.

The longer the apprenticeship lasted, the cheaper it cost, and its logical conclusion was the free apprenticeship: one could learn a craft without any payment to the master. 24 Parisian crafts (from 101) recorded this possibility in their statutes. According to my calculations, the average time of free apprenticeship was nine years, and it was usually 1-2-3 years longer than usual. For example, the Parisian silk weavers (ouvrieres de tissuz de soie; XXXVIII) learned during 6 years for 4 livres, 8 years for 40 sous or 10 years without money, for God’s sake5. It gave the craftswoman (“mestresse”) or craftsman the opportunity not only to “return” the forces and resources spent on the apprentice, but also to earn by it, as a long-term apprenticeship included free work for the master, when the apprentice replaced a qualified assistant (a journeyman) who should be paid.

Later, the terms of apprenticeship reduced, and in Paris, as in other cities, they became two-four years, which was closer to the real time cost of mastery the profession. For example, Parisian makers of coverlets in the 14th century took less than two decades (1327-1341) to change the term of apprenticeship from six to two years6; from the late 15th century, makers of coverlets formed one craft with the carpet makers (LI and LII statutes of the “Book of Crafts”).

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2 Here and further it is the name of craft and the number of statute in the “Book of Crafts” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879).
3 The agreements were mentioned only in four statutes of the “Book of Crafts”: makers of gaiters (chauciers; LV), arms makers (blasonniers; LXXX), shoemakers (cordouanniers; LXXXIV), glovers (gantiers; LXXXVIII).
4 Art. I “...mès …ne les années ne pueent croitre ne apeticier” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 207).
5 Art. II “Item, nulle mestresse de se mestier ne pueent ne ne doivent prendre nulle apprentice a mains de sis anz et por iii livres, ou a viii anz et por xl souz, ou a x ans sanz argent; ne si n’en pueent avoir que deus ensemble, ne prendre en nulle autre, tant que leur terme soit aconpliz” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 74).
6 1327 (Lespinasse, 1892: 695); 1341 (Lespinasse, 1892: 696).
The question on the term of apprenticeship is not only a question of the ratio of this period and life expectancy, as well as the duration of subsequent work as a master, but on the real efficiency of craft training. In early Modern times, the terms were very different in different countries – for the same craft: from two and three years to six and seven years, for example, for the future tailor (Epstein and Prak, 2008: 8). All the terms were sufficient, while the acquisition of professional experience (as a journeyman) was mandatory for many professional traditions that lengthened the formation of the future master. In 13th century Paris, very few professional communities insisted on work after apprenticeship – silk weavers (ouvrieres de tissuz de soie; XXXVIII), pin makers (espingliers; LX).

The result of apprenticeship (not of an apprenticeship along with a work as journeyman) should have been the fullness of professional knowledge and skills, that is reflected in the traditional for the Parisian regulations formula about the real master – “que il sache le mestier, et il a de quoi” (“to know the craft and to have the means”). This formula expressed a common position of professional communities to allow only worthy people to the craft. Later it almost ceased to apply in regulations and was replaced by the more specific requirements: what meant “sufficient” for knowledge and skills required to obtain the title of master and what were the criteria of “means” for a craftsman. But for the 13th century it was very important rule. According to my calculations, the first part (“to know the craft”) is found in 22 statutes, the second (“to have the means”) in 30. Two components of this formula are found in 18 statutes together, and in 16 (4+12) there is one of its components separately, which gives a total of 34 texts – the third part of the “Book” (Kirillova, 2019: 317-327). Very few rules in the “Book of Crafts” have similar frequency of occurrence. This formula allows to see the general position of the Parisian communities on what a true professional should be. In all cases, this position is contained in the very first article of the regulations. Here, each craft explained its position on the most important moment for it: who could enter this professional community.

Course of Apprenticeship

The teaching process was a personal matter of the master, which was evaluated by its result (“to know the craft”), not by its course. Very rarely, some definitions of the training process slipped in the statutes. There is a unique example of the masons (maçons; XLVIII) who forbade the showing of the craft techniques to the labourers because they (“aides et vallès”) were not the apprentices and it was strictly forbidden to teach them accidentally. The masons did not want to explain in

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8 Art. VII “Les macons, les Morteliers et les Plastriers pueent avoir tant aides et vallès aleur mestier come il leur plaist, pour tant que il ne monstrent a nul de eus nul point de leur mestier” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 89).
their statute how to teach, on the contrary, they intended to forbid the doing so. But thanks to this prohibition, it is possible to see how masters taught apprentices, and despite the obviousness of such a pedagogical technique as “showing”, the ability to prove it on sources is very important. Later, for example, the manufacturers of silk products in Reims (1600) forbade to show anything to a woman or a girl, because it was forbidden to teach them, and it is also very rare example.

Master had not only to teach the child, he had to keep him or her fully; an apprentice demanded vigilant attention and constant control. As the crystal cutters (cristaliers; XXX) pointed out, the apprentice “is part of his master”10. Apprentice broke ties with his own family and became a part of the master’s family, however he was not an “ordinary”, but a special member of this family. He maintained some alienation from his master’s family and was controlled not only by his own master, but also by the professional community. Makers of candles (chandelier; LXIV) insisted that the apprentice worked always next to his master: if the master sent the apprentice to make candles in a house of a Parisian, he paid the fine of 5 sous to the king for not been there with his apprentice11. The master had to keep the apprentice “properly, as the son of an honest man”, as the makers of braies said (braaliers; XXXIX)12. Drapers (toissersans de lange; L) indicated how the apprentice should be treated: “it is worthy to keep the apprentice as a son of an honest man, to dress and to shoe him, to drink and to feed him”13.

Demanding such an attitude towards apprentices, drapers developed a way to punish a master who cared little for a child entrusted to him.

The friend (or relative – “si ami”) of the draper apprentice could testify and had to testify the guilt of the master in front of an official, who had to admonish the master. If within two weeks the master did not improve, the apprentice was looking for another teacher and was even returned some of the money – the child, who was in other house and other family, was not left without protection. The professional community was ready to protect him from arbitrariness of his master to whose care he was given for many years.

If the draper apprentice studied only a quarter of a year (le quart de l’an), the master returned ¾ of money paid for the apprenticeship, if only six months – ½ of money, if ¾ of the year – ¼ of the amount paid (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 95). And only if a whole year had passed, the master did not return anything:

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9 Art. LI “Item, que nul maistre dudit mestier ne pourra prendre femme ou fille pour leur aprendre ledit mestier, ny leur en montrer aucune chose, soit de la petite ou de grande navette” (Varin, 1847: 388).

10 Art. IV “…puis que il c’est partis de son mestre qui l’aura aprins” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 61).

11 Art. XVII “Se li mestre Chandelier envoie son aprentis faire chandoiles chiés bourgois de Paris, il est a v s. d’amende au Roy, s’il n’est avec son aprentis tant qu’il ait mis en oevre” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 134).

12 Art. IV “…et que il soit gouvernez bien et deument comme fuix de preud’omme” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 75).

13 Art. XIII “…que il tiengne l’aprentiz honorablement comme filz de preud’omme, de vestir et de chaucier, de boivre et de mangier” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 94).
money paid for apprenticeship had already been spent on the apprentice, as the statute confirmed, and “for the first year he earns nothing” (“car la premiere année ne gaaingne il riens”). That is why the jury had the right to take a pledge from the master, whose well-being and ability to fulfil his obligations caused doubts. The algorithm of the refund is clear proof of the irregularity of apprenticeship in medieval crafts: great effort during the first months or first year and much lower thereafter. I would like to stress that different years of the apprenticeships had different intensities and different meanings; the first, second... sixth years were not equivalent to each other. The apprenticeship of drapers lasted four years minimum, and if the apprentice earned nothing during the first year, the remaining three years he earned, he was not only an apprentice, who needed constant supervision.

Except for drapers (L), only makers of tablets for writing (tabletier; LXVIII) said about the master’s guilt, so the jury masters (prudoma) had to impose a fine. On the contrary, makers of fur hats (fourreurs et garnisseurs de chapiaux de feutre; XCI) insisted that the apprentice should not believe “against his master in craft matters” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 200).

The apprenticeship was seen solely as a continuous process; and the escapes of apprentices from their masters, mentioned in more than 10 Parisian regulations, were evaluated extremely negatively.

The madness, frivolity, dishonesty and stupidity of apprentices considered the main reason for their escapes. Such was the opinion of makers of hafts for knives (couteliers feseeurs de manches; XVII), makers of boxes and locks (boitiers, feseeurs de serreures a boites; XIX), makers of iron buckles (boucliers de fier; XXI), makers of dices (deiciers; LXXI), belt-makers (corroiers; LXXXVII). But “arrogance”, or stubbornness, and “audacity” were not necessarily inherent to the young. Also masters and journeymen could behave so, if they did not want to listen to the jury masters, obey them, pay fines, like bakers, masons, etc. They were not exclusively age-related characteristics.

Continuity of apprenticeship means not only the complete and constant control over the apprentice, but also a special intensity of the education: the apprentice was always in the workshop space (the master’s house), in an environment filled with tools and products of this craft, in contact with the teacher and his assistants (journeymen), who in their everyday life behaved differently from another artisans. They had their own mode of the day, their attitude to things (some were more valuable than others), to people (social circle) and to environment (seasons, weather, etc.). Education that takes the person away from the usual environment and completely immerses this person in a different setting and constant (round-the-clock) communication with teachers, is a well-known phenomenon, including such a property as the acceleration of training.

\[\text{14} \text{ X art. “Se aucuns aprentis s’en va d’entour son mestre par la defaute de son mestre, le mestre le doit amender a l’esgart des preud’omes qui gardent le mestier” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 141).}\]
Final Trial for Apprentice
or Preliminary Trial for Master

For medieval artisans, the traditional final trial of apprenticeship is considered a masterpiece. However, in the 13th century’s Paris the creation of a masterpiece had not yet become the main trial of the apprenticeship results. There was only one masterpiece in the “Book of Crafts” – for the saddle carpenters (chapuiseurs de sieles et d’archons; LXXIX).

There was something like the trials – the special guild’s examination, but they are very little known, because the statutes do not contain their description. First of all, these trials were not for apprentices who had completed their apprenticeship, but for those who wanted to become a master in Paris, and it was unknown when this person had completed his own apprenticeship, or whether he was already a master, but in another city. There are only five examples in the “Book of Crafts”: the statutes of the makers of copper buckles (boucliers d’archal; XXII), makers of silk & thread crepe (crespiniers de fil et de soie; XL), tailors (tailleurs de robe; LVI), makers of copper buttons (boutonniers d’archal; LXXII), surgeons (cyrurgiens; XCVI), when the jury masters verified that the future master knew the craft and was able to work singly or that he had been trained in the customs of Paris.

The doubts about the knowledge and skills of former apprentices were recorded when they wanted to teach apprentices themselves. The main feature of teacher’s unreadiness was not the exact age, it was the incompleteness of his or her own apprenticeship: craftsman or craftswoman had had to study for a full term, as a shorter term seemed insufficient to know the craft and to teach apprentices, whatever the reasons for the incompleteness of training were. This rule was fixed in four statutes: makers of beads of coral & shells (patenostriers de coral et de coquille; XXVIII), crystal cutters (cristaliers; XXX), makers of silk & thread crepe (crespiniers de fil et de soie; XXXVII), carvers-sculptors (ymagiers tailleurs; LXI). The makers of coral beads (XXVIII) forbade to take an apprentice to the master, who had been released before the end of his own apprenticeship term. The crystal cutters (XXX)\(^\text{15}\) and spinners of silk on small spindles (fileresses de soie a petiz fuizeaux; XXXVI) forbade to take an apprentice to those who had bought the term of his or her apprenticeship – as long as this term did not pass.

Later in Paris, the criterion for completion of apprenticeship could be not only the end of the term, but the teacher’s opinion about the apprentice. For example, for turners, whose 1st statute dated 1467, and whose apprenticeship lasted 3 years (Lespinasse, 1892: 682).

In the 13th century, some crafts demanded that after the completion of the apprenticeship the craftsman or craftswoman had to work themselves at first, and

\(^{15}\) Art. V “Nus aprentis qui se rachate ou a qui ses mestres face grace de lui quiter son service a mains des termes devant devisez, ne ne puet ne ne doit avoir aprentiz devant que li x an seront acompli enterinement: que a mains de terme ne semble il pas aus preudeshomes du mestier que il peust savoir souffisanment le mestier pour aprendre le a autrui” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 61).
only then they could teach the apprentices, like, for example, the silk spinners on small spindles (XXXVI; Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 71). Sometimes the term of such a practice was precisely defined in the statute. It was the term of “a year and a day”, well-known in the Middle Ages. There were makers of wire (trafiliers d’archal; XXIV), makers of silk & thread crepe (crespiniers de fil et de soie; XXXVII), silk weavers (ouvrieres de tissuz de soie; XXXVIII), makers of hats embroidered with gold and pearl (feseresses de chapiaux d’orfeis; XCV). The makers of fur hats (fourreurs de chapiaux de feutre; XCIV) forbade the master to take an apprentice if the master was not an experienced worker himself\(^{16}\), but they did not define the criteria of such an experience.

The validity of restrictions is supported by the rare sayings that the journeymen could sometimes teach the apprentices. Makers of tablets for writing (tabletier; LXVIII) insisted that any journeyman did not accept apprentices while he was working for others\(^{17}\). And such a journeyman, like any master, had to have his own workshop, and he could give a job to the apprentice only there – not in the workshop of another person\(^{18}\).

The Apprentices Who Learned Well. What to Do with Them?

The Parisian craft guilds recognized the possibility when the apprentices learned the craft before the deadline of the apprenticeship.

Drapers (L) directly pointed out that in the first year the apprentice did not earn anything, but if he could already earn, his master had to pay him (to “give money”)\(^{19}\).

Carpenters (charpentiers; XLVII) demanded that in the first year of apprenticeship, the apprentice was not burdened with work for more than 6 denier of earnings a day\(^{20}\) that meant the opportunity for such a workload on the apprentice and its legitimacy in the next years of apprenticeship.

High qualification of the apprentice in the last years of his apprenticeship was recognized by jewellers (orfèvres; XI), and they agreed to think about reducing the

\(^{16}\) Art. VI “Item, que nus maistres du dit mestier ne puist prendre aprentiz se le maistre n’est ouvriers souffisans” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 206).

\(^{17}\) Art. XXII “Nus vallez ne puet prandre aprantiz tant com il soit en autrui service: et qui le feront, il seroit a v s. d’amende au Roy” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 142). This article was added to the statute later, but before its second edition.

\(^{18}\) Art. XXIV “Nus vallez ne nus mestres ne puet aprantiz prandre pour metre en oevre en autrui ovroer que en son propre ovroer” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 143). This is also a later article.

\(^{19}\) Art. XIV “...et doit fere donner deniers a l’aprentiz, se il les set gaaingnier” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 94).

\(^{20}\) Art. II “Item, nus dudit mestier… ne ne peut prendre journée pour leurs aprentiz la premiere année, fors que vi d. pour ses despens jusques au soir” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 87).
term of apprenticeship (what had been always strictly prohibited) if this apprentice could earn his food and another 100 sous per year\textsuperscript{21}. Their term was 10 years.

The master saddle carpenter (LXXIX) was demanded to keep in business, to respect and to protect the apprentice, who “can make his masterpiece”. Master had to use him in the work, not like a servant or errand boy\textsuperscript{22}. This is the only mention of the masterpiece in the “Book of Crafts”, and it was made in passing, more than briefly. It indicates that the “Book” recorded such a stage of the crafts history, when the masterpiece was not a difficult and expensive obstacle to the title of master, but a trial of qualification, as it had to be initially: the rules of its creation did not cause disagreements, otherwise they would been recorded in the regulations.

The belt-makers (corroiers; LXXXVII) spoke quite emotionally about overly proud apprentices who studied for only half or a quarter of the term (the minimum term for belt-makers was 6 years (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 188)), but “cause trouble” to their teachers\textsuperscript{23}. What could these apprentices be so proud of? They mastered the craft in the indicated short time and successfully coped with professional tasks. The “pride” of the apprentices confirms how overstated the terms of study in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century were.

All these examples confirm once more that the apprentice was not always a person who still could not do or make anything. His work was appreciated even at the very beginning of apprenticeship (and then the master had to pay him, as drapers had insisted) and especially at the end of apprenticeship – and then the term could even be reduced. The proof is common for some Parisian crafts permission to take a new apprentice in the last year (or in the last six months) of the term of the previous apprentice. This rule was written in seven statutes of the “Book of Crafts”, and an explanation was in the statute of the makers of copper leaves (batteurs d’archal; XX): so that the master should not be without an apprentice\textsuperscript{24}. It was a legal way to increase the number of apprentices in the workshop, really – the number of working specialists.

\textsuperscript{21}Art. V “...se li aprentis n’est tex qu’il sache gaingnier c s. l’an, et son despens de boivre et de mangier” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 33).

\textsuperscript{22}Art. XI “Se li aprentis set faire i chief-d’oevre tout sus, se mestres puet prendre i autre aprentiz pour la reson de ce que, quant i aprentis set faire son chief d’oevre, il est reson qu’il se tegne au mestier et soit en l’ouvroir, et est resons que on l’oneurt et deporte plus que celui qui ne le set faire: si que ses mestres ne l’envoit mie en la vile quere son pain et son vin ausi come i garcon et par cele reson puet li mestre prendre i autre aprentiz, si tost que cil set faire son chief d’oevre” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 175).

\textsuperscript{23}Art. XIV “...Et ce ont li preud’ome establi por les garçons s’en orgueillissent ains qu’il aient fait la moitie de son termes ou le quart, et nomêmente por ce que li uns ouvriers ne soustraie l’aprentiz a l’autre”. Art. XV “...por ce que li aprentiz ne feissent a leur mestres annuiz, por quoi li mestre leur souffrissent a rachater le service” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 190).

\textsuperscript{24}Art. II “...pour ce que il ne demeurt sanz aprentiz” (Lespinasse and Bonnardot, 1879: 47).
Conclusion

The completion of the term of apprenticeship was the basic criterion of its success in the 13th century’s Paris, that took into account the normal course of events and almost all the circumstances, however this criterion had not always been enough for good and sufficient knowledge and professional experience, also for the long terms of the 13th century. The abilities of different children and their achievements in craft were taken into account by their teachers and by corporate rules, and Parisian crafts had the vast experience in the evaluation of the apprenticeship results.

The study of the Parisian regulations allows to identify:

a) other possibilities for evaluating the outcomes of apprenticeship (the ability to earn, “pride”);

b) the reaction not of individual masters, but of professional communities to the different rate of learning for apprentices with different abilities; the conclusions on this subject that have been drawn by professional communities, and the requirements for masters whose apprentices have demonstrated the excellent learning abilities; for the well-learned apprentices the Parisian guilds suggested to pay for their work, or to reduce the term, or to change the attitude to them;

c) the creation of professional barriers for the apprentices who, having overcome the main barrier (completion of the term), showed results that not only satisfied an individual master, but the professional community. The doubt in the high qualification of a former apprentice and a new master produced the requirement to work for extra time or to pass the guild’s trial.

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Social Change and Images of Children in 1920s – 1930s Ukrainian Women’s Literature

Snizhana Zhygun

Abstract: This chapter describes the mismatch between Soviet conceptions of motherhood and real mothers’ experiences in late twentieth-century Ukraine via analysis of images of children in Ukrainian women’s literature. This period is marked by the considerable social and ideological changes caused by Bolsheviks’ decrees. Legally, they destroyed patriarchal society of that time. But realization of these ideas mutilated them. On the contrary, women’s texts of that time, in particular by N. Zabila and R. Troyanker, glorify motherhood approve it as the intelligent choice. These texts significantly discord with the propagandized ideas of a child as a new person saved from inheritance of tradition (the character of R. Troyanker, the Ukrainian Jew, worries future identity of the daughter Olenka); of a child as the hope of society (N. Zabila sees continuation of own femininity in the new-born daughter); of a child aloof from mother (the characters refuse the new relations for the sake of the child). The propagandized condemnation of “blind motherhood” is shown in the conflict between personal and public which paints motifs of a child’s disease or death. Thus, the analysed texts recorded real women’s experience of motherhood that does not match the ideological constructs relayed by the Soviet literature and media.

Keywords: Children images, Women’s literature, Motherhood.

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The Bolshevist revolution became the reason of not only political, but also public changes. Already the earliest decrees of Bolsheviks “On Marriage Abolition”, “On Civil Marriage, Children and on Entering into the Acts of Civil Status” (1917) and “The Decree on Child care and Motherhood” (1918) had significantly changed the status of woman and child. A woman had acquired the right to material and sexual self-determination, to the choice of the place of residence and citizenship, received the four-months paid holiday in connection with pregnancy, and the right to paid breaks for the feeding of a new-born. The Decree “On Civil Marriage” and the Family Code of 1918 equalized in rights the children born in wedlock and out of it, the decree proclaimed all children to be the children of the republics, confirming care of a child as a direct duty of the state. The code also declared the principle of every possible protection of children’s interests. It also assigned the care of homeless children to the state. Adoption was introduced in the legal field only in 1926. And only in the Stalin Constitution of 1936 was the protection of childhood connected to motherhood. Normative legal acts seemed to be rather progressive and were often glorified by researchers (Rostova, 2007; Sazhyna, 2013), but the Soviet history all the time was showing the striking gap between the law and its implementation. Therefore, we should pay attention to the ideology of that time, which influenced the development of events often more considerably than the law.

The main ideologist in this field in the first years after the Bolshevik revolution was Alexandra Kollontai, who proclaimed the ideologem of the “new woman” characterized by “self-discipline instead of emotionality, the ability to value freedom and independence instead of obedience and ‘depersonalization’, asserting own individuality instead of naive effort to take and display someone else’s image of the ‘beloved’, the demand of the rights to earthly joys instead of hypocritical wearing a mask of integrity, eventually, assignment to love experiences of the
subordinated place in life. There is not a female and man’s shadow before us. There is a personality, a ‘person-Woman’ before us” (Kollontai, 1919: 29).

The name of Kollontai is associated with the ideas of “free Eros”, whose perverted realization caused a defective world view paradigm that led to social collapse and a large number of abandoned children, who did not have enough places in the created shelters.

Mother and Child in the Mirror of Ideology

The media discourse in the second decade of the 20th century shows the disunity of the women’s and children’s themes. Thus, the main trend of the women’s discourse is successes in work, social activity, and the working-class movement. Pages of the analysed general political newspaper Proletarska Pravda (PP) (1928) offer readers photos of factory workers, delegates, shooters, inventors, etc., not depicting mothers or housewives (as well as popular singers or actresses), which can be explained by the target audience. (Picture 1) But these “progressive” images

Picture 1.
Original photo caption: “Only Soviet authority makes free woman. The woman at work and at a club. When mother is at work, her children are in pre-school”. Globus, 1929, 5, p. 73
contrast with the “Red Court” and “Cases” headings, which convince that violence, abortion, struggle for alimony, lack of rights and dependence on husbands at home and at work were an integral element of the women’s life of that time.

The resolution of the 13th Congress of the Russian Communist Party insisted on the active involvement of women in public and political life, therefore, children’s institutions were considered as means to increase the productivity of their work and rationalize production (PP, 1928a: 2) or as method of influence:

It is the best of all to organize the woman around kindergarten. In the course of work from preschool education it is the easiest to awaken her political consciousness, to clarify her social role, to make of her the active member of society (“For preschool business”. PP, 1928b).

A woman appears in the media as mother only with a new-born and as an object of the state care: article on perinatal centres “Milk Drop” (PP, 1928f: 3) or holiday homes for mother and child (PP, 1928d: 5). The educational role of the mother is completely ignored. Family education is condemned as a source of “hooliganism, anti-Semitism, chauvinistic sentiments” (“Pioneers and School”. PP, 1928g: 5). The solution of the problem of replenishing the street children ranks by children having parents who can’t find for them enough time was seen not in the parents unloading, but in the social organization of actions.

The socialization of children was the main trend of the children’s topic in the press. The most frequent were the articles of two groups: one fight against homelessness and on kindergartens, playgrounds, schools, shelters and other forms of children’s “collectivization”.

As the article “Attention to Children’s Collectives!” (PP, 1928j: 5) convinces:

the main task of the Soviet pedagogy by which it differs from bourgeois one, is to cultivate collectivist skills, communist desires, to train children to be builders of the new socialist system.

Moreover, the author assigned to children such tasks as: “help to poor pupils, distribution of loans, defence of the country, organization

**Picture 2.** Homeless. Globus, 1927, 1
of children’s clubs, playgrounds and many other things”. It is worth reminding that in the third decade of the 20th century, “these many other things” covered antireligious propaganda, hours of labour, denunciation, and participation in terror. True, a school and a kindergarten prepared not only future builders of communism, but also were considered as a breeding-ground of agents of change: in the analysed periodicals it is a question of bringing to the family norms of hygiene, agriculture, etc. In art texts it will change in ideological control of parents by children.

The important motive of reports about state sponsorship of children is formed by texts about hot meals that were established in schools, kindergartens and playgrounds, which was very important because of low level of well-being. The theme of entertainment is embodied in the reports about children’s performances at theatres, children’s films, books and broadcasts because they were considered the effective instrument of education. The presence of toys in the Soviet child’s life is confirmed only by one article (“ABC on cubes”. PP, 1928c: 5), which criticizes the unsatisfactory quality and calls to the ideological control of cubes. One more article contains a mention of that time games (“Cooperation cares for children” PP, 1928e: 3). Such distortion of the discourse was caused by popularity of the beliefs of the Kharkiv specialists in pedagogy that proletarian children need neither toys, nor fairy tales, nor songs. The theme of the holidays is focused on organizing arrangements for the revolutionary event anniversaries, and for March 8. A significant segment is made by articles on the struggle with the Christmas trees as an element of antireligious propaganda. (Picture 3 and Picture 4)

It is also important to point to a clear tendency to depersonalize children who appear in figures (“How many children study at schools?” (PP, 1928i: 3), “Through preschool education to a new way of life” (PP, 1928a: 2), “About kindergartens in Kyiv” (PP, 1928h: 3)) or in different groups: “homeless children”, “pioneers”, “preschool children”, and in rare stories about certain children, they hardly ever mention the name of the child. Describing these or those phenomena of the children’s world, the authors don’t submit the children’s assessment, leaving the adults views as the only ones worth attention.

V. Gudkova (2008), analysing features of the Soviet plots in the second and third decades of the 20th century, identified the typical features of children’s images of that

time (the material for her was mainly male texts, in which women ones were dissolved). The ideologies of the new woman and the world revolution as the highest goal caused the fact that in plots of the early 1920s the birth of the child was thought as narrow-mindedness, as a collateral, burdening result of “the need satisfying”. New women in the stories of that time did not want to waste time and energy on raising children. Many characters didn’t want and couldn’t have children: “Paradoxically the playwrights whose central and ‘right’ characters are constantly dreaming of the future describe the break of life, the life deprived of continuation” (Gudkova, 2008: 178).

By the way, the state concept of the post-revolutionary development of the country emphasized the role of the child: it seemed logical that the truth is surely saying by the infant’s mouth that a new person who did not live in the “reactionary dark past” has no its marks (Gudkova, 2008: 173).

Therefore, the child began to be thought of as the authority that taught and controlled adults. Besides, in the state which is consistently denying any private property, it becomes unimportant whose child, who brings up him: he belongs to society in general from the birth (Gudkova, 2008: 182).

Accordingly, the plots fixed the rupture of family relations, replacement of private experiences.

**Women’s Texts: Between Ideology and Experience**

In her essay “Professions for Women”, Virginia Woolf (1931) expressed the idea that women writers surely should overcome a certain phantom, an ideological construct, which demanded from them to meet public expectations. It was “The angel in the house” for V. Wolf, and it became the “new woman” for the writers of the 1920s. Accordingly, women’s art work became the arena of the struggle between the need to conform to ideological requirements and the desire to express one’s own experience, which is more often embodied in the lyrics than in the epic. The struggle and conquest of ideology was not only the immanent motive of the analysis of the Ukrainian authoress’ works, but also of their lives. The second decade of the 20th century was the time of active cultural development and arrival of many beginning women writers in the literature, but already in the next decade the Red
Terror became more active, and some of the writers were repressed and shot. Some of the writers left the literature, but some of them confined themselves to the works for children. As a result, practically nothing is known about many writers of that time. Natalia Zabila and Raisa Troyanker are among those the records about whom have been kept in private archives and memoirs, therefore there is an opportunity to compare their works with the real experience of a woman of the 1920s.

The peculiarity of the artistic world of the lyrics by N. Zabila and R. Troyanker, whom contemporaries called erotic poetesses, is glorification of motherhood. The main value for N. Zabila was the family with children, for R. Troyanker it was mother and child relationship.

Motherhood as the intelligent choice defines actions of N. Zabila’s lyrical character: for the sake of the child she is capable to ask about preservation of the family; to break off the premarital relations (“There can’t be any love, / If there is no child, – / There can’t be a child, / My son is somewhere far away”). The emphasis on the continuity of the maternal connection with the child sharply disconcerted with the social tendency to alienate the child from the mother.

A child never appears in Zabila’s lyrics as “Little Octobrist” or “pioneer”, she never thinks of him as a hope of society (even in ideologically biased ballad Lena). Instead, she sees continuation of her own femininity in her new-born daughter. In general, her lyrics convey feelings about her own children (and the characters of her children’s works have their names: Tarasyk, Yasochka, Halochka-Strybalochka, Maryna Dmytrivna).

It should also be noted that N. Zabila turns to the lullaby genre, developing it as a fantastically symbolic lyrics. These verses are too remote from traditional lullabies both by original figurativeness, and by rhythm-melodic, and stay on the verge between a poetic fairy tale and lyrics. Fantastic motives (the explanation of natural phenomena through their personalization) were a challenge to the prevailing ideas concerning the harmfulness of fairy tales and fantasies for the upbringing of the Soviet child.

The media discourse in the second decade of the 20th century which so actively showed children in figures, avoided the infant mortality rate, but obviously it was high, judging by objective conditions of life. The media and art discourse in the third decade were filled with the idea of the child victim for the sake of the future. The active use of children in the Ukrainian village subjugation by artificial famine (the pioneers revealed grain caches, took part in protecting collective farm fields from hungry fellow villagers) led to the victims among them that were subject to sacralisation.

Considering the theme of children’s death in the Soviet culture, M. Stolyar (2012: 26) points out that: not only and not so much the future is “loved” in the child, but that innocent victim capable to give the strongest impetus to the struggle. The child sacrifice on the altar of hatred is not reflected in the culture that proclaims the child the most important idol.

Children’s death in women’s texts is a personal tragedy, taken hard, described with emotional details, where there is no place for the victim pathos. Even in those texts where the traditional role of the mother woman is compared to the “new woman”, professional duties are a rescue in the most difficult time:
And you don’t cry, / you are not only a mother / who will carry pain and sadness in the heart, – / To you winged, dreaming to build / New buildings of joyful houses (N. Zabila, 1930: 17) (she had buried three daughters during her life).

And in A. Turchinska’s verse (1929: 355), having the real addressee, the consolation has a philosophical note: “But I know that not to learn the joy / Without pain, tears, without costly loss”. Even in, on the whole, ideological text Traktorobud by N. Zabila (1931-1933), who represents the participation of women in the future creation, which the plant embodies, the death of the child is a part of the intrigue but is not conceived as a victim. According to the plot the engineer Halyna Klynko, as a member of the Komsomol group, projects a part of the plant while her mother looks after her little son. The decision to give birth to a child has caused the gap between Halyna and her husband, who wanted to focus on engineering work. In the novel’s course, he repeatedly reproaches Halyna, accenting her inability to take care of the child because of the work and the Komsomol loading. It is characteristic that he doesn’t pay alimony for the child, but in the novel Halyna’s work is motivated not by this fact, but by emancipation and production enthusiasm. After all, the boy dies and only this tragedy forces Halyna to miss several days of her work. The character suffers her grief stoically, forbidding colleagues to express sympathy and even recall it. Her internal state is proved by a mistake in calculations because of which there is a threat to the construction. Thus, unhappy motherhood is thought by the writer as a threat to the woman professional realization.

However, in other aspects of the theme the story entirely reproduces an ideological discourse: the character in the second part Leta Azarova works as the concreter at the Traktobud construction. She also has a child named Maivka, whom she has left with her ex-husband, despite the fact that he is poorly suited to the role. But when his maid comes back to the village, she brings the child to the hut where Leta lives. Her co-workers decide to take collective care of the girl, and when more children came, they arrange a nursery.

Another characteristic image is a son of the engineer Rolensky, who questions whether his father is bourgeois and who pushes him to join the engineers Komsomol members. The political literacy of the son, obtained from conversations in the yard, does not annoy Rolensky, but it is perceived as entirely rightful.

Thus, we have the embodiment of the main ideological narratives: a new woman, a social child, and a child agent of changes. Traktorobud is represented in the story as a variant of utopia, for which the characters refuse feelings, proper living conditions, even health for the sake of building the future environment in which women will be realized in labour, and children will be taken care of in state institutions.

If the border between texts of the “new woman” and own maternal experiences in N. Zabila’s works coincides with the boundary between lyrics and epic works, then in R. Troyanker’s works it is within lyrics. Such verses as “My father is upset and silent” and “Evening” belong to the works by the “new woman”. The first one in the form of a drama monologue fixes a break with Judaic tradition, but adding to the character the invented details (“I work at the Veka factory/ And my child is a Little Octobrist”), Troyanker betrays that speaks not for herself, but on behalf of someone more appropriate to the new ideas.
The researcher of her works, Y. Petrovsky-Shtern (2018: 193), who is analysing this verse, draws attention to the fact that Jewish values are defined by the character as inexpressive, alien and deceptive; in contrast to them, “Troyanker is identified with the communist future, the embodiment of which was the image of her daughter little Octobrist” (in the text – dytyncha (child), the Tryanker’s daughter was only a year old at that time. – S. Zh.).

But the embodiment of communistic ideals in an invention forces to doubt concerning own feelings of Troyanker. A strange feature of the “Evening” poem from the point of view of adherents of the autobiographical character of Troyanker’s lyrics is the fact that her lyrical character addresses the son whom the poetess didn’t have. Y. Petrovsky-Shtern (2018: 212) treats it as an element of “self-emancipation”: “Troyanker changes a gender of the child, pointing to a male body as the catalyst of the literary writing”. However, it seems that the son becomes a marker of estranging her own voice from the voice of the “new woman”, for whom the importance of motherhood is lost before the previous “rebellion fires” (which also were not in Troyanker’s life), so she predicts: “I will carry you to the orphanage. / Days in smoke and gases will buzz. / I am small but a part of the whole / and I will go to the Red Army ...” (Troyanker, 2009: 78). In other verse the lyrical character, who is a front telephoneist, also has a son, who is a chekist (an agent of the Cheka). In the verse “Letter” by T. Kardynalovska, mother of two daughters; her son died at the age of three months, the Bolshevik son also appears. Most likely, the son in these verses is not a “catalyst of literary writing”, but a response to the militaristic needs of the time – “whispering” of the “new woman”.

Therefore the surprised critic’s (Kapustianski in Petrovsky-Shtern, 2018: 212) question: “Why boy, but not Olenka?” has a simple answer: because she would never send Olenka (the name of Troyanker’s daughter) to orphanage. As well as she could not leave her daughter with the father, when she married for the second time.

On the contrary, the verses “My Father Drove Me Away and Cursed Me” and “The First Victory” reproduce the direct poetess’s impressions of motherhood and the real name of the daughter appearing in them becomes the marker of “true”. The first one tells the individual story of the family conflict because of a mixed marriage, which stumbling block is not the stranger son-in-law, but the granddaughter, unlike the Jew: “And Olenka has blue eyes/ and fair-white hair./ What will my girl answer/the sensitive question of ‘nation’?” (Troyanker, 2009: 80) The identity of the child with family disturbs the woman, despite efforts of the authorities to destroy this identification.

“The First Victory” glorifies the mother’s feelings and affirms the first “getting up” on the feet as an event; moreover, it calls it “the triumph of victory”. If we recall that in the male texts the act, the first made decision becomes the event in the child’s life, then we can estimate the differences of the women’s art world.

Thus, we state an interesting feature of R. Troyanker’s art world: the boundary between personal, real experience, and ideological construction also reinforces different gender roles: the lyrical character demonstrates the feminine behaviour in the verses about the daughter and the masculine one in the verses about the invented son.

The poems “On the Tenth Anniversary” and “The Birth of the Poet” are also of particular interest. The first one is in fact defence of the mother’s feelings before
“the new women”: the lyrical character can’t go to the festive meeting at the plant where she has to make the report because her child is sick and needs care that leads the character into the conflict with the collective’s expectations:

I know – Zina from Kofok will say, “‘You see, your own is the dearest!’ and the smile on lips will lay down / And it will be clear to everyone following:/They will say: ‘What a Bolshevik is she! – / There are only words, but in fact she is not!’ / The child has spots on the face … / Zina doesn’t know the word ‘mother’” (Troyanker, 2009: 81-82).

This pressure of “new women” demonstrates the real problem of that time, which has remained beyond the male literature attention: despite the new legislation guaranteeing the broad rights to women, ideological practice brings these achievements to naught. And women have to defend their right to be a mother.

The poem “The Birth of the Poet” is an example of an escape from the influence of social constructs for the sake of self-realization. The birth of the poet (in the text – the poetess) occurs at the time of liberation from social roles, even when it concerns the most desirable of them.

The lyrical character suffers the pangs of remorse because her poems are born during the illness of her daughter, but she does not renounce it, asserting her right to art writing. The fact that this theme is not accidental to Troyanker is confirmed also by the poem “The Night Talk”, where the lyrical character addresses Mephistopheles in search of happiness. She wants to combine motherhood and family with literary work and the fact that she appeals to the devil for the help, demonstrates disbelief in a possibility of such combination in the real world. It seems that Troyanker was aware or in any case felt the pressure of the patriarchal and new ideas that prevented literary writing and publishing, prevented to tell her own word until she completely succumbed to them, having created the collection of patriotic lyrics during World War II.

**Conclusion**

As a result, we can identify a number of features of children’s images in women’s texts. N. Zabila and R. Troyanker glorify their maternity, approving it as a meaningful choice. Their texts significantly discord with the propagandized ideas of the child as the new person saved from the heritage of traditions (e.g. Troyanker’s character worries about the future identity of her daughter Olenka); the child as the hope of the society (N. Zabila sees continuation of her own femininity in her new-born daughter); the child alienated from the mother (the characters refuse new connections for the sake of the child); the depersonalized child as the embodiment of the desirable future (both poetesses express their own experience in the lyrics, marking it with the real names of their children). The propagated condemnation of “blind motherhood” is embodied in the conflict between the personal and the public, which colours the motives of the child’s illness or death. Thus, the analysed texts recorded the real women’s experience of motherhood, which does not correspond to the ideological constructs relayed by the Soviet literature and media.

65
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The Child in the Family in the Old Demographic Regime. The Case of Voyvodovo, Czech Village in Bulgaria (1900-1950)

Lenka Jakoubková Budilová

Abstract: The chapter explores the assumption about the different attitudes to childhood in the societies in the past. The idea of a different concept of childhood in traditional societies will be explored on the example of Voyvodovo, Czech village in Bulgaria, in the period 1900–1950, when the character of the local population could be described as the old demographic regime. High birth rates and high death rates and frequent remarriages influenced the character of the family very much. The author argues that it was not so much a different notion of childhood that made the difference between childhoods in Voyvodovo in the first half of the 20th century and in subsequent decades, but rather the old demographic regime that had shaped the structure, roles, and character of the family to a large extent. The chapter is based on fieldwork and archive work data.

Keywords: Childhood, Family, Old demographic regime, Voyvodovo, Bulgaria.

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Voyvodovo is a village in north-west Bulgaria that was founded in 1900 by the Czechs from the village of Svatá Helena (Sfânta Elena in Romanian) in what is today Romanian Banat along with several Slovak, Catholic Bulgarian (Paulikian), and Orthodox Bulgarian families, (Botík, 2005; Jakoubek, 2010a, 2017; Budilová and Jakoubek, 2014). Until 1950, when most of them resettled to Czechoslovakia, Czechs represented a majority in the village. Both the Czechs and the Slovaks in Voyvodovo were Protestants, and most of them joined the Bulgarian Methodist Church. Religion was central in the social life of the village (Budilová and...
Jakoubek, 2017). For a long time, Voyvodovans had identified themselves more in terms of religion, i.e. as “believers” than as “Czechs” (Jakoubek, 2010b). After the Second World War the majority of Voyvodovans resettled to the border areas of Czechoslovakia. This was a result of an inter-government agreement, by which Czechoslovakia tried to resettle depopulated areas after the displacement of the local Germans. Only a few mixed marriages stayed in Voyvodovo, which was soon resettled by Bulgarians from other parts of the country.

Data used in this paper come from fieldwork carried out from 2006 to 2015 both in Voyvodovo, and in southern Moravia, where the majority of Voyvodovans resettled in 1949 and 1950. I have conducted my research together with my husband, and later with our two daughters. I interviewed people who were born in Voyvodovo and spent a part of their lives there; I also interviewed their offspring born after 1950. During the years of my fieldwork, I spoke with virtually all former inhabitants of the village. My oldest informants were people born in the 1920s and 1930s in Voyvodovo. These people moved to Czechoslovakia mostly as married couples, mothers and fathers of young children. Some of them married only in Czechoslovakia. Women made up the majority of this oldest generation as they usually outlived their male partners.

During my fieldwork, I collected genealogies of individuals and their families, and I obtained a huge overlapping genealogy of a community of the Voyvodovans. It contains 4 to 7 generations, and comprises over 1600 individuals and more than 500 marriages. The oldest individuals recorded in the genealogy were born before the first half of the 19th century, while the youngest were born in Czechoslovakia after 1950. Information obtained from interviews with my informants was completed with other sources, like birth, marriage, and death certificates, gravestone inscriptions in graveyards (both in the Bulgarian Voyvodovo and in South Moravia villages), school chronicles, Bible inscriptions, or family photographs. Archive sources (marriage, birth and death records), tombstones, and chronicles were used to triangulate my data from the interviews and to support and (re)construct the genealogy. I used genealogy as a source of data on demography and family structure in Voyvodovo (number of children, age at marriage, infant mortality, etc.). Interview data, together with photographs and Bible inscriptions were used to reconstruct the attitude towards childhood in Voyvodovo.

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It has been argued that there was a different concept of childhood in the European societies in the past (Ariès, 1962). I would like to show the relationship between the position of the child in the family and demographic characteristics of the community in question. I will explore this by using an example of Voyvodovo, where the character of the local population could be described as the demographic old regime. I will show the position of the child in the family and the attitudes towards the childhood, and indicate a shift in the position of the child in the family after 1950 that was connected to the change in the demography of the studied community.
Family in the European Peasant Societies in the Past

The character of the European population in the Ancien Régime is called the old demographic regime by historical demographers. This period was characterised by high birth rates and high death rates: many children were born, but many died prematurely. Also the mortality of adults was higher than in the modern times. Population was very vulnerable in relation to demographic crises like famine, wars, or epidemics. Despite high birth rates, therefore, the population growth was very slow. Another important characteristic of the old demographic regime was the absence of systematic and reliable birth control (Segalen, 1986: 160-172).

The transition to the new demographic regime entailed fertility decline, mortality decline, and contraceptive revolution. It occurred in various European countries at different periods: from the end of 18th century to the first half of the 20th century. In France, for example, the number of births has fallen consistently since the 1800s (Segalen, 1986: 160). In the Balkans, on the other hand, the first demographic transition began in the second half of the 19th century and ended after the Second World War (Kaser, 2008: 102-109). In Bulgaria, the demographic transition has already been taking place in the last decade of the 19th century and in the 20th century (cf. Todorova, 1993: 6). With the demographic transition, procreation started to be a deliberate choice: couples decided at what time they want to have offspring, and how many. In many countries in the West, there has been a clearly defined intention to have no more than two children. This new model of family means that procreation is finished after an ideal size of the family is reached (Segalen, 1986: 171). A “generation gap” emerges between the parents’ and the children’s generation, and the new concept of “life-courses phases” (i.e., life stages experienced by each generation defined by a specific family constellation, like childhood, adolescence, adulthood, etc.) is used to describe modern families (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1982: 48-54). The modern family is also characterized by growing individualization, intimacy, emotionalism, and sentimentalism (Flandrin, 1976: 145-173; Mitterauer and Sieder, 1982: 60-63).

The character of the old demographic regime had specific consequences for the size and structure of the peasant family. Since women used the whole childbearing age to bear children, there were children in the families with big age differences between one another, and there were no “generations gaps”, as children of all ages were normally present (except those who died when they were young). Although it was very difficult to divorce, families got disrupted by frequent deaths. Periods of married life were short in comparison to modern times, and people often did not live long enough to see their grandchildren (Laslett, 1965). The numbers of widows and widowers were high, as was the level of remarriage. Remarriages brought to an existence a type of families called “patchwork families” by sociologists. This means that families were composed of children from various past marriages, and the presence of step-mothers, step-fathers, step-children, and half-siblings was quite normal (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1982: 16).

In preindustrial Europe, there was usually no division between home and the workplace: the family was primarily an economic unit (Laslett, 1965). It is, in fact, almost impossible to speak about “the family” in the modern sense of the world,
because this term referred to something different in the past. The family was a unit that would be better understood as a family household, which was, in turn, also an economic enterprise. The roles of the father and mother were at the same time the roles of the managers of the farm, and children were considered to be also a workforce subordinated to them. At the same time, there was normally a number of non-related persons included in this circle, at least in the Western Europe. These non-relatives – servants, apprentices, journeymen, day labourers and others – were considered to be the part of the family as the proper children of the parental couple. It was often not distinguished between “a house” and “a family”: the dissolution is brought about only with the onset of the modern era with industrialization and urbanization (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1982: 1-47).

In relation to childhood in the European society before the demographic revolution, P. Ariès (1962: 15-49) argued that the concept of childhood as a separate category did not appear in Europe sooner than in the 17th century. He asserts that in the situation of high mortality of the old demographic regime, people often felt indifference towards a too fragile childhood (Ariès, 1962: 38-39). In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist (Ariès, 1962: 128). Interestingly, he maintains, a new sensibility towards the child and the interest shown in the child preceded (by more than a century) the change in the demographic conditions. A new concept of childhood appeared, in which the child became a source of amusement and relaxation for the adult (Ariès, 1962: 129). By the 18th century, then, everything around the child became a matter of concern, and the child has taken a central place in the family (Ariès, 1962: 133).

**Family in Vovvodovo: The Old Demographic Regime? A Different Concept of Childhood?**

Vovvodovans usually confirmed that the attitudes towards the childhood in Vovvodovo prior to 1950 were different from the contemporary usage. They assert that children were not paid any special attention, in the sense of treating them as a specific category of persons. One of my informants recounts:

No playing, no cuddling, that was very different from here. No reading. There was nobody to help us study. Father was always busy tending the field, managing money, taking care of the horses. Mother as well. But they were teaching us how to work, ever since we were little. When I had my first daughter, Rozárka, I’d buy her books, and my mother-in-law couldn’t understand why I spend money on books. 1

The children did not receive any special treatment in Vovvodovo families, in the sense of individual attention being focused on developing their personal skills. The old Vovvodovans I spoke with contrasted it with the period after the remigration to Czechoslovakia, when families started to be smaller. But there were some areas of life specific to children in Vovvodovo, for example, toys. Little girls would play with dolls, boys with bows and arrows; and in winter, all children rode wooden sledges made by the local carpenter.

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1 Female informant Barbora Č., born 1921; Mikulov, 26. 4. 2008.
The basic differences between the childhood in Voyvodovo, and childhood after 1950 were, however, associated with the change in the size and composition of the family, and with the demography of the community. It is these criteria that I will be in the focus of the following section.

“Voyvodovo Families Were Blessed with Children”

The families of Voyvodovo Czechs tended to have quite a lot of children. As my informant stated:

There would be plenty of children. My uncle had ten children with his first wife and eleven more with his second wife. My neighbour had ten children as well. Karel Pitra also had ten – seven boys, three girls; all grew up to be adults.²

Fertility was practically unregulated and women used a large part of their childbearing years. In some families there would thus be a substantial age difference between the youngest and the oldest child: a difference of 15–18 years was no exception. In the words of my informant: “Mothers and daughters would be bearing children at the same time.”³ In a similar vein, another informant adds:

Czechs used to have a lot of children. Hardly anyone had but four children. Five, six, up to ten more likely. The Kopřiva family down there, the Govedár family, they all had ten; uncle Ruda the carpenter and aunt Olga, ten as well. The child that came first would grow up and took care of the little ones. So by the time a woman had her last child, her daughter was already a mother. My mother was forty when I was born.⁴

However, the high birth rate was balanced by a high rate of child mortality. This was mainly caused by epidemics of infectious diseases – typhoid fever, tuberculosis or diphtheria. As stated by an informant: “Children would be dying of typhoid fever; a family would barely reach the graveyard to bury one child before another was dead.”⁵ A further cause of child mortality were unspecified “convulsions” (“psotník”). Babies would also die in childbirth, and neonatal mortality was high, as our informants confirm plainly:

They would be dying a lot, the babies in Voyvodovo. During childbirth, after childbirth. My mother-in-law had two boys, twins, they both died. One of them was already six years old when he died. Maybe it was diphtheria or something. The Lord had given and the Lord had taken away. That’s the way it is with our Lord – sometimes he gives more, sometimes less.⁶

Data recorded in my genealogy for Voyvodovo families up to 1950 confirm these theses. Newly married couples would usually have their first child by the end of the first year following marriage. Births would then occur at two-year intervals, or

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² Male informant Štěpán H., born 1918; Chodov, 16. 11. 2009.
³ Female informant Barbora Č., born 1921; Mikulov, 26. 4. 2008.
⁵ Female informant Františka H., born 1917; Hodonín, 11. 5. 2009.
⁶ Male informant Alois F., born 1919; Valtice, 11. 5. 2009.
most often at 1-3 year intervals. In the first decades of the existence of Voyvodovo, we can thus certainly speak of the old demographic regime characterised by high birth and death rates.

**Birth Control and Contraception in Voyvodovo**

For a long time, there was no birth control in Voyvodovo. My informants assert that “no one would take any precautions there.” Therefore, the only factors influencing the total number of children in families were the age of marriage and potential outside events. Diseases, epidemics or wars often led to premature deaths which meant the end of a family:

No one took any caution, oh no, you couldn’t do that. Contraceptives were not used back then. That’s why they had so many children… They’d have as many as the Lord gave.7

In the matter of birth control, my informants point to differences between the practices of the Czechs from Voyvodovo and the surrounding populations. They emphasize that Bulgarian families tended to be smaller, mainly due to the fact that abortions were performed. As Gerald Creed (1998: 129-131) affirms, fertility had been declining in north-western Bulgaria since the First World War, and abortion was a common means of fertility control. All my informants agreed that Bulgarians “did not have as many children” as Czechs:

The Bulgarians didn’t have as many children as we did. The women would take care of things. Often they would die afterwards. Since we believed in God, we wouldn’t do that. There was no contraception back then, I had no idea there even was such a thing. There was this village called Sofronievo, where each woman only had one child – they’d all gotten rid of it. Only kept one.8

My informants strongly disapproved of such practice, often citing their religious beliefs.

In certain cases, some form of birth regulation was practiced by the couples who had already had the required number of children. This often happened after a desired “youngest son” was born, who was supposed to support his parents in their old age (Jakoubková Budilová, 2018). The regulation then mainly took the form of sexual restraint. A female informant cites an example:

There was this one woman who had had nine children and kept having more; she had a grown daughter with children of her own already, and still kept having babies. So the woman told her old man not to sleep with her anymore. And so the husband and wife started sleeping separately, each in their own bed.9

Nevertheless, with younger generations birth regulation occurs in Voyvodovo already before the remigration to Czechoslovakia. Clearly, the motivations were economic: numerous offspring meant constant divisions of land and shortage of

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7 Female informant Barbora Č., born 1921; Mikulov, 26. 4. 2008.
8 Female informant Barbora Č. born 1921; Mikulov, 26. 4. 2008.
9 Female informant Anna S., born 1949; Žabčice, 10. 5. 2009.
resources. My informants refer to their methods as “being careful”, meaning, probably, *coitus interruptus* (for other European countries c.f. Segalen, 1986: 164; Grulich, 2008: 22). Some of them mentioned also abortions:

Towards the end they’d travel to Rahova [Oryahovo]. People weren’t happy to see that. It was all done in secret. But nothing was actually kept secret, people talked.\(^{10}\)

Voyvodovans considered the size of their families as a problem due to resulting constant divisions of land. Children were welcomed as a blessing and a source of great joy; however, they were also perceived as an economic burden on the family. Migration from Voyvodovo, which was predominantly economically-driven (due to shortage of land), thus very often concerned the largest families.

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**Remarriage and “Patchwork Families” in Voyvodovo**

Marriage was nearly universal in Voyvodovo (Budilová, 2008; Jakoubková Budilová 2019). There were, however, frequent epidemics causing deaths in families (Spanish flu, typhus, cholera, or tuberculosis). One of my informants commented on this in the following: “Some cholera always came along, and then one of the partners passed away, and the other always married again.”\(^{11}\) Also, men from Voyvodovo, as Bulgarian citizens, had to participate in the First World War or the Balkan Wars, and many lost their lives. These deaths considerably influenced the demographic structure of the Voyvodovo community.

In the case that a spouse was widowed, a second marriage often took place, especially when the remaining partner was in the productive age and had underage children. A remarriage was seen as an economic necessity, because there was a need of labour on the farm, or, mainly in the case of widowers, a need to care of the children. Deaths at a relatively young age were not exceptional and cases of widows at the age of twenty-eight with six children were not uncommon. One of my informants comments on this:

“They usually remarried, who could, he or she remarried. It would be difficult to be on your own. You could not be on your own in the farm work.”\(^{12}\)

In most cases there were new children born in these remarriages. In this way “patchwork families”, composed of children from different marriages, so typical for “traditional” peasant societies, emerged in Voyvodovo. There were several examples of sororate and levirate marriages in Voyvodovo, when the remaining spouse marries a brother or a sister of the deceased person. My informants explain these strategies by the interest of the parents to ensure the proper care of the orphans: it was supposed, that an aunt, for example (in a sororate marriage), would treat the children better than a completely strange woman would have done. P. Bourdieu mentions very similar motivation for leviratic marriage in the peasant society of

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\(^{10}\) Female informant Lída F., born 1930; Nový Přerov, 29. 11. 2009.  
\(^{11}\) Female informant Kateřina F., born 1934; Nový Přerov, 19. 1. 2007.  
\(^{12}\) Female informant Barbora Č., born 1921; Mikulov, 26. 4. 2008.
the Beárn region in southwest France. He maintains that after the First World War there were often leviratic marriages, when an older son died in the war and his younger brother was pushed by the parents to marry his brother’s widow – in the best interest of the children (Bourdieu, 1980: 159). My informants did not consider these marriages as improper, with the reference to the fact that these people were not “related by blood”.

These “patchwork families” meant very specific experience of childhood for many children who were brought up in them. In spite of the high rate of mortality in Voyvodovo, few cases of orphans have been recorded – their number has been minimized to zero by the high rate of remarriage. Our informants only mention two orphaned children in Voyvodovo: Jindřich and Růžena, whose both parents died of typhoid fever. Their father was a Voyvodovo Czech; their mother was a sister of the local Methodist preacher. After the death of their parents, Jindřich was brought up by the family of his father’s sister, who had nine children of her own. Růžena was raised in the family of her father’s brother, who only had two sons by his wife (he lost several daughters as young children).

For orphans and stepchildren, their situation became precarious after reaching fourteen years of age. Unless they were adopted and were only in guardianship and later in custodianship, they were eligible to be given wages for their work, which none of the Voyvodovo families could afford to pay. Children from their (birth) parents’ first marriage, who had not been adopted by the new parent would usually be forced to leave the family; they would most often go into service, become apprentices or got hired as labourers in cities.

Childhood in Voyvodovo: Work and School

In Voyvodovo, the thesis of P. Laslett (1965) that the traditional family primarily was an economic unit, was completely true. Children would work from an early age, and did various household and farming chores. The tasks performed by children were assigned by gender: girls were steered towards women’s work: cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger siblings. Boys were assigned tasks considered men’s work, for example, tending cattle, or working in the fields. Provided there were not enough men in the family, sometimes girls and women would take up “men’s work”, but usually not the vice versa (c.f. Jakoubková Budilová, 2017). Apart from these, there was also work classified as “children’s work”, such as herding geese.

The transmission of skills necessary for the living was informal and was done mostly in families. This was related to the fact that Voyvodovans in general did not want to leave the village. They preferred to continue in the livelihood of their parents, i.e. farming. Voyvodovo children also had to go to school. Schooling was compulsory in Bulgaria, from the age of six years to the age of 13 or 14. After finishing compulsory schooling, they would be considered adults by the local community. Some Voyvodovo children would follow their compulsory schooling with an apprenticeship, either to craftsmen in neighbouring villages (e.g. shoemakers, ironmongers, wheelwrights), others were sent by their parents.
into apprenticeship in Czechoslovakia (this was only possible after 1926 owing to the activity of Czech teachers in the village). Almost exclusively, these options concerned boys; girls were mostly sent into service. It was either rich families, able to afford having one of their sons trained, or poor families, who lacked sufficient farmland and therefore did not require the entire workforce available to maintain the farm.

In Voyvodovo, children were needed as a workforce in the fields, and so their further education was not supported. Most Voyvodovo children did not continue in formal education beyond primary school. In Voyvodovo families, higher education was not considered too important; family education steered the children mainly towards manual work. Given that the absolute majority of young people took up their parents’ occupation in agriculture, they had little use for formal higher education in their lives. The young in Voyvodovo learned “empirically”, that is, inside their own family and wider community groups which was typical for peasant societies in the past (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1982: 98-99).

**Different Attitudes to Childhood?**

I believe that different attitudes to childhood in Voyvodovo community prior and after 1950 were connected to different demographic conditions of the respective periods. Until 1950, the population of Voyvodovo could be characterized as the old demographic regime. Both birth and death rates were high by modern standards. Birth control was almost absent, and only impacted the life in Voyvodovo in the later period. The age difference between the oldest and the youngest in the family might have been the same as the age difference between parents and their children. Population in Voyvodovo was very vulnerable to demographic crises, like wars and epidemics. Families were primarily economic units, joint farming enterprises.

Frequent deaths of both children and parents influenced the character of the family. The widowed and orphaned had to establish new families, in order to survive. These circumstances produced families of a specific pattern, which I called “patchwork families”. They comprised re-married adults and their children from previous marriages, as well as children they produced together. Experience of step-parents, stepchildren, or half-siblings was relatively common. Children growing up in the families of their stepfathers were pushed to leave their families soon, to go into service or an apprenticeship elsewhere. Contrary to some contemporary ideas about the “traditional family”, families operating under the old demographic regime, as was shown in case of Voyvodovo, were neither stable, nor enduring, because they were frequently disrupted by deaths of its members.

These characteristics of the “old demographic regime” affected the experience of childhood and the attitudes towards it. Children grew up in families, where the age gaps between parents’ and children’s generation were not as big as in modern times. There was also a completely different dynamics of sibling groups in these demographic conditions. Older sisters normally took over the responsibility of their younger siblings soon, and sons had to work in the fields from the young age. This also reinforced the informal, “empirical education”. Formal schooling was not
supported, because it made no sense in the situation, when all children stayed in the village, inherited land and continued in farming.

After the first demographic transition, which occurred among the Voyvodovans only after the resettlement to Czechoslovakia, circumstances changed. Birth and death rates dropped, and marriages produced a smaller number of children. Many families took a form of the two-child family. Families ceased to be economic units; the land was collectivized in Czechoslovakia, and there was nothing to pass on to one’s own children. In this context, parents started to emphasize formal education (schooling), in order to arrange for a better life for their children. Child’s position in the family became more central, compared to former times in Voyvodovo, where the central position had been assigned always to the father of the family.

My chapter aimed at the analysis of a connection between the cultural values (attitude to childhood) and their demographic context. I tried to show that a different view of childhood was shaped, in case of Voyvodovo, by the “traditional” pattern of the family before 1950. After 1950, we encounter a new type of relationship towards children, greater individualization, more emotional attitude and emphasis on education. In the former model, the child was a part of a family as an economic unit, in the latter, child became a person within a small, nuclear, modern family, that required attention and investment as an individual.

References:


77
Policies of the Bulgarian State in the Field of Culture and Their Reflection in Children’s Activities (1950s–1970s)

Nadezhda A. Ivanova

Abstract: This article is based on research stemming from the author’s doctoral thesis. The research was held through semi-structured interviews among Bulgarian citizens who have been born in the period between 1955-1965 in Sofia and Asenovgrad. The purpose of the following manuscript is to make an observation of the policies of the Bulgarian state in the field of culture and the effect this had on children’s activities which occurred as a result. A major aim of the government of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria was to create a new generation of young socialists on whom the hope of building a communist society fell upon. For this purpose, certain reforms had to be made in the fields of culture and education. Combined with ideology and the development of technology, these reforms created a cultural and social environment for this generation, which none of the previous generations has experienced. This resulted in a change in the activities (games, interests, imagination, social interactions, etc.) of the children.

Keywords: Bulgaria, Policies, Culture, Children’s activities, Socialism.

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In the years following the political changes in Bulgaria in 1944, the Bulgarian state, led by the Bulgarian Communist Party, struggled to establish not only a new political order, but also a new social, economic, and cultural order. In this article, I am going to pursue a brief look at the factors which contributed to the path on which the Bulgarian state led its policies in the field of culture. For the research were used interviews in which the respondents reflected on their childhood during the 1960s and 1970s in Bulgaria and the media which influenced their activities at the time. I have used the works of contemporary authors of the period – researches
on the development of the media and its role in the education of children, and on
the ideological literature written especially for children. The current article is part
of a research piece, which has taken place in Sofia and Asenovgrad. The object of
the research is to observe the generation of children who had their childhood in the
period under review. It was done through semi-structured interviews in the period
between June 2016 and October 2018. In the interviews, respondents remember the
impression of the TV shows, films, books, and magazines they were in touch with
during their childhood, and the various ways they used to incorporate them in their
activities. Not only the ones made specifically for children but also any kind of
media they have witnessed in their childhood that made an impression big enough
for them to want to recreate it in their games and other activities. To achieve a better
understanding of the media and the products of popular culture at the time I have
reviewed films, books, and magazines of the period, especially those mentioned
by the respondents in the interviews. The interviews recorded during the fieldwork
have been analysed using thematic and quantitative methods with markers such as
gender, age, birthplace and profession of the respondents being taken into account.
In addition to that I have used the observations on the topic under research and the
analysed interviews in accordance with the information from the used literature.

Culture is the main instrument used to influence the understanding, knowledge,
reactions, and values of a person. In this article, I use the terms official culture and
popular culture to describe all sources of mass information, which are created in a
centralized way, by the state and aim to distribute a certain agenda. It is everything
that is known by the public and that is widely considered a source of enrichment of
the views and knowledge about the environment in which a certain society exists.
The society itself does not create this culture. It is created by the state and its
services in order to fulfil the need of the public to have a feeling of progress, access
to information, entertainment and cultural enrichment. In non-totalitarian states
there is a similar type of production of culture, but it is not necessarily directed by
a government. Usually, there are different types of artistry used for this purpose:
literature, poetry, cinema, drama, art, music – the different types of art that get to
be most accessible and popular. With the development of technology, the television
becomes an integral part of the media, along with newspapers and magazines.
Through popular culture, the state finds an easier way to reach the public. More
shortly said – this is the instrument of the state propaganda. The popular culture is
popular because at first sight it is non-aggressive.

Most of the processes described in the article, like the fast development
of technology and the popularity of the space programs, were not isolated for
Bulgaria and the Socialist countries. They were common for many countries in
the world. The main difference, which is concluded in the current article, is that of
the ideological the Socialist regime added to the different aspects of the social life.

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1 Author’s definitions.
A Brief Look at the Role of the Family

In the 1960s, the development of popular culture reached such levels that it intertwined with every element of the life of the Bulgarian citizen, including children’s games, education, the socialization of children, the communication between them, and their interests for their future development. It is important that I take a brief look on Bulgarian states’ policies in the field of education as this is the main factor that gives information on the direction which was being followed in educating and upbringing the generation. In the period of the Socialist regime, the education of children in the family was rejected to a certain extent. The motive is that it was believed that parents were not always well prepared to educate their children in the spirit of Socialism and of the path of all-round, vast development of the “new person” (Elkonin, 1984: 295).

The generation of the 1960s and 1970s have lived their childhood in a period of history when all aspects of life went through changes. This, without any doubt, reflected on all activities of the children. One of the biggest changes for everybody was the growth of the role of the educational institutions in the upbringing of children from an early age. The education of the children of this generation was the main priority of the state. The plan for the education had to be followed strictly and it was combined with alternative methods for influencing the way of thinking, which with a non-aggressive character can attract the public and distribute the messages without making the recipient feel obliged to accept it.

The limiting of the role of the family to the role of a domestic example of the values of labour practically belittled the importance of the family environment to a point of zero for the upbringing of the child. The parents had the responsibility to look after the physical survival of their children and to look after them so that “bad” things did not influence them. Such a tendency is described by Elkonin (1984): “Labour is being replaced in the life of the modern family. Only some forms of domestic labour remain. In the bourgeois society, the empowered classes and the well-off class members erase the labour from the life of their children... This is a degenerative and western tendency, which the family must not allow in their home” (Elkonin, 1984: 295). That is why the state used to depend so much on the educational institutions. With the education of the children in their power, they took care of the process as being most accurate to the state’s ideas of the development of the young generation.

The Role of the Media

The role of the media in this period grew continuously and the fast development of technology allowed more and more people to have access to all types of media that existed at the time. The fantasy and imagination became based more on the alternative reality of cinema and television. The images, which a person or a small child could imagine were replaced by the more real-looking pictures, which were broadcasted all the time and everywhere. For the first time in the history of mankind, moving pictures were being recorded and projected. Photographs, films,
and videos became assistants of the memory. Until this time, the text had to be enriched by the mind and the imaginary. Now the imagination started to be limited to the production of texts into images and their broadcasting. Fewer people were producing and more people were consuming the ready-made images, which require almost no imagination (Wolf, 2016: 135).

The content of the media was present in the everyday life of the users and influences their way of living. The media established a role model for society. They present emotions, feelings, attitudes and models of behaviour (Danov, 2016: 32, 35). The development of the media technology and broadcasting during the period under review contributed for the development of the human mind. Today “media” is a broad concept, which comprises many different means and sources, access to which now have many more people compared to the 1960s and the 1970s when the media messages and the popular culture were more centralised and were directed to certain addresses, who were supposed to receive certain messages. Today, unlike the first decades after the creation of television, the feedback is of special importance in the process of communication. Through it, the participants in the process express their relationship with the source of the message and between themselves. The feedback carries in itself personal relations, opinions, and a point of view, combines positive and negative elements, agreement and acceptance, as well as critique and unacceptance and at the same time. (Danov, 2016: 27).

**Literature**

While playing, children reproduce everything that has impressed them. Whatever they have witnessed and experienced becomes a part of their fantasy and dreams. Such a deep impression in a child’s mind leave not only directly seen objects and activities, but also such parts of culture that introduce an alternative reality. Something which the child learns and understands, but which is not real and cannot be seen or felt. Such are the tales and books. They ignite one’s imagination and make the mind create an image of its own of what is heard or read. There is no doubt that something that leaves an emotional trace in a child’s mind will be recreated while the child plays.

With the development of the educational system, the literature directed to the children became more diverse. It became well incorporated in the teaching process. The creators of the education programs included literature, which was to be taught to the pupils. It was made so that children read certain books in their free time as well. In this way, literature lost its casual character, but its influence on children’s perceptions did not change. Markova (1982) researches the impact of children’s literature on children’s play. Her research shows that each product of literature has an influence on a child’s education and that a need for a recreation of the red occurs only when the book includes a definitive description of the characters, their activities, personalities, their relationships and interactions (Elkonin, 1984: 28). The results of this research completely agree with the experiments of Elkonin (1984) and Corsaro (2012). Both of them describe the way children incorporate what they have read or witnessed in their games only when they have learned the
details of people’s activities. In the same manner, the more accurate the descriptions in a story are, the more the child would feel what is written and recreate it in its games and other activities.

A lot of the literature directed to children in the period under review contained information about different and mesmerizing professions. Very often the choice of a profession was given such importance that it was included in novels and poems. Some authors of such are Leda Mileva, Ran Bosilek, Nikolay Zidarov. Others, like Mladen Isaev and Tsvetan Angelov, wrote children’s poems with ideological content (Enchev, 2013). All the respondents in the research, on which the current article is based, shared that by reading books they developed an interest in different professions. Two of the respondents\(^2\) got interested in Astronomy and Physics from books on such themes, reading the biography of astronaut Yury Gagarin and magazines. Another respondent recalls being inspired by books of technology and by novels as well. (Picture 1) He and his friends started making rafts and setting them sailing in the local river; medieval weapons and playing war with them; making carts and riding them on the steep alleys, etc. Some respondents\(^3\) remember the literature they read as something connected with school, lessons and

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\(^2\) Respondents 1 and 2. Female, born 1961 in Sofia.

interests in science, other respondents remember being impressed by novels and using what they read in them in their games. One of them used to play with her little sister “Pipi the long sock”. Another one recreated the Soviet children’s novel *Timur and his band* (“Timur i negovata komanda”) (Gaydar, 1971) while playing with his friends. They called themselves *Timurovtsi* and helped their neighbours. According to the respondents, the recreation in the form of a play of their plots was not obligatory for them. It was their own decision.

The institutions definitely had a big importance in the development of children and their interests. Thanks to the memories of a respondent, we can make a comparison between the role of the institution in the life of the student at the beginning of the 1970s in Bulgaria and the USSR. She used to live in Moscow when she was 11 to 14 years old (5th to 8th grade). Although the direction of development in both states was practically identical, the role of the educational institutions in the USSR was much stronger and more involving than it was in the Peoples Republic of Bulgaria. At the same time, it seems that the Bulgarian state relied more on the non-obligatory ways to educate children and make them an integral part of the society.

**Cinema and Television**

The effect of cinema and television is very similar. But there is one major difference. While literature usually does not offer already created images to the reader (one has to create them using his/her imagination), cinema and television are, in their essence, images. But although their nature leaves little to the imagination, some films leave a big enough impression in children’s minds that they use their plots and characters in their games.

In the decades, following WWII and the establishment of the Socialist regime in Bulgaria (from 1944 through the following decades of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and the 1980s respectively) the film industry saw a major rise in films produced each year. In the 1970s a level of 30 films made in a year was reached. Each idea and script went through a state-organized commission for approval and the ready productions had to be approved by a commission as well. They had to lack any differences with the political line of the Party and had to be made according to the ideas of socialism (Statulov, 2015: 15). Most films had a purpose, apart from entertainment, to contribute to the ideological education of the citizens of the state. Cinemas were built all over the country – in the towns, the villages and in every neighbourhood in the cities. The film industry, operated by the state, became accessible for everyone. Apart from the many Bulgarian films, the public had access to some foreign productions from the USSR, from other socialist countries, and sometimes western productions from countries like Italy and France, with whom the Bulgarian state maintained close cultural relations. A lot of the films

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5 Respondent 3.
were on themes such as the Second World War and the fight against the often called fascist, capitalist, and bourgeoisie oppression. In the 1970s the filmmakers began a tendency for to be allowed to criticize in some social injustices as long as the critique was not crossing some lines. The social problems had to be portrayed as occurring in the society itself, not related in any way to the state authorities unless the problem got solved with their help. This constructive criticism and the attempts to stray from the political line were typical for the genre of the socialist realism, which applied for different types of art, films included (Yanev, 2004).

What is typical for this type of films is that the audience can relate to the characters and the storyline. It doesn’t matter if it’s a comedy or drama – everything is always portrayed in a very realistic manner.

Technologies were very fast developing and new sources of information were being created (Ivanova, 2014). In 1951, scientists from the Department of Radio technologies and Physics in Sofia began working on a project for broadcasting images. On the First of May, 1954, the first live wireless broadcast was aired. By 1959, there already were live programs, such as fashions shows, concerts, and manifestations for celebrations such as The Day of Labour. Meanwhile, the construction of a TV tower was started, which would serve to spread the radio and TV signals (Predavatel.com, 2016). The same year (1959), the Bulgarian National Television was created and started airing. The children of the 1960s and the 1970s got to be the first generation of Bulgaria, that have had access to television from the very beginning of their lives. Television became very quickly the most widely used tool for mass information and for influencing society. Although in the first decade of its existence the Bulgarian National Television did not host many shows directed to the children, there were some which exist almost from the start – such as Лека нощ, деца (“Good night, children”) which has aired since 1962 until today. The show is about ten minutes in length and consists of different children’s shows made through the years, usually animated or puppet shows. With time television started airing more and more programs for children and their purpose was to help the “right” development of the children, which was “the best interest of society”. The education of children from an early age was of special importance for the Bulgarian state at the time and no resources were spared for the cause (Mihaylova, 2013).

Considering the shared memories by the respondents of their childhood, a pattern of the type of games they played the most in the ages 4 to 11 can be seen. Most of the games are role-plays or play-pretending or contain an element of role-playing. Among them it can be found some that are influenced, or partially influenced, by popular culture. I have described in the text above some elements inspired by the books children read, but there are also games inspired by the cinema and the serial films on television. Two of the respondents, together with their cousins, played war when they were about 4 or 5 years old, pretending they were soldiers and making tanks from cardboard and other hand-made toy-weapons. Another respondent played with their siblings “Partisans” and Овчарчето

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6 Respondents 1 and 2.
7 Respondent 4.
Калитко (“Kalitko the shepherd”). All of them share a realization that these games were a result from the seen in series like Зеленото чудовище (“Das grüne Ungeheuer”, 1962) and Семнадцать мгновений весны (“Seventeen moments of spring”, 1973), as well as films like Черните ангели (“The Black Angels”, 1970) and other productions about partisans and the Second World War (International, 2019). A primary memory from childhood the respondents share is one of watching films about the War. It must be taken into consideration that the children of this generation had access to home TV sets as early as the early 1960s (which, for most of them means since they were born). What children saw in these films affected not only their games but also reflected on children’s notion about the people, their origins, and traits. An example of this is the association of Germans with being “fascists”. All of the respondents remember the “craze” at the time the emblematic TV film На всеки километър (“Every kilometre”, 1969-1971) was aired. A TV serial film, praising the story of childhood friends, who became communists and partisans (International, 2019). Many of them watched every episode and later played “Every kilometre” with the other children in the neighbourhood. Each child played the role of one of the characters. In the stories about this play-pretend as told by the respondents can be seen as a pattern of hierarchy among the children – the older ones decided on who would play a certain role. They usually chose to play the roles of the protagonists and the younger ones were given the roles of the antagonists (in this case – of the fascists).

None of the listed above films were made specifically for children. Their creators probably had not thought that they were going to make such an impression on children. It seems that the productions made for children at this time did not have such an effect as those films about adventures and action. The image of the enduring, high-spirited characters, who are idealists and dreamers, fighting for a bright future was the key to catch the attention of children, as well as of all viewers. This image turned into a role-model for children, while the image of the antagonists (“the fascists”) became the idea of the enemy, the image that must be rejected. The noticeable dualism and dramatization in the films was probably their most alluring trait and what made them most suitable to be used in a play-pretend. The characters in these films left such a strong impression that all respondents share that they used to collect pictures of their favourite actors, which usually were cut from magazines.

Magazines

In the 1960s and the 1970s, the publishing of periodic press with diverse content did not stop or become less, compared to the pre-socialism period. They did not become less popular with the rise in popularity of television and cinema and their spread all over the country (Picture 2). On the contrary – with time they started to become more diverse, more colourful, and glossy. On the pages started appearing favourite characters from the films and TV series, favourite singers and other popular personas. The serious and formal look of the media became more ordinary and accessible, it became easier to comprehend and more fun for a wider public. There were magazines published especially for children. For the younger children, there
were Другарче (“Drugarche”) and Септемврийче (“Septemvriyche”), which consisted of poems about topics such as family, school, games and also – about Party leaders and the comrades from other Socialist countries (“Drugarche”, 1968-1990). There were also magazines directed to the children above the age of 9 (above third grade) like Млад конструктор (“Young Constructor”) and Космос (“Cosmos”). On their pages can be found information on all kinds of scientific innovations and new discoveries, about the progress of space science, futuristic and fantastic articles, comics, interviews with astronauts, instructions how to make telescopes, generators, robots, etc. It is noticeable that in the magazines for younger children there is a stronger emphasis on the ideological and social propaganda, while on those for the older children the emphasis falls on the development of professional interests, although the political element is still present.

The progress of technology and the space missions in this period were an important part of both the education and the interests of children in this period. The listed magazines were very popular among pupils. Some of the respondents\(^8\) describe that they got inspired to make a hand-made telescope so they could look at the stars, following the directions from the magazine “Septemvriyche” when they were 11 years old. They used to climb on the tallest building in the neighbourhood (an about 14-storey apartment building) to use their telescope. They made maps of the stars and were very keen on learning Physics in school, so they could become astronomers or nuclear physicians when they grew up. They list some other magazines they read, like “Cosmos” and Наука и техника (“Science and technology”), as well as the fact that they used to read all the books on such thematics they could get (Picture 3). They were mesmerised by the biography of Yury Gagarin,

\(^8\)Respondent 1 and 2.
but the biggest excitement they recall was the space mission of “Apollo”: they recall being at their grandparents’ in Gorna Oryahovitsa during the summer holidays and being “stuck” all the time in front of the black and white TV, watching the connection of “Apollo” and “Soyuz”. Another respondent collected all these magazines and took lessons outside of school on chemistry and other sciences, being inspired by the articles she read.

Apart from magazines with educational content, there were such that were purely entertaining. “Pif” and “Mickey Mouse” were of this kind. Their content was mainly of comics about the adventures of the characters after which the magazines are named. Both were foreign and came from western non-socialist countries. Getting an edition of “Mickey Mouse” was not easy and many times children got it from relatives who bought it abroad. Two of the respondents remember getting it from Yugoslavia and feeling a big joy for having the stickers that came with it. Magazines proved to be an effective instrument for the children to get regular information on the topics which they have an interest in and to learn new things.

Conclusions

In modern times, the experiences a person has in childhood are put into a sentimental perspective. The path which is set in front of children is to a great extent a path into the unknown. The aims, which are to be reached, are a kind which nobody has reached before, and nobody can be sure whether they will ever be reached. This is relevant for all periods in history and all societies. In Socialist Bulgaria,
the official aim of the society was “to build Socialism”. But the state’s hope for the generation of the children of this period was to “build Communism”. They were the generation born in a socialist society, unlike their parents, who were born in a capitalist society. These children had never seen or experienced something different from socialism. So the state and the whole socialist world relied on them to reach the highest point of development of humanity – a communist society of equality and labour. A clear example for the type of dreams which the children were being taught is the fictional tale, published on the first pages of the magazine “Cosmos” (XXI, 1963), which tells the readers about the future, about the 21st century and the way people and especially children live. The narrative is about an easy and perfect life of a flourishing highly technological socialist world, accomplished at the end of the 20th century through the hard labour and idealism of the society that this generation is going to create. These children were taught to dream of scientific and social achievements and to have a high appreciation of education and science. All of the respondents, who have been interviewed for the current research later became doctors, engineers, architects, psychologists, etc. So can it be concluded that the aim of the state to create a highly educated generation was reached? Most definitely many people were influenced by all the books, magazines and films they had access to in their childhood. And most of the respondents in the research remember the exact products and activities in childhood that left the most important traces in their lives (Picture 4). All of the reviewed genres in the article are quite different from each other but shared the state-operated control and censorship in the current period. This led to a certain similarity in the produced content. The thematics of the progress of technology, space programs, the rivalry with the west, the beauty of labour, the national pride, internationalism and the prosperity of the Socialist society were common for all reviewed genres. But the idea of a hard-working society of highly educated communists was not accomplished. It was as early as the 1970s that the state found a problematic tendency – many parents and their children were not interested in hard work and serving the country (Teneva, 1977: 229). The now grown-up children remember the things that they were passionate about – science, novels, films, music and dreams, but none of them ever mention a passion for a hard-working society of communists.

Picture 4. Children. A photo of respondents 1 and 2 taken by their father during a visit at their grandparents in Gorna Oryahovitsa. Milena Nikolova, private archive, 1968
about the dream of Communism. Nor of the idea of hard-working. Everyone shares a somehow nostalgic feeling for their childhood. There is a difference in the perception of the past. Some have mixed or even negative feelings. The reflection of the past created questions about whether the role-models from the books and films from their childhood were real and what were they do to with them (Ivanova, 2010: 198). Others idealize their childhood and view everything from the period as better than anything newer, as the experiences in childhood are what makes the individual a person.

References:


Abstract: *Zmaj* was one of the most important children’s magazines published in Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Suggestive illustrations and the power of discourse made it one of the first mandatory school magazines. Texts published in *Zmaj* indicate the need to socialize youngest members according to the ideals and principles of Socialism and the Non-Aligned movement as a group of countries who did not want to be aligned with any major power block. During the Cold War, a group of countries rejected to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union, but to stay neutral. The main initiative to create this movement came from Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito. The aim of this paper is to: 1. Stress the political and cultural function of *Zmaj* in the process of socialization; 2. Reconsider the link between Yugoslav policy of Non-Alignment and upbringing, pointing out the importance of three elements of Non-Aligned policy as the most important values included in socialization – struggle for peace, anti-colonialism, right to independent judgment and decisions, anti-imperialism, and regional development through reconstruction of the international political and economic order; 3. To highlight some of the consequences of the idea that political socialization is enduring over the adults life time.

Keywords: Political socialization, Childhood, *Zmaj*, Yugoslavia, Non-Aligned.

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Introduction

The first issue of the Yugoslav school magazine for literature, Zmaj was published in 1954.¹ The magazine was intended for children aged 12-14, and in November 1970, it was recommended as a mandatory part of school literature (Zmaj, 11, 1970: 256; Zmaj, 12, 1970: 288). During the two and half decades between the 1950s and 1970s, Zmaj became one of the most important magazines for school children in Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, edited by number of important figures from cultural and political life.² Although it was published from 1950’s to 1980’s, the peak of its discursive power took place in late 1960’s, precisely between 1967 and 1970. Zmaj covered topics from general culture, films, stories about revolutionaries and ideologues of socialism, prose and poetry that supported anti-colonialism, texts about political events worldwide with ideological basis of fraternity and solidarity. Despite the great number of other sources, mainly television shows and other magazines, Zmaj took a special place by the virtue of unique, rich structure, suggestive illustrations and the power of discourse. It became a useful instrument in the process of socialization of children which were supposed to become grown up individuals suitable for further participation in the political life of Yugoslavia (Spasovska, 2017: 100).

The discourse analysis applied in this paper, the very language and structure of Zmaj discover layers of meaning added by the Yugoslav institutions. It creates a unique pedagogy aligned with the political sphere. According to this, the title of this paper, refers to “non-aligned child” as a desirable “personality type” in socialist Yugoslavia. Since Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was following principles of neutrality, peaceful coexistence with neighbours and both polarized parts of the world, its ideal child should nurture the values that will preserve its non-aligned policy.

The analysed issues were published between 1966 and 1971 and they were found in private collection. The research included a total of forty-seven journals published within a given time frame. The aim of this paper was to understand the connection between politics, childhood, and popular culture which had a limited scope in Yugoslavia during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Since leisure time and entertainment were exposed to the influence of political culture, it seemed that political socialization was one of the most important aspects in upbringing.

A discourse analysis was used as a standard approach to document analysis in order to understand practice and construction of childhood in magazine Zmaj. The traditional way of understanding child and childhood intersect with local, Yugoslav concepts of childhood. Thus, discourse analysis can help understand the invention of children and childhood within political frames. A discourse analysis of Zmaj highlight narratives and beliefs that were agents of political socialization. Attitudes

¹ During 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’ a great number of other school journals like Pionir (“Pioneer”), Kekec, Male novine, Zeka, Tik-tak were published.
² Some of them were: Mira Alečković, Grigor Vitez, Aleksandar Vučo, Arsen Diklić, Branko Ćopić, Desanka Maksimović, Vojislav Stanovčić, Branislava Vujić, Mira Mihelić, Ljubica Sokić
and emotions imposed by this magazine, manifestly support the ideals of peace, mutual understanding and neutrality.

The first chapter of this paper introduces the term “non-aligned” while questioning both its political and historical meaning and its influence in popular culture. The second chapter brings definitions of childhood and socialization accenting those which Yugoslav pedagogy considered most valuable. The third chapter discuss most important topics of Zmaj in the context of political culture. Thus, stories, films, poems published in Zmaj were aimed at socializing what I refer to as the “non-aligned child” and the glorification of the Yugoslav political path. The last chapter brings a conclusion about “non-aligned personality type” as the most desirable and most sublime according to expectations of Yugoslav socialism. The same chapter partially questions traditional theories on childhood which had implications on upbringing and education of Yugoslav children.

Positively Neutral: Non-Aligned Movement and Its Popularization

The political and ideological background of the magazine Zmaj dates back to 1940’s and 1950’s as a reflection of wider ideological split between Yugoslavia and SSSR. Inconsequence, the magazine demonstrated a search for an “original” Socialist path. The new socialist path was based on refusing to choose a side amidst bipolar division, while maintaining good relations with neighbours (Hubbard, 2008: 71-79). Although the Belgrade Summit (organized in 1961) was not the very beginning of the Non-Aligned Movement, it was considered to be one of the most important dates in the Movement and in the history of SFRY (Misra, 1982: 62-74). The post-war era in the 1950’s witnessed the decline of traditional political models and the construction of bipolarity in the international system (Srivastana, 1993: 44). Colonial powers of the West needed time for reconstruction after the war, while former colonies became newly created states that lack resources and technology (Mišković, 2014: 1-18). The very core of Non – Aligned ideology was expressed in helping nations gain and retain their interests without economic and military power and without outside interference in their inner and foreign politics. The Non-Aligned was understood as: 1. foreign policy doctrine of the most of the so called developing countries, having roots in their similar colonial, imperialistic and exploitative past; 2. a specific foreign policy orientation and; 3. political association of the so called developing countries (Misra, 1981: 200). The Non-Aligned Movement advocated general disarmament and peace, regional development and anti-colonialism.

In SFRY, the Non-Aligned Movement was more than just a political and ideological path, though. It was used in popular culture and intertwined with it. It was presented as a matter of ethics of humanity, so the Non-Aligned idea justified the political path, struggles and problems which Yugoslavia was facing with. Respecting different cultures, identifying with economically marginalized people and being critical toward any kind of war propaganda, political domination or social injustice, were ideals incorporated in upbringing and education as much as in political rhetoric and foreign policy (Rubenstein, 2015: 74-75).
Child and childhood call for a historical inquiry into the ontological and epistemological understanding from which these views have arisen (Kennedy, 1988: 121-137). From Freud to Piaget, Western thought has given special attention to childhood (Irvine, 2000:29-54; Freud, 1984; Piaget, 1970). There are two dominant views of the child in both traditions – Enlightenment and Romance – which are still present in tensions in contemporary images of the young child (Tomanović, 2015: 7-48). While the Romanticism invented an innocent child, which is not yet rationalized, the Enlightenment brought big changes in understanding the childhood. Instead of “breaking the will of child”, parents and teachers strove to mould the child’s mind (Foyster, Marten, 2010: 1-10). Both paradigms were included in twentieth-century theories of childhood and its development. Following World War II, the world confronted new challenge of rebuilding countries that had been shattered by the war and a new paradigm was a result of the new experience. The post-war economy was booming, so “development” became one of the most important terms in technology, economy and social sciences, including pedagogy (Rapley, 2013: 4). The concept of political socialization emerges from great theories on childhood and education, and later, from 20th century developmental theories (Rutges, Grieshaber, 2005). According to these theories, development is a series of age-related changes that happen over the course of life span. Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, and Eric Erikson describe development as a series of periods in which people exhibit typical behavioural patterns and establish capacities. At the age of twelve and thirteen, the child identifies with a social group and internalizes the role system of the group becoming a member of it. The diverse concepts of (political) socialization usually fall into two broad categories. The first type could be represented by Langton, who defined political socialization as a “way how society transmits its political culture from generation to generation” (Langton, 1969: 4). Early research in political socialization considered the parents as the most important societal agents who form attitudes in children such as regime support and identification with political figures (Devitt, 2005:67-88). The second perspective emphasizes an individual’s personal growth in which the person is forming their own values and personal identity. This broad division of conceptualizing political socialization fits into larger debates about the nature of socialization within the discipline of sociology and has resulted in some ambiguity and confusion regarding the importance of socialization. According to George Voskopulos political socialization is a process which to a significant degree determines children’s perception of politics and their reactions to political phenomena. The political socialization is expected to lead to the formulation of political culture based on the adopted values (Voskopulos, 2004:5-44). At present, there is no dominant perspective guiding and integrating political socialization theory and research. Although, all researchers in this field would agree that media provide most of the material (accounts of history, news, and commentary) from which parents and teachers construct the presentations of political reality, which they deliver to their audiences. The media accounts themselves are symbolic constructions reflecting organizations choices of what to report, how this should be interpreted, and the
language used in their narratives (Wasburn, Covert, 2017: 78). Similar to television and film, magazines are considered a part of mass media and believed to be effective because they enable the retention of attention among audiences and pre-occupying predominately children and adolescents. According to developmental theories, at each stage of developmental cycle, a person is facing a developmental crisis that serves as a major turning point (Okvuchukwu, Faith, 2013: 6-10). One of the most important is the age 12-14, when young Yugoslavs began reading Zmaj. The child was still a student, although able to understand abstract terms and ideas like liberty, freedom, justice, independence. In this period, girls and boys become increasingly active members of the collective through pioneering, gatherings, singing songs from Second World War and Revolution, glorifying socialist and communist ideology (Smiljanić-Čolanović, 1967: 80).

Although early theories viewed children as imperfect adults, contemporary theorists believe that childhood is neither universal nor natural. Drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives such as critical theory, postcolonial theory and post structuralism, postmodern scholars question the modern belief in the power of science to objectively determine the universal laws of human development. Social constructionism seek to understand how children and childhood knowledge is constructed, by whom, and why and what purpose it would serve. While criticizing categorizations, age criteria and neglecting cultural aspects of childhood, social constructionism offered alternative ways to understand this life period. This way of thinking is grounded in varying concepts among different cultures, societies, and different time period in history (Norzoli, Moen, 2016: 75-80). Paradigm shift about childhood happened in 1970s and 1980s when the traditional perceptions started to problematize in academics. Vygotsky’s and Piaget’s work on child development were criticized and questioned for considering childhood universal. With the globalization of economies and cultures, contemporary social life is characterized more by hybridity than similarity. Children are being raised in a range of circumstances, while accessible technologies are transforming social relations and providing children with new means of communicating and learning (Ryan, Grieshaber, 2005: 34-44). Postmodern understanding of child enabled ethnographic, cultural and anthropological point of view. The shift toward a recognition and acceptance of children’s voice in determining their own world view brought about a theoretical position about pluralities of childhoods and its experience across cultures. Diversity of experiences according to place of residence, class, and gender questioned traditional Western notion of childhood and resulted in notions such as “disappearance of childhood”.

William Corsaro uses an interpretative view of culture as public, performative, collective, and definitive to establish children’s peer culture as a stable set of activities, artefacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with each other (Adyt and Corsaro: 2003: 1306-1325). According to Corsaro, there are two basic themes in peer cultures: Children want to gain control of their lives, and they want to share that sense of control with each other. A common routine in young children’s peer cultures is socio-dramatic role-play. In frames of this play, children perform activities that are related to activities in their real lives (Corsaro 2013) Children do not imitate adults in socio-dramatic play, but elaborate and embellish
adult models to address their own concerns (Corsaro, 1985). Their embellishment is about status, power, and control. They are empowered when taking adult roles. This imaginative play enables imagining the future when they will become adult and invest in control of themselves and others. Politics is regarded an adult’s sphere. While imagining war, peace, taking sides and gaining battles like Allies and partisans did, children could imagine gaining control. Modern understanding of political socialization can be transferred to postmodern theories. The very process of socialization consists of broadly understood learning and imitation. Through reading stories and inventing plays based on stories published in Zmaj children could gain imaginative power and control while acting like adults and investing in their bright future. The suggested future was about winning and becoming a winner, the one who is able to keep balance by staying neutral or choosing the right side in the battles and wars.

**Zmaj and Its Chapters: Peace Policy, Anti-Colonialism and Development**

Columns and stories published in Zmaj can be summed up in shaping attitudes and other social traits that are characteristic of children’s behaviour. Properly socialized Yugoslav child was considered to be sensitive to injustice, ready to defend marginalized people, or to feel sympathy for them (Zmaj, 8-9 1970: 208-2010; Zmaj, 10, 1970: 240-243). It is not easy to comprehend the rich content of Zmaj although it is possible to point out some of the most important chapters which broadly cover topics on peace policy, regional development and anti-colonialism. Stories about Pioneer Organization were followed by historical review of similar organizations and their magazines, such as Budućnost (The Future), a proletarian children’s newspaper for instruction and entertainment, published 1923-1928. The aim of Budućnost was to teach children to love and appreciate all the working people in the word. The title of this magazine, unlike the manifestly neutral Zmaj, anticipates investment in the future and youth as a symbol of progress (Zmaj, 4. 1969: 96-97; 100-103). Pioneers organized spontaneously or under the leadership of Communist Party of Yugoslavia and Communist Youth League of Yugoslavia (Duda, 2013: 90-111). After the Second World War, the Pioneer organization was the first step in the initiation process of becoming a politically socialized person, while Pioneers from were presented as role models (Erdei, 2004:155). The goal was identification with the pioneers from the past who were represented as brave, altruistically inclined and used as hard to reach ideal. The very effort to become like one was worthy of social recognition (Zmaj, 6-7,1971: 163-164)

Children were involved in the activities which include expressing loyalty to the Socialist path of Yugoslavia (Picture 1). Competition for drawings, stories, songs and travel books were just some of the activities. The topics were rarely neutral in ideological and political sense. Winning a prize was a form of recognition and a reminder of the “true path”. Beside awards such as sweets, t-shirts, publication becomes prize itself. Political obedience and emphasis in this obedience fills the reward that must become visible. Prize-winning literary contributions had political
connotation, they glorified the values and ideas associated with peace in the world; expressing concern about the so-called Third world countries; struggle for equality and independence; political maturity and awareness of inequality and injustice (Zmaj, 12, 1971: 318-319; Zmaj, 4, 1971: 154-155; Zmaj, 1 1970: 32-33; Zmaj, 4, 1969: 127). Of course, in the meantime, they were a proof that children are aware of socialist path and the obligation to follow “neutrality” and “independence” of Yugoslavia.

Films that were favoured in Zmaj were diverse which was also in accordance with the concept of neutrality and peace policy. Common to those films was anti-war option. Disney movies, Hollywood films presented in Zmaj were compatible in the ideals of modesty, altruism, fighting against oppression (Picture 2). Attention was paid to difference between growing up in peace and growing up during the war, to the righteousness and the necessity of suffering in the process of growing up. Krvava Bajka (“Bloody Fairy Tale”, Branimir Tori Janković, 1969), Jungle Book (Disney Production, 1967), Desantna Drvar (“Raid on Drvar”, Fadil Hadžić, 1963), Bitkana Neretvi (“Battle of Neretva”, Stevan Bulajić, Veljko Bulajić, 1969), Kada čuješ zvona (“When you hear the bells”, Antun Vrdoljak, 1969) and others. Yugoslav child was not spared of cruel scenes and knowledge of emotional and physical pain and suffering (Picture 3). Films discuss the cruelty of war, as much as brutality of growing up. Despite idealism, life was represented as a painful struggle. Thus, Yugoslav child had to be aware of the sacrifices laid for life in peace, her/his security and happiness (Zmaj, 1966-1971).

Zmaj issues were devoted to socialist revolutions (Zmaj, 10, 1967: 226-230; 240-241; Zmaj, 3, 1971: 72-73; Zmaj, 10, 1970: 22). For example, October Revolution was represented as a symbol of revolution itself (Zmaj, 4, 1970: 97-109). Lenin was portrayed as thinker and a hero whose ideology was aimed at establishing peace among peoples, nonviolence, giving the land to peasants and
factories to workers. He was also represented as one of the most important figures who inspired Non-Aligned path. Issues were completed with stories about Lenin, his childhood, and illustrated by an inevitable photo of smiling Lenin with cat in his arms (Zmaj, 11, 1969: 262-263).
Significant place was taken by the stories that celebrate Second World War as a national liberation movement. The Partisans (often named liberators) were portrayed as the carriers of the Revolution, and role models. Their determination to “struggle for peace” and readiness to sacrifice their lives for the country were presented through stories and poetry. In issue published in December 1967. The partisans were named “Children of the Revolution”, and portrayed as carriers of the struggle for peace in the whole world (Zmaj, 12, 1967, 298-299). Through reading poems, stories, biographies, children gained identification with Partisans. Further stimulation was part of children’s play and performances. These plays often rely on general places from history such as the First Serbian Uprising, the fight of the brigands (haiku) and the haste, referring to some of the well-known political stereotypes and constructs – “liberal tradition” / “the libertarian spirit of the South Slavic peoples” (Zmaj, 10, 1971: 232-233; Zmaj, 1, 1967: 97; Zmaj, 6-7, 1967: 258-259; 264-265, Zmaj,4, 1967: 289; 298-299).

Zmaj was openly and unequivocally opposed war in Vietnam (Zmaj, 2, 1968: 62-63; Zmaj, 6-7, 1968: 172-173; Zmaj 2, 1968:144-145) (Picture 4). Stories and chapters were dedicated to peaceful coexistence, the importance of independence and freedom, mutual understanding and enriched with songs that young Yugoslavs
were allegedly singing in the protest against violence, colonialism and inequality (Zmaj 3, 1968, 80-81). Issues leave the impression of insisting on non-violence that has no open political connotation. The forces that endanger people and mostly the children of Vietnam were represented as anonymous – nameless enemies of the peace in the world which disable preserving neutrality.

In issue from December 1969, was published a children’s poem *The Earth is Angry*. The song, allegedly written by a twenty-year-old girl, tells about suffering,
poverty and social insecurity of children in the Third world. It is hard to believe that the child in the age 12-14 can be aware of political and social reality in general:

Why children are screaming;
Why mothers are yelling;
It might be that the Earth is angry;
Because of the wars;
Because of the frauds or injustice (Zmaj 12, 1969:291)

In the context of anti-colonialism, Zmaj was telling the stories about the so-called Third-world children while Young Yugoslavs were represented as sympathetic to their “sisters and brothers” from Non-Aligned countries. The mention of slavery and colonialism was set in a carefully selected context that does not turn openly to a potentially responsible political or other force. In this context, the text and subtext remain consistent to the ideology of Non-Alignment (Zmaj, 10, 1970:240-243).

According to the stories published in Zmaj, the greatest fighter for freedom was the very president and the leader of Yugoslav Revolution, Josip Broz Tito (Picture 5). A major goal of the adolescent phase is the development of autonomy and independence from parents. In this age, ideology might be thought as a principal component of identity formation of which was a subject of extensive study of Erik Erikson (1963:133). In his system of stages of development in life cycle, as we already mentioned, during the puberty and adolescence, identity starts to be formed (Dybala, 2014: 13). However, Josip Broz Tito was not represented as a mere leader or a president but a kind of super-hero with semi-mythical characteristics. Stories and articles testify that he fought against economically, technologically and outnumbered multiple superior enemies and gained the battle (Germany); he was represented as a rebel with a cause because he stood against powerful Communist leader – Stalin; Tito was represented as human, kind to his comrades, sensitive to injustice. Actually, it is not surprising that Yugoslavia celebrated his birthday as a Day of Youth because he becomes symbol of Youth himself. Children seek for their individuality by identifying with heroes, so Tito’s image enabled dissemination of specific value system forming citizens and followers of Non-
Aligned socialist path. He was represented not only as a liberator of Yugoslav nations, but hero of the whole world (Zmaj, 2, 1968: 32-45; Zmaj, 11, 1968: 258-259, 256; Zmaj, 5, 1972: 13-141). Tito receives the attributes of the deity:

Only one word is sufficient – Tito! It includes everything in it – both love for freedom and hatred towards the enemy, and a cheerful smile and a dark expression. Stories about him are like memories from the past we are treading and those about the future we strive for. His name is a testimony of the battle we have to fight! Tito! His name pervades the strength of the down-hearted; it is the brightest of the gloomy, the steadily worried. It strengthens the weak, raises from the knees, from the mortal creations of the heroes, to illiterate; from enlightened to ignorant one. Whenever we see the beauty, strength and greatness, the name Tito is written. During the night, his picture on the wall becomes the threat to an enemy. You will meet him in the Partisan hospital, while wounded soldiers are whispering his name; He is a hope and a prayer. He is able to heal. When heroes are saying his name it sounds glorious but simple, like the blood we shed. (Zmaj, 5 1969: 130-131).

Sections dedicated to the uprisings and revolution, includes songs of children who died in the battle (“died heroically”) or in the concentration camps. One cannot resist the impression that texts and illustrations were not suitable for the age 12. In Serbia, where Yugoslav films are experiencing a new wave of popularity, war movies are not recommended to persons under the age of sixteen. Camps, murders and tortures, must not be erased from historical memory, all in order to appreciate the peace. Songs, drawings, pictures, different illustrations, enable trauma transmission, making generations of children born in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s to pass through trauma similar to that of survivors of the Second World War (Zmaj, 10, 1967: 246-247; Zmaj, 4, 1967: 12-122; Zmaj, 5, 170; Zmaj, 6-7, 1970: 161; Zmaj 3, 1969: 64; Zmaj, 10, 1969: 244-245; Zmaj, 12, 1969: 267).

Finally, issues were most often opened by neutral narratives about the everyday life of children. They usually testify the need for technological and other kinds of development through using the idea of progress. While describing the relationship between friends, children and animals, weather conditions, ecology, archaeology, biology, history of art, stories retain didactic character. Short articles made up of several lines allow for the acquisition of wide-ranging education. These “developmental stories” enable children to get to know facts from geology, soil morphology, plant and animal life, interesting facts from antiquity and new scientific discoveries. A special place occupies knowledge of life on other planets, which creates another version of balance between the East and the West. Stories from the cosmos remain neutral in such a way that travellers are not usually named, and the names of states are communicated in an equally neutral form. Some of these texts relate to spaceships, Columbus discoveries, hydrocarbons of the future, fast trains, underwater plantations and yields, dismantling dams, while building ecological awareness (Zmaj, 8-9, 1969: 193; 208-211). Such inventions offer stories about regional development and rely upon the concept of progress. This is a promised future. Yugoslavia was moving through the progress, but it was stopped in the eternal present moment while retaining and celebrating youth.
Yugoslav Socialism and Socialization

Early life experiences are generally considered to form the basis for political attitudes, values, identity, political engagement and political interests. Political learning begins early in childhood and continues over the person’s lifetime. The development of their political “consciousness” begins when they realize they belong to a particular group of people. Awareness of politics as a distinct realm of experience begins in the preschool years, when the first political objects recognized by children are usually president or police officers. Later, children develop patriotic feelings through participation in school rituals such as singing the hymn. As children mature, they develop more complex perception about their place in the political world and their potential participation. This is due to their ability to relate abstract concepts they read about in textbooks or learn in school classes (Niemy, Hepburn, 1995:7-16). The major agents of political socialization are education, parents, mass media and school. Children or young people can be socialized through reading magazines, watching television, films, or having conversation with their parents or teachers. Although researchers consider influence of these factors dependent on the very society, it is certain that children come to understand their role and to “fit in” political culture through the political learning process. Children, thus, develop their “political self”, a sense of personal identification with the political world. They acquire the knowledge, beliefs and values that help them comprehend politics (Greenstein, 1969: 34). This aspect of socialization is intended to ensure that political system is stable and recognized as legitimate.

Political socialization theories are concerned with specific processes of socialization in which children acquire political norms and behavioural orientations towards political issues, but which should be approached on a different basis than general knowledge and skills acquisition or social learning. Early theories on political socialization focus on child capacity to learn symbols, norms and behavioural tendencies which are strongly connected to political issues, like party or leader. These theories put a strong emphasis on the primacy principle, which holds that “early political learning is relatively enduring over the adult’s lifetime”.

Zmaj was one of the means in creating the image of Socialist citizen and Non-Aligned child as the object of reproduction of Yugoslav socialism. The structuring principle of political socialization holds that what is learned early is not only retained, but moulds later learning as well – structuring the acquisition of later attitudes and behaviour. Early orientations and identities serve as “filters” in terms of what is to be believed or trusted as well as what might be accordingly dismissed as untrustworthy (Pearson, 2001: 163-201). Although the aim of Zmaj was to produce personal “qualities” among Pioneers, or Yugoslav children, it had a strong ideological influence. As a literary journal, it was intended to keep neutrality, peace policy and to represent future development of socialist citizens (Buckingham, 1994: 79-94). Children with such qualities would later join another association under the umbrella of the Socialist Alliance of Working People and even become a member of the Communists Party. The Party expected from every citizen to be, a person aspiring for development, ready to defend her/his country, the rights of the one who was signified as “weaker”, but also to be sensitive to
non-socialist manifestation in his or her environment. Finally, the message was learning and working, honesty and faithfulness, appreciation for the revolution and all “progressive” people of the world, appreciation of liberty and peace, love for socialist Yugoslavia, its brotherly nations and nationalities, and a promise to build a new life in security and happiness.

_Zeka, Kekec, Tik Tak_ and other school magazines have been published less than one decade and appeared in time when Yugoslavia could not finance culture and education as much as she did during late 60’s and early 70’s. At that time, _Zmaj_ editor’s became affirmed political figures committed to the policy of Yugoslav non-aligned path. Other magazines were mostly edited by writers, teachers, former pupils and less influential party members, Their content was simple comparing to _Zmaj_ and aimed at children’s play. They contained colouring pictures, comics, stories about animals, weather, ways to spend leisure time. Rare references to society concerned ecology and the necessity of learning and school and obedience in the family. These magazines were less demanding for a child. The magazines largely reflect the ups and downs of SFRY, thus, As Yugoslavia was losing its political importance in a broader context, magazines were less focused on political socialization of children. By ceasing to invest in school magazines and other educational instruments, Yugoslavia less and less invested in its own future.

The manifest goal of political socialization was peacekeeping in Yugoslavia and the world. The editors of _Zmaj_ obviously believed in politically correct child. Nevertheless, the assumptions outlined in this paper raise the question of whether analysed discourses, images, narratives and rhetorical practice indeed helped gaining peace in the world. Taking into account the facts about the destiny of Non-aligned movement and historical facts about the dissolution of Yugoslavia, one could question the function of _Zmaj_. Further questioning of its content problematize not only Yugoslav socialism, the role of Non-aligned movement but traditional understanding of child as an imperfect adult suitable for political moulding. The extent to which political socialization influences the child and his adult views, beliefs, is only one of the issues with far broader implications than those limited to this work. The images of war, economical, social inequality, obligation to become a responsible citizen who strive to keep peace with neighbours while staying neutral in conflicts, obviously did not produce adult peacekeepers, but citizens dissatisfied with their position in Yugoslav and wider society. The political socialization of a child can thus be understood as a process with an ambivalent outcome. As a part of the traditional understanding of childhood and the traditional approach to the child, political socialization can be deconstructed. Thus, _Zmaj_ as one in a series of socialization instruments, can be regarded a magazine with questionable meanings and ambivalent function. As a product of the traditional understanding of the analysed magazine faces a number of problems characteristic of modernist views on upbringing and political socialization. Therefore, it is not the exclusive product of Yugoslav policy of Non-alignment and peace-oriented socialism, but of a much broader context in which the child is part of an investment in the future.
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106
Section 2:
CHILDHOOD IN INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT: FOLKLORE, GAMES, MUSEUMS AND SCHOOLS

Childhood and Football: Memory and Identity (The Bulgarian Case of the End of 20th Century – the Beginning of 21st Century)

Iva Kyurkchieva

Abstract: Football is an important element of popular culture. It is one of the most spectacular sport activities that unites many people, including children and youth. Interpreting football in the light of memory, we could see its capacity to give meaning to social life – to create communities and to construct identities. These characteristics of the team sport are particularly visible in amateur football and are relevant for ethnological and anthropological analysis. In general, football strengthens cultural relationships, especially among child and youth, as well as the social integration of individuals in modern societies. The engagement in such activities supports the development of profound forms of shared identity and solidarity. The purpose of the research is to reveal the structure of children’s memories connected to football as an important part of identity formation of those interested in amateur football in Bulgaria (few villages near the capital – Sofia, and a small town in northern Bulgaria). This chapter applies classical ethnological methods such as analyses of autobiographical stories, interviews, and observation- for the period from the 1960s until second decade of the 21st century.

Keywords: Childhood, Football, Memory, Identity

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Football is an essential part of popular culture and one of the most exciting sports, able to unite and influence many people, including children and adolescents. Viewed through the prism of memory, football can offer vast information concerning
the attitudes and processes in the society, and as such it provides rich material for exploration in the fields of ethnology and anthropology. Some recent scientific studies have illustrated that the social aspects of football can be investigated and interpreted from different analytical standpoints (see also Giulianotti, 2007: 171). Generally speaking, this game is able to create strong connections between the individuals in a team, and children or adolescents, as specific social groups, can also find and enrich their collective identities through this sport activity, which they find particularly enjoyable (see also Giulianotti, 2005: 214). The aim of this chapter is to research the constructed childhood memories related to football, and to outline their importance in the identity creation of people who are amateurs in this sport. At the same time, this article presents the attitudes, experiences and emotions of those children and adolescents who are currently tracing their way in football, and it shows how the sport helps them to adapt in society.

Football is an important segment of childhood memories. It represents a unique aspect of the individual and collective memory. A lot of boys remember vividly their first steps in this game. Their first attempts of self-affirmation, their early and unforgettable successes and failures, are related to this sport. Proving oneself in the game is also proving oneself as part of the community. The shared emotions of the collective game mark the beginning of the first friendships and strengthen the character. Communicating with other players helps not only growing up but also identifying with a particular group; at the same time the fact that a young person can be in contact with different people in an informal and safe environment creates long-term relations, enduring friendships, and eventually leads to the formation of stable groups. The shared football memories can later unite the grown-up boys.

The topic of this study is amateur football, because taking part in street football matches is part and parcel of growing up in small towns (the example of Pavlikeni, northern Bulgaria) and in villages near Sofia (the capital of Bulgaria). Most boys are involved in this kind of sport activities. Girls don’t often participate, except as spectators, which gives them the chance to observe and empathize with the victories and loses of their friends and classmates.¹

¹ I plan to discuss the gender element in a future study.

Theoretical Overview, Historical Contextualization and Methodology

In mid-twenty century, scholars began to pay more attention to their studies of childhood, turning it into an important topic within the general studies of cultures and societies. Some scholars insist on giving childhood studies a more prominent role in the field of ethnology (see Bankova, 2011; Bankova, 2013 and the given bibliography). Social historians affirm that the concept of childhood started to take shape in Europe after 12th century (Aries, 1962). Aries believes that the history and historical concepts of childhood have to be understood and analysed as shaped by historical and social factors. He claims that until late Middle Ages, children were...
regarded as “little adults”, and the modern idea of childhood, as a separate and protected period in one’s life, had resulted from the compulsory general education and the appearance of the nuclear family. He asserts that it’s important to use different sources for studying childhood, such as diaries, handbooks about raising children, autobiographies, family albums, photographs, etc.

Since the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the topic of childhood has attracted the interest of historians, ethnologists, anthropologists and other scholars from Southeastern Europe, including in our country; as a result, there have been a series of conferences dedicated to the topic2, followed by publications of collective works, thematic magazine editions3 or books (Popova, 1999; Naumovic, Jovanovic, 2004, Todorova, 2003: 154-225; Popova, 2003: 25-33; Bankova, 2011:121-150).

Social historians agree that it’s not easy to determine the borders of childhood, even more so when we compare different historical periods; nevertheless, they point out certain factors, which can be viewed as marking the upper border and the transition from childhood to adolescence. These factors include, among others, the physiological and psychological changes happening around 14-year-old, or the completion of a certain educational level (Mitterauer, 1992: 41-84). The age before the teen period is exact target of present study.

Participating in football matches is part of the process of growing up in small towns and villages. That is why I focused my research interest on several villages near Sofia (Voinegovtzi, Podgumer and Chepintzi) and on one small town in central-northern Bulgaria (Pavlikeni). This sport contributes to the social integration of young people and it could be seen as a form of initiation. The relations with other players or supporters from different age groups, as well as the shared love for the game, assist one’s stepping into the adult world, making the players of the new generation a part of the shared local football memory. The establishment of amateur football clubs, which players and supporters are free to join on their own will, contrasts the atomization of the present-day society, which cannot fail to affect children and adolescents too. In practice, being part of the game is a way of integrating oneself in the common social network (Giulianotti, 2007: 15).

The establishment of amateur football clubs in different towns in Bulgaria in the 1920s is influenced by the official state policy (see Georgieva, 2006: 120-135) of westernizing the country. The football history of a certain town or village carries important weight in the building up of its social structure, and it offers a rich source of memories, important for the formation of the individual and collective identities of the children and adolescents, growing up in the respective communities. The mutual reminding of some indicative moments from the past can often be a prelude to a personal or collective project (Candau, 2005), and the participation in group rituals, related to football, can glue together the memories of different generations.

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2 The international forums “European Social Science History Conference – ESSHC” led to the creation in the 1990s of the scientific network “Education and Childhood”.

3 For example, Balkanistic forum 1-2, 2016; some articles in Ethnologia Balkanica 2, 2018 are dedicated to this topic.
My research is based on traditional methods in ethnology, implying interpretation of autobiographical stories, interviews and direct observations. The study covers respondents’ memories from the socialist period (1960s – 1980s), when as children and teenagers they were involved in football; it also includes my own observations of children’s football tournaments, carried out in the region around Sofia. The text is based on a fieldwork study conducted within the frame of the individual project “football and memory.” The interviews and the autobiographical stories taken down, reveal a wide range of personal and family narratives and memories, which have been passed to the descendants and the fans of the football players. The narratives are a valuable source when analysing social memory and its role in the creation of one’s identity (Olick, 2008: 23-28). To make the picture of the football experiences and emotions more vivid and true-to-life, I have used articles from local newspapers, different municipality documents and resources, and some Internet-available data. Scholars researching the issue of memory have drawn attention to the need of using a variety of sources in the process (Troeva, 2011: 157).

When dealing with the topics of football and childhood memories, I have adopted the viewpoint that identity and memory are social and political constructs (Gillis, 1994: 5), and the formation of the concepts of childhood is dependent on certain cultural prerequisites and realities (see Bankova, 2011).

**Football and Childhood Memories**

The identity construction of children and adolescents is often associated with their involvement in cultural practices related to football and with the individual and collective memories stemming from their playing the game in their childhood years. The autobiographical narratives of the socialist period are often permeated with nostalgia. The topic of nostalgia is broadly discussed in the literature. For the purpose of this study, I chose to base my interpretation to comprehensive review (see Angé and Berliner, 2015). The scientists conclude that, “Recent anthropology literature has confirmed that nostalgia as affect, discourse and practice mediate collective identities, whether they are social, ethnic and national” (Angé and Berliner, 2015: 5). The childhood memories of one of the respondents from the town of Pavlikeni (northern Bulgaria) recount the improvised football matches on the lawn near the railway station, where the boys from the neighbourhood used to play every day, weather permitting, from 4:30 until dusk. This was where the local

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4. 5 interviews and autobiographical stories are taken in the town of Pavlikeni – the respondents are 4 men and 1 woman at the age of 50 up to 75.

5. I visited the local sport tournament in the village of Podgumer (Sofia region) on 27th of May 2018. Four teams participated. I have told with the some of the players and the spectators – classmates and friends.

6. The project is financed by a budget subsidy from The Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic – BAS. All the materials have been archived in Archive of IEFEM-BAS № 1009-III, 28.11.2017 and № 1014-III, 23.10.2018.
jokes and nicknames, which still stick in the memory of the local people, were born. Generally speaking, football and “cops and robbers” are two outdoor games that have been loved by many generations (Nenov, 2012: 286-287). The children of amateur football players from Pavlikeni remember that their families formed a circle of close friends. They used to spend their free time together:

Every Saturday the families, there were 4 – 5 couples, got together at one of the family’s home. They used to finish work at about 1 p.m. … in winter they mostly played cards, the women cooked and prepared cakes, different appetizers, caviar. In the evening, they played the gramophone, and there were dances and songs until the wee hours. It was great fun. It’s all over now.

These forms of entertainment and informal get-togethers were something characteristic of the past, even more so because the socialist period didn’t offer many alternatives and varieties of entertainment. This kind of autobiographical elements appearing in our interviews, are also a way of presenting and modelling the past through personalized narrative forms and models. It must be mentioned that since the narratives in question represent memories from the childhood and teenage years of the respondents, they are understandably idealized and emotional. The collective memory of the socialist period is characterized by the formation of different social “memory groups”, which can be explained as corresponding to the different personal and family experiences, as well as to one’s readiness to preserve, erase, or rearrange the memories in accordance with one’s present needs (for more on this, see Luleva, 2006: 177-180). In the stories I was able to record, the nostalgic mythologizing of the childhood period prevails.

The memories in which childhood and football intertwine are among the most intense and vividly remembered experiences of my respondents. One of them recounted the following episode from his childhood years, related to the tragic accidental death of one of the best players in Pavlikeni. He remembers sharply the scene in which the rest of the players were trying to choose the person, who was to take his place on the pitch:

I remember that it was at the very beginning of the tournament season; the funeral had just taken place … his photo was on a sort of shelf in the room. His photo was put there, while they were discussing who was to take his position of a centre-back. At this time Vassil Petrov – Garazhiño was their couch, a very noble man by the way, and he was saying, pointing at the portrait: “Paco, you’ll substitute him. Do you see him? He’s watching you.” And then he just added “Come on boys, let’s do it!” I remember it as if it was yesterday.

This childhood experience, linked to the football history of this little town, is obviously still emotionally charged.

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7 This study of childhood and children’s games is based on in-depth structural interviews of 74 people, born between 1930 and 1992. Their families come from central and northern Bulgaria and have some family connections.

8 More on the topic of socialism and memory see Todorova and Gille, 2012.

9 His father was a player in the local football team.
The most vividly remembered episodes and events of the childhood are the milestones of the individual and collective memory\textsuperscript{10}, on which the community identity is built. Memory is initiated, reproduced and transformed within the community or society network (Assmann, 2012). Memories reincarnate the past within the framework of the present needs of the individuals or the collective, and all the dreams and desires of the childhood are reflected in them. In the same way, remembering some key episodes related to the favourite sport, helps a young person to find their place in the group and become more mature. What’s more, football can be regarded as a specific form of initiation, which marks the end of the childhood for boys.

**Children and Football Tournaments Today**

For most of the men interviewed by me, football has been present at all stages of their lives: childhood, when they were getting to know the rules of the game, the street matches, the best goals in the teenage years, and the triumphs at the local stadium; then, the adulthood period, in which football was once again a central topic, because men very much identify themselves with their roles as coaches, club presidents, organizers, or simply avid fans, watching the Sunday matches.

In the villages and towns around Sofia, a great effort is made to attract children to football. That is why, the managers of the local football clubs try hard to invest in “local men and children teams.” Usually, every school in “Iskar” district, which is part of Sofia municipality, has its own team. There is a consistent effort to organize tournaments between the schools on a regular basis. These are usually supported by different municipality initiatives, related to the work of the Sofia municipality’s “Permanent Commission for Children, Young people, Sports and Tourism.” Often, the sponsors are local confectionery manufactures. It is especially difficult to provide transport for the children football teams: “When we have enough money, we can hire a small bus. Now we have to transport them in our own vehicles … It’s a serious and stressful engagement.” In this respect, the managements of the teams bear responsibility in front of the children’s parents. The aim of the clubs is to create a lasting interest in football in local boys. The awards won in tournaments are an important stimulus; for example, fourth place was won by the Voinegovtzi team in a children mini football tournament in Chepintzi, 2011 (see Kyurkchieva, 2017: 112-126).

The participation of children and adolescents in the local amateur football clubs is important for the young people as a form of proving oneself and finding one’s place in the group. My research interest focused on the tournament, held on May 27, 2018 (Picture 1 and 2), in Podgumer village, as part of the Sofia Municipality’s special programme, dedicated to the project “Sofia – the capital of sport in 2018”. It was organized by the “Iskar” district. The children were very enthusiastic to participate. The mayor was the main organizer of the event. The

\textsuperscript{10} More on Bulgarian amateur football and individual and collective memory construction see Kyurkchieva, 2017 and Kyurkchieva, 2018.
Picture 1. Tournament in the village of Podgumer. Iva Kyurkchieva, May 27, 2018

Picture 2. Tournament in the village of Podgumer. Iva Kyurkchieva, May 27, 2018
children participated in a cycling tournament, where the participants were mostly girls, and in a football tournament, where the participants were mostly boys; it seemed that the second sport event received more attention. Four of the villages from this municipality took place in the football tournament: Kubratovo, Gniliane, Negovan and Podgumer. Podrumer won the first match against Gniliane with 8:0. The opponents were selected by lot.

The children who participated were mostly secondary school students – from 5th to 7th grade. There was only one player in Podgumer team, who was a 4th-grade-primary-school pupil. The players, both boys and girls, as well as the fans of the teams, were wearing specially made T-shirts in different colours: yellow for Podgumer village, and white for Gniliane village. The children from Kubratovo were wearing orange T-shirts, while those from Negovan had green ones (Picture 3). This kind of children football tournaments are part of the socializing function of the school as an institution, which on the one hand is part of the general societal structure, and on the other hand is a place with its own internal structure and hierarchy, with its own social life, festivals and sports activities (see also Stanoev, 2012: 122-125).

The fathers of the football players on the pitch were very active spectators of the football match I was present at. They were discussing the matches of the international tournaments, mostly the final of the European football championship, which had taken place the day before. It was interesting that they often compared the playing of the little footballers on the pitch with that of the famous international players. There were also teenage spectators, who obviously belonged to the group of the adults.

![Picture 3](image-url)

**Picture 3.** Tournament in the village of Podgumer. Iva Kyurkchieva, May 27, 2018
They would also share their opinion on the international matches and the final that they had watched the previous day. The qualities of this or that player received a special attention and a lot of comments. Watching the match together was felt as an opportunity to join in the village’s common life and to become an equal partner in the group of adults.

Fathers supported their children\(^\text{11}\), and, as it is usual for this kind of sports competitions, there were heroes and favourites. The taller players were often rallied on their height. The youngest footballer was eagerly encouraged by his father, who was one of the organizers of the whole event. He was shouting some instructions all the time during the match: “Forward to the centre, to the centre”, “Go back now, go back!”,”Get the ball, shoot!”, “Go for the ball!”,”Run, get the ball!” . The spectators were very happy with the win of their young and promising footballers; they were cheering and shouting: “Well done! You trashed them!” or “You are ready for the champion’s cup!”. Since the fountain next to the stadium was adorned with a football, there were some jokes that the winners deserved their own monument. During the match it was noticed that there were a lot of comments about the importance of sportsmanship. Football, being one of the most beloved team games, facilitates the acquisition of many habits, behaviours and rules, belonging to the world of adults. The boys from Kubratovo team supported and applauded the players from Podgumer as their peers and friends. Young individuals are still very dependent on the value system of their environment, and on the judgments made by other people from their immediate surroundings (see Mitterauer, 1992). By being part of their fathers’ football passion, children find support and stability when it comes to their own self-identification. This strengthens the connection between the generations, and football has a significant role in this respect. This sport, which is liked and loved by many, helps young people’s socialization by fostering their individual and their collective identities at the same time.

The mothers of the young footballers from Podgumer were not among the spectators at the stadium. The female classmates of the secondary school boys, though, were present. What’s more, they were cheering during the whole match: “Podgumer, Podgumer!” or “Spartak, Spartak!” (the second is the name of the amateur men’s team of Podgumer). Before the start of the game and at half-time, the boys and their female fans and supporters could be heard exchanging teasing remarks, some of which bore sexual connotations. In principal, the small “society” of classmates has its own norms and internal rules and values, which could be different for the different classes, and which are displayed in the interpersonal relationships, as it happens at such events as football matches, for example (Stanoev, 2012: 123).

On the other side of the pitch, next to the girls cheering for Podgumer, were the supporters of Gniliane. The coach of the children’s team from this village was a woman, their PE teacher, and there were two girls among the substitutes on the field.

\(^{11}\) In Bulgaria traditionally men are interested in football issues. Women are usually excluded. This phenomenon is still present in the small towns and villages in the country. Nowadays in the capital and bigger cities women are more engaged in the field.
The people present were trying to convince them to go out on the pitch and play, but they refused. The girls were considering the possibility of playing for their team if they were to play for the third place. There were some voices arguing that letting them play would be a good strategy, since the opponent’s defenders from Podgumer village would not play so forcefully against girls. The teacher sought the advice of another coach, a man, about what players changes to make. Football is often an arena where gender stereotypes are used and reproduced, and they affect not only the male and female perceived images and roles, but also the society as a whole (see Bourdieu, 2002; Dworkin and Messner, 2002). Among the supporters of Gniliane team there were a boy and a girl, apparently ex-students from the same school. The girl was recounting some episodes from matches she took part in while still at school: “Do you remember, Miss, that incident when I was badly fouled, how I cursed then!” The teacher obviously shared the warm feelings of remembering the same episodes from their common past. The social interactions between the genders reveal some fixed roles and established models of behaviour. Overcoming the stereotypes existing in a given community is generally not easy, although young people are more inclined to challenge and eventually change them.

During the match I watched, I noticed that there weren’t explicitly visible gaps in terms of social behaviours and mentality between generations. This could probably be explained with the fact that in small towns and villages the close ties between family members are better preserved and almost intact; the same is true for neighbours, distant relatives or acquaintances. Football is apparently one of the ways of maintaining this closeness between people of different generations. Girls from secondary school could be seen interacting with young women, aged 24-28, as if they were their peers. The interaction shows closeness and warmth – they exchange hugs and kisses. Being present at the same sporting event could obviously trigger in today’s adults’ memories from their childhood years, when they were part of the team or of the fan group. There is no visible generation gap, the age hierarchy is put aside, and the relations are openly amicable. The people who are present treat with great appreciation the opportunity to revive and relive some of their best childhood memories. Everybody is united by sharing the emotions brought about by this game, and adults can go back in time and see themselves as school children once again. On the other hand, the tournament is an event, which children regard as their own time to celebrate. Their emotions are shared by their families, relatives and other spectators, and children feel that they are important, and their achievements are admired. In general, teenagers, aged between 13 and 14, and children under this age, identify with and equate themselves to their immediate social surroundings. At this age, they are not striving for meaningful individual standpoint, because the latter is not clearly defined yet (see also Stanoev, 2012: 123).

Such children’s football competitions are means to assert oneself as an individual, while claiming a place in the group at the same time. In this way, the tournaments facilitate the formation of the young persons’ individual identities. They also assist the process of finding a meaningful place in the community, since they provide personal memories, which can be incorporated in the construction of the collective memory.

116
Conclusion

Scholars examine childhood as a social construct, which is formed within a given cultural context. The influence of sport games, and football in particular, in the memories of our respondents was apparent. By watching children and adolescents taking part in sport activities, we can better understand the significance of playing football and being part of the game in their growing up. Football emerges as an important element in the socialization of children and young people, in the period when they are still under their parents’ authority and at the same time searching for their own individual identities.

In the childhood of boys living in the small towns and villages in Bulgaria, memories can be quite selective; nevertheless, football seems to take a consistently prominent place in them. This could be a surprising discovery, if we have in mind that some other, seemingly more important events of the childhood period, are often forgotten. In the eye of its fans, football is much more than just a game. The plenitude of memories related to football, which often go back to the very early childhood, is a strong evidence of the above situation.

The aim of this study was to look at the relations between football and childhood from two different perspectives. On the one hand, we discover the importance of this game and the memories it creates, in the process of forming the individual and collective identities of children and young people. On the other hand, we realize that the memories of one’s childhood football experiences turn out to be a significant element of one’s adult life and identity. That’s why, the first part of the essay focused on memory, while the second centred around the children’s experiences and emotions, which are crucial for the formation of the memories in question. Of course, we should always keep in mind that the conclusions here are based on observations and autobiographical narratives, which reflect the subjective viewpoints of the respondents, as well as their own reconstruction of the past. When the subject is childhood, the interviews are usually quite emotionally charged, because of the very personal attitude of the interviewees. It gives us one more reason to understand why football has such a pronounced place in one’s memories – not only as a game, but also as a sheer emotion, an opportunity of self-assertion, and a chance to become part of the community.

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Rites of Passage at Waldorf Schools.  
First Day in School (Sofia, 2018).  
An Anthropological Perspective  

Nayden Yotov

Abstract: Rites of passage are a category of rituals that mark the transition of a person through their life cycle; either from one stage to another over time or from one role or social position to another, integrating the human and cultural experiences with biological characteristics, birth, reproduction, and death. These ceremonies make the basic distinctions, observed in all groups, between young and old, male and female, living and dead. Of course, lives and stages vary depending on many factors, including geography, sexuality, health, race, class, bodily ability, and gender.

These rites apply to all stages of life and are present in the traditions of all people around the globe. This chapter I will focus on the Waldorf educational system as being exemplary in terms of how passage is determined, not only by carefully guiding students through the educational process, which changes them forever, but by having a clear distinction of stages of development and rhythm in childhood.

Waldorf schooling is not precisely a rite of passage, yet it gives meaning to “rites of passage” in a complex, holistic, and anthropological perspective. The reason I have choose this topic is because schools are generally understudied in anthropology, with little terrain work and widely unknown eco-systems. More specifically, the alternative schooling environments are not unified with their local character and therefore it is not possible to draw broad conclusions without extensive research. However, the Waldorf educational approach and eco-system has been known for one hundred years now and has enough evidence to offer, especially to multidisciplinary approach researchers such as myself.

Another ambiguous aspect of that research chapter might be the fact that each year the rite of passage changes some of its characteristics, such as place, day, exact timing of climax gestures, and participants, among other things. These variables, however, do not interfere with the core of the rites as they remain stable throughout the yearly calendar.

I would like to thank to my fellow colleagues and especially Mr. Orlin Karagyozov for his help with outlining the stages of the ceremony.

Keywords: Rites, Passage, Ritual, Waldorf School, Education, Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophy, Initiation, Childhood, Rhythm

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Rites of Passage

Rites of passage are ceremonies that accompany and dramatize important events such as birth, coming-of-age for boys and girls, marriage, and death. Occasionally, they are known as rituals of “life crisis”, or “life cycles”. They culturally mark the transition of the individual from one stage of their social life to another. Though these rites could be linked to the biological changes through puberty and motherhood, they often relate to the sociocultural order which intertwines with the natural biological state, without being identical to the latter. Rites related to children’s birth are not necessarily celebrated when the child appears out of the womb. Many initiations do not coincide exactly with the hormonal changes leading the man-to-be or menstrual changes. Wedding ceremonies may advance or follow coming of age ceremonies; even the first intercourse and funeral rituals could continue years after the departing of the family member. Therefore, the life-cycles seem to announce that biological order is less determining than the social one. Physical birth is one thing; to be properly identified and accepted as a member of one social group is something entirely different. Some scholars argue that there is a deep human impulse to take the raw changes from the natural world and to “cook” them, according to the words of Levi-Strauss¹, and in such manner to transform the inevitable physical entities into cultural norms. In a way, this is an attempt to exercise control over nature or to naturalize the cultural order through the transforming of physical events into elements of conceptual order of knowledge and experiences. In every case, dynamics between the natural and cultural sometimes are acknowledged and sometimes are masked behind the rites of the life-cycles, seeming to be integral for the values and ideas that are shaping personal identity, social organization, and cultural tradition.

Arnold van Gennep interpreted all rituals as rites of passage in a process consisting of three steps. In this ritual process, the person leaves behind one social group and its intrinsic identity, passes through a status of no identity and affiliation,


120
and is to be accepted into another social group, which confesses another identity\(^2\). Such rites of passage from one stage of life to another, argues van Gennep, provide a model of initiation into special groups, whose membership is not narrowly connected with any particular or formal stage in life\(^3\). Clubs, brotherhoods, secret societies put their new wannabe members through ritual trials and tribulations. The logic behind these rites creates symbolical stages and transitions which negotiate social and personal identities. Successful high schools have been described as having a strong sense of community and values that support the bonding among participants, and between the participants and the school itself.

**What Is an Anthroposophical Festival?**

“To celebrate a festival really means to unite oneself in spirit with the cosmic spirit”.

(Rudolf Steiner, lecture in Berlin, 1905)

Waldorf education, also known as Steiner education, is based on the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy. Its pedagogy strives to develop pupils’ intellectual, artistic, and practical skills in an integrated and holistic manner. The cultivation of students’ imagination and creativity is a central focus. One of the intrinsic parts of the rhythm of life in the Waldorf community is the festival.

In fact, the rhythm is precisely why these festivals are such a prominent part of Waldorf life. The goal is to develop in the child a rhythmic sense of the seasons and the passage of time, and an appreciation that there is something bigger than him/herself.

The festive life in the Waldorf schools, globally, is structured around activities that stimulate head, hands, and heart. The ultimate goal is for the thinking to be developed with the help of lectures on spiritual sciences and studying. Following Goethe’s practices, beyond the laws of nature, artistic attitude, open for insight and intuition, aiming at better problem solving out in the world. Movement and artistic initiatives motivate nurture strength of will, creating this way balance and

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\(^2\) In a process first described by Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957), participants in rites of passage undergo three phases: separation of participants from the group, a transitional or “liminal” phase, and incorporation back into the group. Victor Turner (1920-1983) extended van Gennep’s theory, developing the concept that the liminal phase was often more than just an intermediate, neither-here-nor-there state. Societies use the liminal phase both to instil values and lore in participants and to evoke self-doubt and reflection. Liminality, therefore, is often fraught with anxiety and uncertainty and could even constitute a permanent category of people who are marginal within their societies. At the same time, the liminal state produces a feeling of group warmth, solidarity and unity, or “communitas”, among its participants. (Encyclopaedia of religious rites, rituals, and festivals; Frank A Salamone; New York, NY: Routledge, 2004)

\(^3\) Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, p.65, Psychology Press, 1960.
beauty, directing creativity towards a goal, deepening thoughts through action. Activities such as storytelling, sharing biographies, and conscious singing make us more intimate with life, reduce stress, stimulate the imagination, create bonds and strengthen the good will.

These festivals not only mark important historical events, cosmic truths, and traditions, they are themselves spiritual phenomena, which reveal seasonal rhythms and bring meaning that grows and deepens along with human evolution. Steiner suggests a new interpretation of the practices by calling them “Reversed ritual” – the idea of the “openness to above”\(^4\). Instead of calling the “Spirit” downwards, (as it has always been in the old days), participants are lifting their spirits in their thoughts. This way, we study and celebrate those memorable days to renovate ourselves and sustain the world. The festival has the property of bringing us above the quotidian into the mystery and magic of the seasonal rhythm. Historically, festivals have emerged from the connection between people with their spiritual life in search of the meaning of human existence. There are four main cycles or festivals organized around the change of the seasons, which also reflects changing of one’s self.

“The great festivals exist to bear witness to our connection with the whole universe…”

(Rudolf Steiner, lecture in Berlin, 1905)

Rite of passage is a ceremony which marks the transition from one phase of life into another. There are many thresholds in our life should we choose to celebrate them. The majority of dictionaries define initiation as: “rites, ceremonies, trials or instructions which are used by the young ones to acquire status of maturity within the group, society or the sect”. This definition could be enriched even further. The main point is that rites of passage sustain and ensure order in society, and the one who had newly acquired status takes upon oneself a new social role along with the set of new responsibilities intrinsic to this new phase of his life.

My case study is focused on the Opening ceremony at the Waldorf School “Prof. Nikolay Raynov” in Sofia, which is, by far, the only Waldorf educational institution in Bulgaria. It occurs on or around 15\(^{th}\) of September each year. Below is the description of one of the most important rites of passage – the First day in school and as in every opening there are forces to be initiated and bells to be rung.

Before that, an important remark is necessary. The author’s role is idiosyncratic one and therefore the description might not follow the concept of the participant observation by the cannons. The author is both participant and observer of the ritual from an ethnographical point of view as described by Bronislaw Malinowski and thus brings a fuller perspective of the observed scene.

Beginning of the School Year

Parents and children are gathered in the school yard. There is an arc by the stairs in front of the kindergarten

The beginning of the ceremony (the opening of the cycle for the new school year) is marked by the rhythm. At 10:30am, all teachers, carrying their instruments, pass under the arch, continue over the little bridge, and line up on both its sides. Two of them start playing the flute, and one by one the others join the improvised orchestra. The idea is that the children will join because this is the melody and rhythm of one of their favourite morning routines. It happens as it is expected (The children are unaware of any symbolic meaning throughout the end of the event. They are raw participants which makes the whole ceremony authentic. Only afterwards it is explained so everyone (except the college who knows it from before) link the meanings with the spectacle) (Picture 1).

Following the end of the performance, two students (the eldest so far) introduce themselves before the gathered crowd and briefly but solemnly explain the meaning of symbols, rhythm and ritual that happens in front of the guests. One of the two

Picture 1. Teachers welcoming pupils. Yana Lozeva, Sofia, September 2018
starts ringing the school bell proclaiming and introducing the new rhythm of the period and the previous one has been put to rest until the next summer comes again\(^5\) (Picture 2).

After that students explain that from now on there will be new people closest to the first graders and they are called teachers. The naming is accompanied with symbolic pointing with open palms to the college of teachers and thus formally recognizing them as authority before the world. Their parents taught them to speak, but only their teachers will explain words to them and help them build worlds.

One of the two leading ceremony students recites the ancient Bulgarian letters \(Az, Buki, Vedi, Glagoli, Dobro, Est, Zhivote, Zemlya, Kako, Lyude, Mislete, Nash, Pokoi, Rutce, Slovo\ldots\) which means: “I, knowing the letters will be able to read, to know life, the good and the evil in it, to love, to forgive, to be human, etc.” It is clear that our humanity is initiated and sustained by knowing the alphabet: the ability to speak and to write. Because the whole knowledge of this world does not count if you do not learn how to use it for the common good of others.

Further on we are introduced to the legend of the Minotaur and Ariadne’s thread, which plays a key role in the hero’s escape from the Labyrinth. Further on, one of the teachers takes the yarn ball and unwinds it. First graders start moving toward

\[\textbf{Picture 2.}\text{ One of the pupils announces the new school year.} \\
Yana Lozeva, Sofia, September 2018\]

\(^5\) In some occasions, it actually never reawakes as students choose completely new rhythm and song which corresponds to their temperaments.
The school year begins and concludes with the Rose Ceremony, giving a “full circle” experience through the welcoming and farewell roses exchanged between the First and Last (so far – 9th) Graders. The Rose Ceremony marks a significant moment in time for the incoming and graduating students. Due to its symbolical complexity and length of interpretation it may be appropriate to leave it for another paper.

the bridge holding the thread. Crossing the bridge, they are welcomed by their class teacher and given bread with salt and honey to know they will experience both sides of the learning path while being part of the school community (Picture 3).

After that, they receive some geranium, symbolizing health and strength, and a red rose. Right before they step on the bridge, a party of welcoming pupils (usually the second grade) is waiting in two columns so the initiate need to pass through them while being enchanted by the spell of the letters of the alphabet Az, Buki, Vedi, etc… (Picture 4). This is the most important part of the ritual signifying they are being initiated by the sacred letters meaning which may give them inspiration and divine support during the rocky road of knowledge while striving for excellence. When a/the teacher hands them the bread, salt and honey they hear the words Pomogni mi da te vozvisya. (Help me lift you upwards). And then they gather in a group and wait for their class teacher to bring them to class (Picture 5).

After everyone passes through the official part of the ceremony is over and every class teacher gathers with the students and parents to commemorate with photo the festive occasion. Teachers receive flowers and some homemade treats. Some of the retreat in the classroom to discuss the week to come and then everyone leaves the premises of the school.

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6 The school year begins and concludes with the Rose Ceremony, giving a “full circle” experience through the welcoming and farewell roses exchanged between the First and Last (so far – 9th) Graders. The Rose Ceremony marks a significant moment in time for the incoming and graduating students. Due to its symbolical complexity and length of interpretation it may be appropriate to leave it for another paper.
Picture 4. Pupils following the threads leading into the class. Yana Lozeva, Sofia, September 2018

Picture 5. A young brother attempts to advance his initiation with several years. Yana Lozeva, Sofia, September 2018
Conclusion

Due to the fact that every educational institution is one of transition and initiation, a bigger part of the school festivities is engaged with rites of passage. Students are initiated, indoctrinated, and ultimately move forward to another institution. Most recognized rites of passage are formal graduation, beginning of the academic year ceremonies or festival between the two terms, accompanied with a basket of individual discrete and personal rituals. These are all necessary to accentuate and mitigate the anxiety, to inspire belonging and commitment to the institutional culture and re-establish presence among the community the place and name of this very institution.

Rites of passage are consisted of distinct anti-structural and chaotic elements. Levi-Strauss (1964) argues that since all human beings belong to both nature and culture, rites of passage serve to mediate our biological destiny with our cultural experiences.

School is also an institution with roots and tradition. Even if it is a brand new branch or new enthusiastic parents and educators, it is still a token of a long standing way of transferring knowledge and skills. It has rules, own distinctive ways of doing things and manifesting it. There are teachers and students. Elders and youngsters. Therefore, it reminds of tribal organization where everything has its turn, and everyone knows their place. As such, it will always be a cross point of different scientific approaches none of which pretends to exhaust the given subject – i.e. rites of passage. They have yielded forth numerous ways of explanation: religious, symbolic, functional, psychoanalytical, articulating different nuance of the communication between the ceremonies and participants/watchers. Indeed, all these interpretations contribute to the multi-layered cloth covering rites of passage.

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Educational Programs in Bulgaria’s Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute – Modern State and Future Prospects

Nadya Terzieva

Abstract: Nowadays children and young people have new interests and are moderately attracted to museums. Their interest needs to be kindled, for they need to have their sense of belonging, to a community instilled and developed. It is a great task for museums today and in the future.

The author, in her quality of a participant, presents in this paper the educational program for children that is been currently devised by a pedagogical team with the Ancient Plovdiv Municipal institute. Although not a typical museum, the Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute, considering its listed tasks, has much in common with the museums. One of the main challenges modern museums in Bulgaria face nowadays is how to attract children audiences. The paper analyses the potential for working with children, families and schools based on a case study from Bulgaria. It also takes into account the difficulties ahead, considering the great importance of attracting children to museums, also with their family members and despite the challenging difficulties and the degree of responsibility.

Keywords: Education, Museum, Children, Ancient Plovdiv, Monuments of culture, Learning.

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This chapter explores the intersections of childhood, education, and museums. Teaching children at the site of a museum, given the specificity of the local conditions is a complicated and challenging task. Speaking particularly of Plovdiv, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Europe, we take into account
the plethora of cultural assets from different historical periods, together with the reality of the two present day generations grown up without ever having visited a museum. For the last several decades, a number of people considered the museum as a temple, a place for worshipping if not a mausoleum, a place where entry is selective. In this respect, changing the attitude to the museum of these people is a first priority task for the museum workers, who could even turn the museum into a free entry area, a genuine quality for this institution by the way.

The current paper is focusing on the opportunities for carrying educational sessions on the sites of the Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute. It presents the educational program already tailored. It analyses the benefits the program presents and discusses the challenges met during the practical implementation of the course.

Speaking about educational activities on the site of a museum, we cannot ignore the great issue of Bulgarian cultural heritage. It concerns the problems society has in passing cultural values to the young. The topic of the cultural assets is beyond the scope of this paper so perfectly described by Victor Hugo in his essay on the preserving of history from 1825, named “War on the demolishers”, where he presents the situation of his time and place in a very realistic manner saying: “There are two things about a building: its use and its beauty. Its use belongs to the owner, its beauty to the whole world; to destroy it is to overstep one’s rights” (Hugo, 1825: 2).

The overlapping fields between education and monuments of culture are precisely described in the strategy for culture for the 21st century of the Council of Europe. The Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute is the representative museum for the city. In 1969, the first structure specifically assigned to manage the Ancient Plovdiv Reserve in close co-operation with the Ministry of Culture was established as part of the Plovdiv Municipality. In 2004, the Association got restructured and renamed into Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute. It was for the purpose of managing, protecting, preserving and using the intangible cultural heritage in the Ancient Plovdiv architectural reserve and on the territory of Plovdiv municipality. It implements the municipal policy for protection and development of cultural heritage in line with the principles of national cultural policy and local traditions.

Established with the belief that, after all, our greatest legacy to future generations is to pass to them the heritage that we received, the Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute manages and controls all the activities for restoration, conservation, rehabilitation, greening, lighting and stewardship on the territory of the architectural reserve. It also, carries a cultural and informational activity in the reserve and provides up-to-date possibilities for the development of cultural tourism, fundraising, permanent monitoring, documenting and archiving. It functions by coordinating its activities with the institutional partners: the Ministry of Culture, the National Institute for Monuments of Culture, the Tourist Council, foundations, NGOs and other organizations and persons.

The nature of the heritage sites and properties differs with their age and purpose. The area features houses dating from the Bulgarian Revival period and a great number of them are listed cultural heritage mostly of national significance. The historical reserve also preserves the fortress of the City Guards (Nebet tepe), with remains dated from 4-1 c. B.C. In the city centre outside of the hills, many
archaeological finds are displayed dating back to the time when the city was part of the Roman Empire. All of them are presented in line with the open museum concept, most appropriate for ancient archaeological sites, but also applied to the interiors of the Revival period houses (aiming greatest possible authenticity). This unique diversity of the heritage grants us the opportunity to deliver lectures and teach classes for different audiences in an authentic setting.

To implement an educational program in a museum, specialists must deal with the challenge of synchronizing the regulations of different institutions like schools, cultural operators and with the audiences. This aspect is set in the Strategy for Culture of Plovdiv Municipality 2014-2024 (Strategy for Culture of Plovdiv Municipality, 2014: 43). Some of the aims in the strategy in this context are: “Improving the dialogue between the sectors of culture and education and increasing the level of interactivity in the cultural educational process”.

There are three main pillars fixed in the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century. One of them is “knowledge and education” (European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century, 2017: 9). According to the strategy this component: “focuses, through heritage, on education, research and lifelong training issues, by establishing heritage knowledge centres and centres for training in heritage trades and professions, by means of appropriate teaching, training and research programmes.”. Together with the key issues of the Strategy a very important question is placed: “The issues occupying us at the beginning of this 21st century are no longer why or how we should preserve, restore and enhance our heritage, but rather: Who should we be doing this for?”. (European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century, 2017: 5)

Educating children is a very tricky task, but educating children in a museum is even more complicated, difficult, and filled with a lot of challenges and responsibilities. Presenting cultural heritage and telling stories about historical events linked with the monuments of culture in front of children is the most difficult task for a museum curator. Children differ in their response to encountering the heritage.

The usual children audience greeted at the Ancient Plovdiv is children accompanied by their parents. There are also organized groups from the schools of the city and from other cities. There are frequently concerts, exhibitions and workshops organized for the children. None of them have strict educational features; they are rather entertaining events. The project launched by two museum specialists consisting of delivering classes at the site of the museums was a novel and enriching experience, fitting well the professional profiles of the participants – pedagogy and ethnology. The main idea that moved the team was to possibly complement the school educational process, to synchronize and to contextualize the main school themes. The aims at the beginning were to strengthen the patriotic thinking and the sense of personal responsibility of the youngsters through familiarization with the historical past of our city. But, along with that, we knew that bringing children to the museums was a move towards changing their attitude to the museums as institutions as well as to the monuments of culture in general.

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1 Further explanations can be consulted on page 56.
The first thing we did was to draw a list of topics or different directions in which we thought we could work according to the existing display and specifics of our museums. We also took into account our own research interests. In a conversation with the teacher from Knyaz Alexander I Primary School (children aged 9-13), the list became more detailed and was expanded to meet the interests of their age group. Here are some of the topics:

- The secrets of Klianti house;
- Furniture and appliances of the Revival period;
- Botanical garden;
- Animals in the ornamentation of the revival period houses;
- Maritsa river and its significance for Plovdiv;
- Ancient Philippopolis in the modern city;
- Family album and family tree;
- Legends about the Sun and the constellations.

We prepared methodological plans for the classes, listed our aimed tasks and expected results. During the sessions, we used visualization, visual thinking strategy, and questions requiring interpretative answers. This gave us the chance to have our professional qualification improved. We also delved into the respective knowledge fields and prepared interesting lectures which were well accepted by the respective audience. We used multimedia presentations, music, storytelling, organized carnivals and fairy tale pageants. Thus, we provided good occasions for the children to “witness” and to “experience” moments from the past of their city.

The children from the Primary school “Knyaz Alexander I” came divided in two 5th grade groups and their stay counted for an extracurricular activity. Mrs Tzveta Kostadinova, one of the teachers, had the idea of the Guide in Plovdiv program, later financed by the Ministry of Education. Among the topics of this program there were some not directly linked to the Ancient Plovdiv. All this happened throughout the school year and was always in conformity with the activities of the children. At first we held classes in two consecutive days, while, at a later stage, we gathered all pupils together and held binary classes as the topics allowed. Some sessions in the winter were held at school because the expositions of the Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute are not air conditioned. The existence of topics not strictly connected to the museum houses was a possibility for the museum specialists to move to the school and helped strengthen the inter-institutional relations.

The group was formed by 47 children from 5th grade. Nine lectures were held with them, three of which were in their school and the others – in different places in the Ancient Plovdiv.

In April, during the spring festivities held by the Ancient Plovdiv Municipal Institute, on the day dedicated to children, a huge event was held during which the participants presented their Guide for Plovdiv program. The enthusiasm of the

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2 Operational programme “Science and education for intelligent growth”, Project “Your class”, Ministry of Education
children was the reward for the museum pedagogues, they enjoyed their experience, were active during the sessions and showed eagerness to come back.

This School at the Museum program caught the attention of other Primary schools and nurseries i.e. “Rayna Knyaginya” and “Petar Beron” schools, and they also paid visits to the historic sites. One of the program advantages is its thematic diversity. In other words, this specifically tailored program gave the opportunity for different discussions, started from different points of view – history, culture, literature, arts, mythology, architecture, geography, biology. In each session, the children were given assignments to be done at home. They also had plenty of tasks to carry during the sessions, developing different skills. The idea was that the program could be easily adapted to the needs and the specificities of the different groups.

Each of the Revival period houses of the Old Plovdiv has its specific features and allows for the diversity of the architecture and for the artistic styles to be presented appropriately and to be nicely illustrated. The furniture that complements the interior and presents the urban lifestyle of the past gives an opportunity for presentation and acquaintance with the life and traditions of the period. The explanations are facilitated by the fact that in the revival period houses there are no artefacts in glass windows. Discussing a particular exhibit with its use and elaborating, on its path which took it to the historic house and at its supposed place adds to the sense of authenticity so much sought in the houses of the old town. For instance, the theme The secrets of Klianti house, which basically included presenting the house and the Revival period was held in one of the secret, hidden premises of the house. This small semi-floor is located along the southern part of the house, named with the Greek word himala (hamila) (meaning low). The space of the himala is very convenient, for it lacks museum exhibits and the children are allowed to act freely. On the other hand this area is part of the house and what happens there benefits from its authenticity. This is due to the small windows and to the dim light inside which help the process of diving into the setting and reminding the time when people used gas lamps and candles. When the children leave this place, they have already embarked on an imaginary world, a world of fairies and of heroes of the past, and all this transcendental spirit touches their senses, they keep remembering what they have experienced and remain actively involved in the educational process.

The example I gave here is also valid for the other themes. The children easily to learn and remember in an unconventional environment like the museum. In other words we use non typical methods of teaching prompting personal experiences, sensations, perceptions, using the senses, which are often enhanced by the use of fragrances such as roses or rose water, colours, sounds, etc.

A group of children from the Mother Care – Saborna kindergarten (3 to 6 year olds) were the youngster public that listened to the lecture The Secrets of Klianti house. Leaving the site, they were so enthusiastic that they promised they would return. That evening, reading the Facebook posts of the parents, we could grasp the scope of the results. The emotional memory of the children has passed their feelings on to their parents. Thus, we had the opportunity to reach out to the parents through their children. This meant that a multileveled task had been
fulfilled. The next time the children came, they remembered a great deal of what they had experienced.

The children have always played an active role in the classes. The principle applied was to give different roles to the children rather than delivering lectures in front of them. They were free to ask whatever questions they wanted and, along with that, they were able to solve problems by themselves. They could directly compare the authentic artefacts with their own ideas, they could touch them, smell them, feel their structure, they could take pictures with them and take the memory away. Among the educational method we used was the so-called VTS or (visual thinking strategy) that helps children develop their ability to concentrate, make observation, elaborate analyses and be more alert on details. It elevates their cognitive abilities to higher levels on the Bloom’s taxonomy (Lord and Baviskar, 2017).

The class on the theme of the Family Tree for instance was held like a role game and the children played the roles of reporter and storyteller. This was a complicated issue, because of new family attitudes and new family models we are witnessing of recently. For homework the children had to prepare a family tree of their respective families in order to practice what had been taught. They analysed by themselves and thus sustained knowledge, so the final aim was reached.

Another way to learn history is through the personal stories of the people who have inhabited the area of the three hills. The owners of each house had a different occupation, place of origin and at the end of the day, a different fortune. The relations between the people were very different during the period of the Revival.

Studying in the museum adds a particular diversity to the educational process. This type of teaching increases the communication level between the children, between the children and the adults and between the mentors and the pupils, for the distance between all is not that big. It is the vocation of the museums to be available for everyone, including for elderly students within the scope of Learning Through the Whole Lifetime program. In a museum, a person can use inventions, impressions, emotions and can remember easier with minimal efforts.

The School At The Museum Program at the Ancient Plovdiv had some limitations due to the missing air conditioning, which made the classes seasonal. Of course, it is necessary to keep up the standards for the preservation of the tangible cultural heritage, the paintings and the murals which make the historic houses so famous. Underestimating the need for conservation impedes also the educational process. Another proof of how positive changes in one field can impact others. And positive changes fortunately occur all the time. If until last year, the school regulations made it difficult for the classes to leave their working place, in the last months the barriers for the extracurricular school activities were lifted so the pupils can easily visit the classes at the museums. Moreover, the professional classification has recently included the position of a museum pedagogue and this will greatly boost education at the site of museums.

There is also the issue of the required fees for the visits of the pupils. Our referred program implemented in the 2017-2018 school year had European funding for the entry tickets and museum activities. For the visits of the private nurseries the children parents paid. The good thing is that there are still some opportunities that schools may use for financing. The question here is, are the funds enough
and do they reach everyone who would be willing. Raising the issue of payment, we understand that this is a complex question. In the first place, the work of the museums in Bulgaria is regulated in the Cultural Heritage Act and the secondary regulations. Along with that, the existing local regulations should be considered. This also corresponds with the idea of cooperating between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture. We learnt recently that both ministries work on a program that would allow financing classes carried in museums. The cultural heritage of Bulgaria is part of the European heritage and it needs to be understood, displayed in an interesting way to be attractive for the children audience (Magnier, 2015).

In this context, we cannot ignore the fact that, on one hand, the museum display in the Ancient Plovdiv, with few exceptions, is not adapted for children with special needs. On the other hand, the museum specialists need to familiarize themselves with the teaching methods and with the new developments in the methodology for teaching children with special needs. This so important issue goes beyond the scope of this report.

“Museums, however, allow a great variety of ways to study, discover, interact and enjoy” (Kallio, 2015: 12). In this respect, one of the possible future developments may be the creation of educational physical games for different ages, which could only involve children, could be mixed – for children and adults and family members and could start competitions between family members or even between several families along tracks in the Old town. There are free spaces on the territory of the architectural and historical reserve for the carrying out such competitions. For this purpose both the outer spaces and the interior of some of the sites can be used, depending on the case.

The 21st century children were born during the digital revolution. They grew up in this information society and from their earliest years their toys have actually been digital objects. To turn museums into appealing places where these children would feel happy and willing to go, where they should be from a very early age and more often, is a task of today. Building stronger and sustainable institutional links between the museums and the schools is also a great necessity (Karadecheva, 2016). One possible path to explore is to update the expositions and use innovative technologies for their presentation. There are museums in Bulgaria, where such methods are very successfully applied. Plovdiv seems somewhat lagging behind in this specific respect. Integrating these new technologies should be balanced in order not to shift the emphasis to them, but also not to lag behind in the development.

Reference:

Council of Europe. European cultural heritage strategy for the 21 century. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 22 February 2017 at the 1278th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies.


The Role of Parents’ Attitudes in Accepting Male Teachers in Kindergartens in Contemporary Croatia

Željka Ivković, Željko Boneta, Lucija Kosić

Abstract: One of the important reasons for the insufficient affirmation of the early childhood and preschool education profession in the Croatian education system is its low social status, which partly stems from the fact that it is a highly feminized profession. This chapter examines parents’ attitudes about male teachers and the possibility of an increase in their number in kindergartens. The theoretical framework is based on Connell’s theory of different types of masculinity (Connell, 1987, 2005), where the main assumption is that parents’ disapproval of male teachers is associated with their gender-conservative values. The survey was conducted on a sample of 290 parents whose children attended kindergartens on the island of Krk in northwest Croatia. The research examined the relationship between parents’ attitudes about male teachers and their gender attitudes, experience of collaboration with male teachers and sociodemographic characteristics. The results showed that parents generally express positive attitudes towards male teachers. Parents who did not have any experience with male teachers had slightly more negative attitudes than parents whose children had male teachers. Younger parents preferred “male” qualities in male teachers, while parents with a lower level of education considered male teachers to be “feminized”.

Keywords: Male teachers, Masculinity, Parents, Parents’ attitudes

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Introduction: Exploring Gender Equality in Educational Institutions

Children today, mainly in developed countries, spend most of their time in institutions such as kindergartens, schools, and supervised places for extracurricular activities. It has thus become important to explore those institutional contexts and to determine their main characteristics such as curricula, physical space, and relationships with peers and adults.

Adults who work with children on a daily basis are, of course, teachers. The teacher profession has lately undergone many changes in the direction of professionalization and modernization, but it still remains one of the most feminized occupations. However, it was not always like that. The beginnings of teaching within modern educational systems in the 19th and the 20th century were marked by the dominance of male teachers. There was a saying in the Balkans that the three most important persons to have in a village were a (male) priest, a (male) doctor and a (male) teacher. By the end of the Second World War, female teachers in Croatia were required to leave their profession after getting married.

With the beginning of the modernization process in former Yugoslavia, followed by the introduction of compulsory elementary mass education, women were finally allowed to keep working in schools after getting married, which constituted the beginning of an extensive feminization of the teacher occupation, especially in the lower levels of the educational vertical.

There was a simultaneous global shift in the social construction of childhood and education, which inspired the ideology of family and a child-centred perspective (Prout and James, 1990). That meant that parents and various experts focused their attention on novel teaching methods and children’s experience in kindergartens and schools (Milić, 2007). Early childhood and preschool education traditionally implied taking care of children and feeding them, i.e. activities which were considered to be female. Although the traditional understanding of kindergarten has changed, the teacher profession remains feminized.

Such a horizontal gender division of labour is reflected in curricula and physical spaces within the institutional context of kindergartens, oddly combining contemporary educational solutions and traditional understandings of human relationships. An example of that in Croatian kindergartens are activity centres widely promoted by pedagogues. The idea behind activity centres, based on the socio-constructivist theory, is that the room for a kindergarten children’s group should include different centres that provide certain activities for children. Centres should be built with children as active co-constructers, and the activities should
be based on children’s current interest and transformed accordingly. In reality, practically every kindergarten group has a family centre and a building centre. The family centre usually has a kitchen and baby dolls, and is predominantly used by girls, while the building centre usually has tools, cars and a “driving” carpet, and is predominantly used by boys.

That kind of space arrangement uncovers the impact of social relations on everyday curricula in kindergartens. Employing male teachers is, thus, not just a matter of gender equality in professions, but also a matter of gender equality in curricula.

The EU and Croatian policies are encouraging an increase in the percentage of male teachers. In Croatia, they are given the advantage when looking for a job in kindergartens. Still, there are only 1-3% of male teachers across European countries (Peeters, 2007), and there is usually only one male student in every other generation in faculties of teacher education. The Council of the European Union emphasized the need to increase the share of men in early childhood and preschool education in order to influence a change in attitudes and show that women are not the only ones in charge of upbringing and education (Council Conclusion on ECEC, 2011).

There are a few assumptions as to why men are not interested in teaching occupations: teachers have a relatively low salary, there are fewer opportunities for a career advancement, the teacher profession has a low social status and it is not considered to be “a job for a man”. Although reasons such as a relatively low salary could be questioned since there are also some benefits such as fixed working hours and free weekends, researches show that gender conservativism in Croatia partly still persists along with the process of re-traditionalization of society as a whole (Kamenov and Galić, 2011; Tomić-Koludrović, 2014; Sekulić, 2015), so prejudice about appropriate jobs for men could be worth considering. Gender conservativism is related to the process of gender socialization through which women are encouraged to attain skills associated with caring for young children, and teaching young children is often accompanied by the expectation that nurturing and care are required in order to be successful. We could say that teaching profession presents what Walby (1991) calls “public patriarchy” because we can easily observe how caring for young children shifted from privacy of households to public sites such as employment and institutions.

That is why the aim of this research is to explore parents’ attitudes about male teachers. We presume that their opinions could be indicators of informal gender norms hindering an increase in the number of male teachers in kindergartens. We ask parents what they expect from teachers, what their attitudes towards potential male teachers (or the ones they have already met, perhaps) are, and what the appropriate or desirable characteristics for male teachers are.

**Theoretical Framework**

We base our theoretical framework on theories dealing with the construction of male identity. Connell (1987, 2005) introduced a theory on gender hierarchy with several types of masculinity. People’s behaviour in their private life directly
influences the collective social order. Gender relations in society are formed and defined: work, power, and *cathexis*, i.e. personal/sexual relationships. Work refers to the gender division of work both inside and outside the labour market. Power is based on social relationships such as authority, violence, and ideology in institutions, the state, the military and home life. *Cathexis* refers to intimate, emotional and personal relationships, i.e. marriage, sexuality, and upbringing. Connell thus uses the term gender hierarchy to describe the dominance of men over women. Hierarchy consists of stylized types of manhood and femininity. Hegemony, or dominance of a particular group, is achieved through media, education and ideology. In each historical period, there is a form of hegemonic masculinity that is considered to be the ideal type.

There are different types of masculinity. Connell distinguishes between three types that are hierarchical and that exist in all contexts: hegemonic masculinity, participatory masculinity and subordinate masculinity. Ideal or typical male behaviour is called “hegemonic masculinity”, and it differs in terms of culture, country, and history, as well as influences the process of self-understanding of genders and their roles in society. That type of masculinity normalizes and neutralizes the dominance of men and the subordination of women (Sargent, 2013). Hegemonic masculinity is a dominant type of masculinity present in the private and the social spheres. It consists of the ideal male characteristics: heterosexuality, marriage, authority, paid work, strength, power, and physical strength. Participatory masculinity represents the group of men who benefit from the dominant position of hegemonic masculinity in the patriarchal system and the subordinate position of women (Connell, 1987, 1995). They benefit from the way hegemonic masculinity constructs gender order (Sargent, 2013). Subordinate masculinity is the opposite of hegemonic masculinity. Stigmatized and with the lowest level in the hierarchy, subordinate masculinity is characterized by homosexuality, kindness, caring, empathy, maternity, and other characteristics of femininity (Connell, 1987, 1995). Subordinate masculinity includes men who are symbolically linked to women and femininity: homosexuals, weak, sensual and “nerdy” men (Hjalmarsson and Löfdahl, 2014). This type of masculinity is a threat to the hegemonic type. It includes men avoiding competitions and the traditional definition of success, as well as take care of children (Sargent, 2013). Homosexuals are not considered to be a “true” man, so he is at the lowest level of the gender hierarchy (Hjalmarsson and Löfdahl, 2014).

Gender relations are subject to change and re-examination, the result of a permanent process, and are thus open to change and review (Connell, 2005). The positions of men in Connell’s hierarchy are not fixed, but men tend to “hover” between them (Hjalmarsson and Löfdahl, 2014). In contemporary society, there is a crisis of sexuality, a crisis of institutionalization and a crisis of formation, which is why hegemonic heterosexuality does not dominate as it once did. Femininity and gay sexuality are becoming stronger, and masculinity is transforming. The crisis of masculinity is caused by economic and social transformations. The traditional concept of masculinity is becoming weaker due to labour market changes and a high percentage of divorce. Connell describes a new alternative type of masculinity appearing in the 1980s. Connell said that the new type of man is sensitive to women
and children and meets their emotional needs. He appears as a powerful but gentle educator and father and is becoming a sexual object, just like women were in the past (Connell, 2005).

Similarly to Connell, Jones (2005) explains how a type of “an enlightened man” appeared in contemporary family life. There is an increasing number of highly educated women who earn more than men and thus spend more time at work. Therefore, the “enlightened man” takes over women’s once-traditional role. He does a “mother’s” work: he goes to playgrounds, to the store, to PTA meetings etc., while women gain more power in terms of earnings, influence, education, and ambition.

The problem for male teachers is that expectations regarding the “male model” are culturally conditioned and embedded in social discourse. There is a conflict between perceptions, expectations, desires, and ideologies challenging male teachers to be models, even though there are no defined male characteristics and behaviours in the teacher profession (Brownhill, Warin and Wernersson, 2014). The question is how male teachers can demonstrate alternative forms of masculinity if their surroundings expect them to demonstrate traditional male qualities associated with hegemonic masculinity: strength, authority, and aggression. The aforementioned characteristics are inadequate for early upbringing, which requires qualities related to caring and those categorized as “feminine” ones (Brownhill, Warin and Wernersson, 2014).

In his research of men in the teacher profession, Iovine (2015) defined three types of masculinity: the idealist of solidarity, the missionary and the professional. The motivation of the idealist of solidarity stems from political and solidarity reasons. The idealist of solidarity believes that what determines a teacher is quality and emphasizes the importance of society helping people with disabilities. The missionary is a teacher who has chosen education for altruistic reasons, that is, who wanted to help others. That type is in contrast with hegemonic masculinity, as the man is not interested in money or authority, but in helping others. Masculinity is not perceived as a chauvinistic or a patriarchal concept, but as a concept comprising fragility and worries, which are not specifically female. The missionary type believes that the roles of male and female teachers should be well-defined. Iovine (2015) determined his own profile as missionary-romantic-traditional. The professional type separates emotional from professional components. He describes the teacher profession as a multidimensional profession whose quality is influenced by the surroundings, professional experience, resources, money, quality of life, culture, and society. He links masculinity to the authority/strength needed to deal with families from socially deprived environments, and describes the emotional dimension as a component of the technical dimension. Competences such as dialogue, concern, listening and empathy are considered to be parts of a teacher’s personality (Iovine, 2015).

Jones (2007) believes that men in the teacher profession are attributed contradictory identities constructed by their surroundings, and in her research, those are female teachers. Jones (2007) calls this phenomenon the concept of a “millennium man”. There is a “hybrid masculinity” in society, and it is represented differently depending on the context. Loss of identity and greater freedom of choice
emerge in the contemporary world. According to Jones’s research, male teachers are uncertain when it comes to defining their identity, who they are, and who they should be in the educational context. Uncertainty is a consequence of awareness that different groups have the power to construct their identity in different ways. By interviewing male and female teachers, Jones (2007) defined four male identities: the “fake” man, the sexual predator, the potential manager, and multiple identities. The “fake” man is described as gentle, naïve and passive, representing traditional stereotypical female characteristics. The general opinion is that by entering a “female” profession they cease to be “real” men. The sexual predator refers to suspicions that a male teacher may be a potential sexual abuser. The potential manager represents men who enter the teacher profession but are more interested in career advancement. Men are often given an age limit regarding children they can work with, for instance, children older than four years of age, which then in turn often means that they are frequently offered the principal position. A large number of men involved in early childhood and preschool education are imposed multiple identities that cause confusion, suspicion and uncertainty for them. The “millennium man” represents the discourse of traditional masculinity mixed with the progressive discourse of a gentle and a caring man. In other words, the “millennium man” is a strict heterosexual man who at the same time shows his gentleness and kindness (Jones, 2007).

Brownhill, Warin and Wernersson (2012) conducted a research involving male teachers, asking them which qualities a male teacher should possess as a role-model in early childhood and education. Three groups of qualities were identified: “male” (diplomatic), “female” (caring) and “natural” (authentic) qualities. Male qualities represented the father figure, authority and discipline. Female qualities were qualities of a good human being: caring, empathy, and physical closeness. Natural or authentic qualities were determined as “being what you are” / “being yourself”: being a good person, as well as trusting, confidential, and full of respect. Brownhill, Warin and Wernersson (2012) concluded that the qualities of male teachers are not only formed through the needs of children, but also through the expectations and pressure by their surroundings (parents, colleagues, pedagogues etc.).

Buschmeyer (2013) conducted research on what male educators do in order to reconstruct their masculinity and show that they are masculine even though they opted for a stereotypically female occupation. She analysed what kinds of “alternative” types of masculinity can be found in the childcare profession, and concluded that the childcare profession, as well as the knowledge and the image created by teachers about their profession, is based on the idea of a role-model as the main aspect of a teacher’s work. There are two different ways in which male teachers conceptualize their identity as role-models: either by insisting on their masculinity or by referring to gender division (the alternative type). Contradictory information was obtained by observing and interviewing on the subject of closeness and intimate relationships. In practice, the “masculine” type exhibited physical contact and closeness, while in the interview they had the need to distinguish their actions from the ones of their female colleagues in order to defend their masculinity and separate themselves from the feminine. That type of teacher is classified as the “participatory” type of masculinity. In contrast, teachers with the “alternative” type
of masculinity did not have the need to defend their behaviour and distinguish themselves from femininity, but rather from hegemonic masculinity (Buschmeyer, 2013).

Drawing on said theories and typologies, we hypothesize that parents will recognize teacher masculinity as the subordinate type: overly emotional, feminine, and opposite from the hegemonic type of masculinity.

Sample and Research Methodology

The survey was conducted in May 2017 on the island of Krk in the northern Adriatic, and it involved 290 parents whose children attended kindergartens (in the settlements of Krk, Vrh, Malinska, Baška, Vrbnik, Polje, Njivice, Omišalj and Punat).

Islands in Croatia are considered to be a periphery (Rogić, 1994). The population oscillates over the year: in summer the islands are full of tourists, and in winter there are only local residents, mostly older people living in small rural places, and connections with the mainland are poorer. Although the island of Krk is connected to the mainland by a bridge, and although it is the most populated island in Croatia (with 17,860 inhabitants), it is still a rural and a relatively isolated area, which makes it interesting for our research.

Questionnaires were filled out both by fathers (13.8%) and by mothers (86.2%), aged between 23 and 50 (mean age: 35.02). For researches involving parents and conducted in kindergartens or schools, it is typical that fathers usually do not participate as mothers pick up children more frequently and do the “paperwork”. Regarding their education level, 50% of parents finished high school, and 50% graduated from university (undergraduate or graduate studies). Our sample is overeducated relative to the general population due to the fact that parents are younger and that, unlike unemployed parents, employed parents have the advantage of enrolling their children in kindergartens. Only 25.5% of surveyed parents had previous experience with a male teacher as their child’s kindergarten teacher.

The questionnaire included 11 items aimed at measuring parents’ attitudes about male teachers, assessed on a 5-point scale (from completely disagreeing to completely agreeing) and 13 items aimed at measuring desirable qualities of male teachers, assessed on a 5-point scale (from completely disagreeing to completely agreeing). All answers were compared with regard to age, education level and experience with male teachers, using a t-test for independent samples to determine statistically significant differences.

Results and Discussion

Parents’ attitudes about male teachers are shown in Table 1. We can see that the most accepted statements are the ones regarding the ability of a male teacher to be as good as a female teacher (equally qualified and equally professional), but
the moment the ability to work with younger children (toddlers) is mentioned, the agreement becomes weaker. A more neutral stance is evident in relation to the statements that a male teacher can be a good role model for boys and represent an authority for children, as well as the statement that there is a need for more male teachers. The five least accepted statements are all negative: parents from our sample did not agree that the teaching career is not satisfying for male teachers or that they were not successful in other jobs. They also did not see their involvement as problematic or unpleasant.

Table 1. Parents’ attitudes on male teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male teachers can be as good as female teachers.</td>
<td>4,56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male teachers can be as professional as female teachers.</td>
<td>4,54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male teachers can manage working with toddlers as well as female teachers.</td>
<td>3,94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A male teacher can be a good male role model for boys.</td>
<td>3,93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need more male teachers.</td>
<td>3,84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A male teacher must have authority over children.</td>
<td>3,30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man has no chance of building a career in the teacher profession.</td>
<td>1,76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male teachers cannot have the same knowledge about working with children as female teachers.</td>
<td>1,73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men who have opted for a career in teaching probably have not previously been successful in another occupation.</td>
<td>1,52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men working in kindergartens will certainly have some problems if they want to work there.</td>
<td>1,51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be unpleasant for me to talk about my child to a teacher who is a man.</td>
<td>1,51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We could conclude that parents from our sample do not show any prejudice and do not discriminate against male teachers, though they are not very welcoming towards them either, as the statement regarding the need for more male teachers was not strongly accepted. It is also possible that parents only gave socially acceptable answers, as the research took place in kindergartens. The phrasing of these items could have also been limiting since we were asking only about male teachers – perhaps including both genders would have been more revealing.

The results were not so unambiguous when we looked for differences among parents regarding their experience with male teachers, age and education level. Parents who had previous experience with male teachers showed more positive attitudes towards male teachers than the parents who did not have any experience with them. That is in line with Croatian educational policies and the Council conclusion on ECEC (2011), emphasizing the impact of an increase in the share of male teachers on general attitudes.

Younger parents (M=4,06; 3,45) agreed with the statement that male teachers have to be “good role models for boys” (t=1,981, p=0,048) and “an authority for children” (t=2,060, p=0,041) more than older parents (M=3,82; 3,18). Said results
are interesting as it could be interpreted in two ways, the first one suggesting that younger people are more authoritarian than older people, and the second one suggesting that younger parents are simply stricter and less patient with children than older parents. The research continually points to the re-traditionalization of Croatian society (Kamenov and Galić, 2011; Tomić-Koludrović, 2014; Sekulić, 2015), but kindergarten and school practitioners also warn that the global trend of epidemic permissive upbringing is taking place in Croatia as well, so more research is needed in order to answer said question adequately.

Less educated parents \((M=1.93)\) agreed with the statement that “men who choose the teacher profession are feminized” \((t=1.970; p=0.049)\) more than parents with higher levels of education \((M=1.72)\). That comes as no surprise, as it is believed that higher education lowers the level of prejudice. Since our sample is overeducated relative to the general population, we can only assume that the discrepancy would be even bigger if we had included a larger population in our research.

When we look at desirable qualities for male teachers (Table 2.), we can see that their most desirable qualities were “a good person”, “trustworthy” and “patient”, while their least desirable qualities were “an athlete”, “a father figure” and “a strict authority”. “Physically close” was also not so desirable, but “handy” was. There were no differences in the assessment of desirable qualities among parents regarding their age, education level and previous experience with male teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A good person</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handy</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically close</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An athlete</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A father figure</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strict authority</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we compare said findings with the typology by Brownhill, Warin and Wernersson (2012), we can conclude that the most desirable type of male teacher is the “neutral” or “authentic” type, while the least desirable type is the “male” type. The so-called “female” qualities are in-between. That would mean that parents from the island of Krk do not see masculinity of male teachers as subordinate or hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005).
Conclusion

The presented research dealt with the issue of a low share of men choosing the kindergarten teacher profession. The assumption was that traditional social values such as gender conservativism were the main reason for male teachers’ reluctance to choose said profession. That is why our choice was to conduct a research with parents of children in kindergarten, as we considered them to be indicators of broader social attitudes.

Drawing on theories and typologies such as Connell’s gender hierarchy and Brownhill, Warin and Wernersson’s (2012) qualities of male teachers, we hypothesized that parents would see male teachers as the “subordinate” or “alternative” type with stereotypically female qualities, and therefore represent an unwelcoming climate within the kindergarten culture.

Our findings showed the opposite: parents expressed positive attitudes and considered “neutral” or “authentic” qualities as the most desirable ones for male teachers. More educated parents and parents who already had experience with male teachers showed less prejudice.

Limitations of our study include the fact that the sample was small and specific, as well as overrepresented by women, younger and more educated subjects. Furthermore, the research method involved a survey, which led to a higher share of socially acceptable answers being given. Further research should therefore include qualitative research methods and/or surveys on larger samples, with the comparisons of opinions of different groups (parents, male and female teachers and children).

References:


Aspects of Children’s Socialization in Bulgaria (Late 20th – Early 21st Century)

Ina Pachamanova

Abstract: This chapter analyses some changes in children’s socialization in Bulgaria, comparing two periods: 1970–1980 and 2006–2018, and two groups of children of middle-class central Sofia and living in one Bulgarian village. Information used for the analysis comes from different sources: personal memories, field interviews and long-term observations together with personal stories of other people (published or shared in the specialized Internet sites) and published scientific studies. The author points out the problematic objectivity when researching childhood (due to nostalgia and other factors) and uses an interesting mixture of methods, combining classical ethnographic and comparative analysis, based on case-study and participant observation, (auto)biographic and (auto) reflexive approaches. The main question raised is “what causes the discussed changes?” And the main conclusion is that they are to a very big extend related to the increased and increasing protection of children, which limits some of the aspects of their socialization and changes its mechanisms.

Keywords: Childhood, Children, Socialization.

Biographical note: Ina Pachamanova, PhD, is an assistant professor at the Ethnology Department of Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski” since 2015. Her main areas of scientific interests are: Bulgarian traditional culture; traditional institutions, family, gender roles, socialization; contemporary ethnology, modern culture, cultures in transition, Bulgarian culture during socialism and post-socialism, policy towards family, women and children. Her main publication is the book “The previous transition. Woman and family under socialism (low, state politics and a field work from a Bulgarian village)”, released in 2015 and based on her PhD work (“The Woman in the Bulgarian Family (mid 1940s – late 1980s)”, 2013, Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”).

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Introduction

This chapter is preliminary research and does not offer general conclusions, as in order to do that it needs more data – both qualitative and quantitative. But it offers a new lens to view the increase in protectiveness in childhood as one of the basic reasons for some major changes in children’s socialization in Bulgaria in the beginning of 21st century, compared to the second half of 20th. And it states the preliminary hypothesis that this protectiveness limits some of the aspects of socialization and changes their mechanisms in ways that will still demonstrate their reflections and provoke research interest.

My research interest in the specifics of children’s socialization was provoked when, after almost 13 years of personal observations of central-Sofia middle-class children (being a parent of two and surrounded by dozens on an daily basis) and much longer observations of children in a village about 100 km away from the capital, I realized that there is a big difference in children’s everyday lives; in the ways they communicate, play, learn, acquire and apply skills, etc. in these two environments. One more thing, the childhood of today’s “rural” children seems to be much more like mine (and (at least) the previous) generation’s, than like their Sofia peers. The differences are not visible in the baby’s period, but they appear (and increase) as children grow, and in the period of early adolescence they seem to be significant. This observation came to me as a confirmation of the idea that childhood should not be simplified by generalizations like “modern”, “traditional”, etc. as it is different not only in distinct historical periods, but also in various socio-economic conditions existing at the same moment/nation/state1.

So, the main question I tried to answer doing this particular research was: What causes the differences in the way “today’s children” socialize in dissimilar environments? This question becomes even more interesting in view of the fact that my generation’s childhood took place during the socialist rule of Bulgaria while my children are born about 20 years after its end – respectively in another economic, political, sociocultural, demographic and other environments. But obviously the historical (and the regime) transformations had much greater impact on the urban childhood than the rural. This shows that there are other factors influencing the changes in children socialization and that their effects differ in urban and rural environment.

1 I can not quote here all the supporters of this thesis, as it would mean to name most of childhood researchers, so I will just quote Bankova (2011) and Popova (1999) who make a detailed review of their works. “According to most researchers, childhood is a socio-historical construction and should be explored in a particular social environment and a certain historical time.” (Popova, 1999: 31).
Methodology

Clearing the aim, however, was much easier than choosing the methods as a second step of my work. As I already said, I am a parent myself. I have almost 13-year-old son and a daughter who is 7. Their presence in my everyday life is naturally my priority and I consciously strive to be present in theirs – not only for a few hours in the evenings at home. So, I regularly participate in different events in school and kindergarten, go to parks and children’s clubs, and have children’s parties at home. I spend the summer with them in a village together with my brother’s and my cousins’ children, friends who visit us for several days (in different configurations of a total of 10-15 children aged between 4 and 18 years now) ... I mean that I see many children, in different environments daily. And of course, I communicate with them, and with their parents, grandparents, and teachers. We discuss various situations, problems, and opinions. Our conversations sometimes grow into serious discussions about “today’s children”, often comparing the present childhood with that of the 1970-1980s (ours) and that of the 1940s-1950s (of our parents). All this explains why when I started to work on this text – I realized that no matter how hard I try, I could never achieve absolute scientific objectivity as I cannot escape my personal examples and impressions. That is why I decided in this case, instead of “stumbling” into them, to use them.

Recently, this approach gained serious presence in Bulgarian ethnological texts researching childhood, children, and socialization. For a long time, they have been focused mainly on the child as an object of the ritual system and its socializing function (Vodenicharova, 1994: 102). In the last 10-20 years, not only there has been a growing interest in childhood as a topic for research, but there is a serious change of paradigm. It is increasingly turning towards the individual’s everyday life and personal history, looking at it as to a piece of a “puzzle” in the overall picture (Bankova, 2013: 231; Elenkov, I., Kr. Popova, D. Koleva, 2010: 11) – in this case the overall picture of childhood in Bulgaria (more precisely, one of its pictures, as I already noted my believe that generalizations are not usable here).

The expanding presence of the individual approach, biographical, and autobiographical methods is a trend in ethnological research in general (Luleva, 2012: 25-26), but in the study of childhood they are particularly useful because, no matter what motives, goals and approaches are applied, it is not possible to avoid the personal sight at several levels: 1) The interviewees have a subjective perception about their childhood; 2) The researcher is presumably an adult with memories about their own childhood – also subjective; 3) In most cases he/she is also a parent, which inevitably creates opinions about the childhood of their children’s generation, which is again subjective and defined by the memories. I mean that both the interviewer, and the interviewee(s) are influenced by nostalgia, which is most often defined as a “sentimental longing for one’s past” (Sedikides et al., 2008: 304), but the past in the way that one has constructed it by his/her own memory (Cunliiffe, 2010: 18). And lastly, memories are selective (Israel, 1995: 28) and they can create identity (Bergson, 1939: 23-28). Memories are different than the objective truth about the past (Kando, 2001: 33), they are constructed and modelled (Asman, 2005: 25) and the subjectivism of a person can overwrite the
actual events in a way that this person prefers them to have happened (Baddelay, 1993: 63), from the positions that this person stands on after the events happened, and according to his/her success or failure (Bourdieu, 2000: 98). As Magda Soares describes it (Soares, 2001, p. 40):

> With my hands tied by what I am today, conditioned by my present when I try to narrate a past in which I re-do, re-build, re-think with the images and ideas of today. The selection of what I include in the narration obeys the criteria of the present: I choose what bears relations with the system of references that direct myself today. The (re)construction of my past is selective: I do it from the present, because this is what tells me what is important and what is not…

These are all obstacles to the objective, etic/external position as Roth (2003: 31-32) describes it. My efforts to soften subjectivity and gain optimal objectivity brought me (after a serious consideration) to the choice of a complex mixture of methods. On one hand, I compare children of middle-class families, living nowadays in central Sofia with their peers, living in a village, about 100 km away using information from long-term participant observation, including personal impressions and conversations, but also classical ethnographic interviews, together with conclusions of already published scientific works, researching childhood and/or the period of transition from socialist to post-socialist period of Bulgaria (quoted in the following text). On the second hand, I compare the childhood of the same two groups of children with my own generation’s, using the same type of sources, plus (auto)biographical stories – my own and published in specialized Internet sites and/or scientific issues (also cited below), and the information gained (and conclusions made) in my PhD work (Pachamanova, 2013). It is a research of the Bulgarian family, its form and structure, family relations (including between parents and children) etc. in their development from the period of traditional culture to the end of the socialist rule in Bulgaria.

I hope that even if I am not etic/external (Roth 2003: 31-32) to the researched object(s) (in the parts that are based on methods of autobiographical and participant observation²), my analysis and conclusions are not entirely subjective, as: 1) The use of my own memories is paralleled by other people’s personal stories; 2) The information from my ethnographic interviews and previous research is validated by other scientific publications and by the use of classical ethnographic and comparative analysis – synchronic and diachronic.

Despite that, I will not make general conclusions in this chapter. It’s more like a comment on some differences in certain aspects of child socialization (up to early adolescence) in rural and urban environments in Bulgaria, in two periods – 1975-1985s and 2006-2018s., conducted mainly on the principle of the case-study – in this case – two cases, that I will illustrate with two personal narrations (my own).

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² The advantages and the limitations of these methods are discussed for example in: Lewis-Beck, M., A. Bryman, T. Liao (2004); Pinar, W (1981); Abrahao, (2012); Schwartz, Schwartz Green, C. (1955); Atkinson, Hammersley (1994); Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2001) and many others.
Personal Stories about the Two Periods

2006-2018s:

My son was born in December 2006 and my brother’s – in January 2007. As my mother owns a house in a village not very far from Sofia, the two of us started to go there with the boys every chance we had, so the children can grow in a healthy environment. In the beginning, the babies were either sleeping or watching the leaves moving from the terrace and that was enough fun for them. A local family, consisting at that time of 4 generations, the youngest – a 2 years old boy lived in the house across the street. We could see him walking the street holding the hand of some of the adults, but that was all in the beginning. As our 2 boys were growing, we were creating a safe environment for them to start walking and playing – regularly cutting the grass, keeping it clean and safe. Afterwards, in a period of about 5 years we brought sand for playing, bought swings and a slide, build a playhouse, installed a swimming pool and so on. Meanwhile, my brother’s second son was born, and my daughter, and my cousins’ children (another 2 boys and 2 girls). Our village house and yard became very nice and a lot of people with a lot of children were gathering there. Our neighbours’ yard on the other hand, is full of trees, vegetables, vineyard and animals and there is no free space, so the neighbour boy was playing in the street in a pail of construction materials. And naturally it happened so that he started to come and play in our yard with (or even without) “our” children, they became friends and he visited every day. I will spare the details how their relationship changed over the years (and in connection with the appearance of new local or Sofia’s children and objects in our yard). The point is that at a certain moment the situation suddenly changed. He stopped coming. And we were very surprised to see that he is ploughing the land with his grandmother, cutting trees and vineyards with his grandfather, driving and repairing the car with his father… The next summer he was no longer living permanently in the village, as his mother left his father for another man, gave birth to another 2 boys, and they all lived in the nearby city where our neighbour boy went to school, but he was staying with his grandparents every weekend and throughout the vacations. So, the next summer he was already driving the car by himself, riding his own motorcycle, cutting the trees with a chainsaw, taking care of his two little brothers and going out with girls… Of course none of “our” boys did any of these things3, although compared to most of their peers in central Sofia they are pretty skilful (many of my son’s classmates’ parents were still taking them to and from school, serving their food etc. in 6th grade), and lately (already 11-12 years) they carry wood, water the flowers and try to handle the pickaxe and the shovel, and even the saw.

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3 Here I have to note that I take into account the age difference of 2 years which is essential in this period, but I mean that if he was splitting wood with an axe at the age of 8, none of our boys did, even at 10-11.
1975-1985s:

About my childhood in Sofia I clearly remember that in the last year of kindergarten I and my brother (one year younger than I) were going home alone, passing by the local store to buy bread. In first grade we were heating (and sometimes cooking) our lunch (as mom and dad were working), I was ironing some of our clothes and the two of us had clear duties at home besides doing our homework. When we were done, we played outside with crowds of other children till dark crossing Sofia alone. During the long summer (and shorter spring and winter) vacations we were with our grandparents. With my father’s parents, we were staying in a house in a very wild, abandoned village, where we had to bring water from a spring, and our grandmother was cooking on a woodburning stove. We spent the days with our cousin (a little older than us) exploring the woods, the river, (where we fished for lunch and dinner) and the old abandoned church and houses in the village (obviously used for some kind of military storage, as there were old boxes full of ammunition), entering through their broken windows. And we were helping our grandmother gather honey as beekeeping was her livelihood. With my mother’s parents and two other cousins we were staying at the same village, where I spend summers with my children now. Almost every day we had to do some weeding, digging, harvesting or making compotes and relish... But most of the time we spent there we were on the streets with other children (local or staying for the summer like us). During the days we were often in smaller groups (girls playing “family” and “theatre”, boys with slings and bikes), but we were also exploring the mountains, the caves and the river (4 km away). In the evenings, we were gathering in big groups (of about 20 children in each neighbourhood) and either stayed on the street, making improvised “discotheque” or we went to the cinema in the school hall. After that we played with the children from the other neighbourhoods (over 100 boys and girls, aged between 10 and 18 years).

Increasing Protection

Telling these stories, I am most probably influenced (like most people) by the nostalgia of my own childhood. I present them not to make judgments about “good” or “bad” but because even if they have an emotional burden, they are informative of the changes just as much as if they were quotes from an interview taken duly on terrain. And I only use them to briefly illustrate these changes. Such stories can be heard by almost all people of my generation (not to mention the previous ones). They are present in many of the published books and articles (eg: Daskalova, et al., 2003, Elenkov, I., Kr. Popova, D. Koleva, 2010, Popov, R., Y. Mankova, 2012, Bankova, 2013, etc.), in Internet sites (like Spomeni ot detstvoto, prekarano na selo (Memories of childhood in the village), 2019) and publications (like: Spomeni ot detstvoto, koito vasheto dete niama da ima (Memories of childhood that your child will not have), 2019). They are also part of my field material quoted in my PhD work (Pachamanova, 2013) and the book based on it (Pachamanova, 2015). Due to
the limited scope of this text, I cannot reference these stories again here, but I use them in my analysis.

The two personal stories above can be discussed as an indicator of many changes, but I will discuss the one that I find particularly important because it is the precursor for many other transformations. I mean the increasing effort to protect children from all sorts of dangers – starting with colds, bacteria and viruses, passing through street risks, bullying by classmates and getting to the virtual threats coming from the Internet, and even from “scarring” moments in fairy tales that are periodically adapted according to the new “requirements”.

The growing prevention is kindled (or even fuelled) by the media that overflow us with information about all kinds of incidents with or violence against children, on the one hand, and on the other, with numerous tips on how to protect our children, such as described by Gencheva (2012: 236-237) “Children’s Safety Map”, “Parental Control Program”, etc. I will not go into listing the different types of materials that can be found in bookstores, and especially on the Internet, but when I see them I remember the advice my father gave to people with little children: “If you want them to be healthy, give them to chew tram tickets!” and his words when I and my brother were going out alone: “If you have a problem, go ask somebody on street for help. People are good!” Of course, as I noted in the beginning of the chapter, it was “different times” – the way of life in Bulgaria during socialism was less dynamic and stressful, and much more “easy”, communal, and controlled (I cannot go into details here, but it is very well described for example by Brunnbauer (2007). That is the main reason for most people to say: “The times were different...”; “People were different...”; “There were not so many cars...”; “There were no kidnappings...” – words that every colleague has heard on terrain, gathering information about “before”. I say them too, and I think of these dangers, and I am afraid for my children... But I keep recalling something that my brother said when I was demonstrating (very proudly) the newly-built playhouse in our yard (that was entirely my project and my work – with a little help). Instead of saying “Bravo! Well done! Very nice work!”, he said: “Stop making prisoners out of these children!”.

My brother is a musician and he is not familiar with Philip Aries’ theory of segregation of children after the Middle Ages (Ariès, 1960), so ingeniously presented from Kristina Popova as “ghettoizing” childhood (Popova, 1999: 24), but he made me think of it more than ever. And thinking of his reaction helped me clarify the connection between two generally opposed theories – about the “segregation” of Aries from 1960, and about the increased “social value” of children since 19th century of Lloyd deMaus from 1974 (deMause, 1995). And the connection is clearly demonstrated by the growing protection of children, as it causes the “segregation”, and is caused by the “increased value”. Similar conclusion could be seen for example in the work of Viviana A. Zelizer “Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children” (1994), where she tracks out the changing public “reaction” to child’s death (especially accidental) in the first three decades of 20th century in the US, and how it lead to “sacralisation of child’s life”, to different national initiatives for children’s prevention (with high priority) – for
example the “playground movement” and the increasing number and variety of play spaces to keep children away from streets, as a result of which “their lives were increasingly supervised and domesticated” (Zelizer, 1994: pp. 23-52).

Increasing care and protection of children by both society and family (with their new values, attitudes and relations in the Modern and Post-Modern Age) can be seen in the international and governmental acts on children’s rights and the growing number of institutions for their protection. And on the other hand, in the extended period of childhood, with later maturation and the acquisition of more knowledge, but less skills as a result of the new attitude towards children. The latter is related to another thesis by Philip Aries: “Family infantilization of the child under the constant supervision of adults reduces the ability to accumulate experience itself” (citation is as given in: Popova, 1999: 24). And self-acquired experience is an important part of socialization. Its definitions are many and different sciences put different accents on them but generally its essence involves integrating the individual into the community (or communities) to which it is (or is about to become) a member. This inclusion is realized through “transmission [...] absorption and use [...] of the accumulated social experience” (Vodenicharova, 1994: 101).

**Protection and Socialization**

The two stories above show the connection between the increasing protection and child socialization in several directions. **First**, it is obvious that the “perimeter” of the “urban” children’s movement (in the period 2006-2018) is narrowed, compared both to their “rural” peers and the “urban” ones 30-40 years ago. If the “rural” children are on the street for almost all their free time (5-6 years old mainly near the house but then all over the village – with other children or alone, on foot or by bicycle, and after 12 years – even with their own motorbike), the ones living in the capital may eventually go alone to school (if it is close and there is no big streets to be crossed), or to visit a friend living nearby, or to go to the near park (under the same conditions and with many reservations). Even when they are in the village, they rarely go without a companion outside the yard, because although they are not

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4 Obviously a global trend: “according to American psychologists’ research by 1990, the radius around the home where a child is allowed to be without parental control has decreased 9 times compared to 1970...” (Bankova, 2013: 244).

5 Here I want to put an accent on the fact that “our neighbour boy” from the story above is not an exception. Almost all local boys receive their own motorbike around the age of 12 as a present from their parents. And ride them in the village every day, which is of course illegal and very similar to the situation of children driving without driving license in the US, described by Annette Lareau (2001: 281).

6 My data is about the central parts of Sofia and my hypotheses refer to their inhabitants, although sometimes I use the “urban” or “Sofia’s” children more generally. Probably in the more distant districts of Sofia, as well as in smaller towns, the picture is different, but at this stage they are not included in the survey.
as serious as in the city, the dangers are still there – cars, street dogs, probability of getting lost (as they are not used to going out alone and respectively they have not developed the ability to know the space and have orientation in it). I.e., the increasing protection, reducing the perimeter of children’s exposure, reduces their ability to face situations in which they have to solve problems themselves, make decisions, get to know the world, find their way in it properly without assistance of their parents or other adults. According to Atanasova, (2012: 139), “modern parents are trying to protect their children from the horror of the world outside home” and they are left to “self-educate themselves in front of the TV and the computer [...] by the trial-error method”. On the basis of information from my research, I fully agree with the first part of this conclusion but not with the second, as there are many “urban” parents who restrict, or even ban the TV and the computer (in rural areas they are still generally limited for a number of reasons), and spend time to educate their children and to communicate with them. Whether this time is sufficient (as quantity and quality) is not the subject here and I will not discuss it, but it seems that it is not less than “before”. “Before” meaning the period of socialism when almost all parents worked and most of the children were spending time at home alone, according to my field work information and many personal stories (for example cited in: Bankova, 2013; Gospodinov, et al., 2006; Spomeni ot detstvoto, prekarano na selo (Memories of childhood spent in the village), 2019 and others) and even the movies from the period show this situation (for example Kuche v chekmedzhe (A dog in a drawer), 1982; Voynata na taralezhiite (War of the Hedgehogs), 1978, etc.).

And although “then” and “now” the parents work, i.e. children spend the part of the day they are not in school without them, there is a significant difference that is a second reflection of the growing protection: In the 1970-1980s, while parents were at work, children had to deal with certain domestic and school duties to earn free time to play. In 2006-2018, enhanced prevention also minimizes domestic duties, self-learning through the “trial-error” method and outside playing, replacing them with additional educational activities – tuition, courses, various competitions, sports (also often planned as “education” – to form certain qualities in the child or just not to be alone at home). During vacations, parents enrol their children in various daytime classes or courses so that they do not stay alone if there are no grandparents to be with them. Many factors influence that type of organization of children’s time: the increasing value of education and the challenges of globalization, respectively the desire of parents to make them competitive, even the Child Protection Act (Zakon za zakrila na deteto, 2000) as it prohibits parents

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7 Even the growing number of offerings of these type of “all-day” occupations for children is indicative for this trend.

8 Here I can not comment much, but I must at least mention the changing role of grandparents who predominantly either work (due to the increased retirement age) or are too old (due to later reproduction) to take care of their grandchildren. This naturally affects another aspect of child socialization – the transfer of information through generations, but it also influences the way children are raised in Sofia and the fact that much fewer are those who spend vacations in villages.
to leave their children without supervision until they reach 12 years of age. But my goal here is not to explore the reasons for the increasing protection, only its impact on the changes in child socialization, so I will go back to them.

The reduction of home duties affects the aspect of socialization related to the absorption of working habits in general and, in particular, the proficiency in individual skills. It is true that at the end of the 19th century children in towns (in Bulgaria) already had far less obligations than the “rural ones”, they were more cared for and more attention was paid to their education than to their labour skills (Bankova, 2012: 181). However, a certain set of skills and obligations was maintained, which also stands for the period 1975-1985, when children living in the city still had to learn the habits and skills in the home work, and those who spent the vacations “in the village with grandparents” – in the agricultural too. Evidence may be found in the stories I told, and in others – e.g. from sites like Spomeni ot detstvoto, prekarano na selo (Memories of childhood, spent in village, 2019), and in some scientific publications (Boneva, 2012: 259-260, Nenov, 2012: 281-282, 286-287, Todorova, 2012: 288, etc.). For the period between 2006 and 2018, however, my field information shows that this set of skills and habits is minimized for children in central Sofia – to make their room, to slice bread, to pour milk, etc. Only few of them use the vacuum cleaner or the kitchen stove, or the iron. In contrast, the children of the village dig, harvest hay, cut wood, care for the animals, etc. Even more important is the fact that they perform domestic and agricultural tasks almost daily, unlike their peers in Sofia. Enumerating these differences between children of the two groups, I must point out that they are very much alike the ones described by Annette Lareau in “Unequal Childhood: Class, Race, and Family Life” (2011). The results of her research show that “middle-class children are often treated as a project to be developed” and “their parents support their involvement in extracurricular activities as they consider them “an essential component in [their] overall development” (Lareau, 2011: p. 67, 110, 111). At the same time, “working class and poor children are given boundaries for their behaviour and then allowed to grow”; they “spend much more time with family members and providing important goods and services to kin”, organization of their daily life is much more “open-ended” and “is not as heavily controlled by adults” and their “enrolment in an organized activities is not likely to occur unless children specifically request it” (Lareau, 2011: p. 67, 68, 77). Even if my comparison is of “urban” and “rural” children while Lareau’s is class based, the similarity of the results is not surprising as in Bulgaria due to a whole chain of historical reasons (and the specifics of the socialist economy and its effects in the period of post-socialism) the “middle-class” is mainly in the cities, while the rural population is either working-class or poor. But this is another topic that I will not discuss here (more details could be found for example in Brunnbauer, 2007; Znepolski (ed.), 2009, and others).

The third major reflection of the enhanced prevention is on socialization in its aspect of developing communication and learning skills. The most obvious difference for the period 2006-2018 is that “urban” children are not “on the street” and they are not even “in the yard” (Bankova, 2013: 239). They communicate with other children in the kindergarten/school, a variety of extracurricular activities and sports, or on the playground, in the park, in a party-club or on a home party/guests
for play. In each of these cases parents are either present or at least bring and take them, and while children are studying or playing, they are always watched and cared for by at least one teacher or parent. In addition, they are generally in a homogenous environment (peers that they know). And they are in limited, formalized (often institutionalized), controlled (even formatted) by adults’ environment.

But “the street has always been an important place and [...] a means of constructing a child’s social and cultural identity...” as “there children live out of the eyes of adults, surrounded by their peers...” (Mattheus, 2003: 103-104). Without neglecting the role of the family – it remains the most important institution (and environment) of socialization (Bankova, 2011: 136, Vodenicharova, 1994: 101, Krasteva, 1996: 112, Kon, 2003), or kindergarten, school, sports clubs, etc., they all emphasize on the upbringing/educating and disciplining. And communication and learning there are channelled by adults. Therefore, the “peer society” is also an important socializing factor as well as that of bigger children (Kon, 2003). Informal communication with them is an essential part of the child’s preparation for his/her upcoming roles, self-identification and positioning in the community. And this communication is part of the game on the street and in the yard (without supervision, control or guidance). And obviously “today’s” children need it, and when they do not practice it in the traditional way, they are looking for other options. Obviously, this is one of the reasons why it is becoming increasingly difficult to tear the children apart from computers and phones – through them they communicate with other children out of parental control. My observations, conversations with children and interviews with parents show that up to 5 years of age children use electronic devices mainly to watch songs and films and to play games – predominantly educational (related to the identification of objects, shapes, colours, or memory games etc.). In the 5 to 7-year period, games become more competitive (they include, for example, overcoming obstacles to reach a certain goal) and creative (the easiest example is the popularity of the “Minecraft” game) and last but not least – they are online, i.e. children play together while interacting. I have witnessed (and other parents share the same experience) many situations in which a group of children (between 5 and 12) are in a room and are talking, laughing and shouting, and when I enter the room, it turns out everyone is with a phone (or tablet) playing (for example “Minecraft”) in a network, and they are discussing the game, encouraging (or criticizing) each other, joking and having fun. When they are not in one room (and are at home) this communication is done through microphones and headphones. The films in this age range are replaced by videos in which mostly teenagers demonstrate skills and tricks in the same games or show “how to make by yourself...” for example origami, slime, doll dress from a balloon, and so on. In the age period of 7-8 to 12, besides the fact that games are becoming more complex (but firmly in network), the so-called “influencers” like “bloggers”, “vloggers” and “youtubers” are the most popular (some children even idolize them). In this age range, some children are even taking online guitar (or other) lessons as a demonstration that they do not want to learn from adults (I have this kind of example in my survey). With this information, I am trying to demonstrate that the interest of children (especially at school age) in electronic devices is, in fact, to a big extent an interest in the Internet space where they can
expand their “perimeter” of playing and communicating with peers, (and bigger children), without the permanent control of the adults, as it is their natural need in the process of growing up and socialisation.

As I said in the beginning of this chapter, I will not draw general conclusions here, as at this stage it is a kind of preliminary research and to be more solid, it needs more data – both qualitative and quantitative. So, for now it is more like a comment on a very small part of the changes in some aspects of children’s socialization and their relation to the new type of perception of childhood and attitude towards children, their constantly rising value and, as a result, their enhanced protection. However, if I have to make any conclusion as a preliminary hypothesis, it is that this protection limits some of the aspects of socialization and changes their mechanisms in ways that will still demonstrate their reflections and provoke research interest.

References:


Researching the Voices of Those Who Do Not Know: Games, Play and Toys from Sao Tome and Principe

Marlene Barra

Abstract: This article aims to acknowledge one of the diverse socio-cultural worlds of children, more precisely of those who do not know: because they are children, because they are African, because they are marginalized by adult-centrism, and because they are invisible due to Eurocentrism. Carrying out ethnographic research for 12 months in Sao Tome and Principe involving more than 1300 children, it was possible to acknowledge new and creative insights from younger social actors, who are creatively responding to the problems and constraints of their lives. The realities of African children are especially focused in order to fill a gap in research and theoretical production about the processes of childhood’s construction in peripheral countries. That is, giving voice to the African children through the acknowledgment of their own conceptions, listening and reflecting on their daily practices out of the occidental norms. Visual methods were used for the revelation about Sao Tome and Principe children’s knowledge within the following dimensions: games, play and toys.

Keywords: Sociology of childhood, Post-colonial authors, African children, Cultures of childhood


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Researching within the Sociology of Childhood Framework

Today, the Sociology of Childhood has a guaranteed presence in the most important European Research committees such as European Sociological Association (ESA), International Sociological Association (ISA), and the Association Internationale des Sociologues de Langue Française (AISLF) (Sarmento, 2018: 385). In addition, the Portuguese section of Sociology of Childhood was recently created in the Portuguese Sociological Association (APS). Nevertheless, the articulation of the Portuguese sociology of childhood with the label central countries was constructed with a strong attachment of the research field with the southern Portuguese-speaking countries, namely Brazil and African countries. This positioning reveals the specificity of the Portuguese scientific production and helps to explain why the critique of the hegemonic normativity is “one of the most promising tasks underway in the theoretical work of the sociology of childhood” (Sarmento, 2018: 395). That is to say, following the “appeal to learn with the south” (Santos and Meneses, 2010) rejecting remaining in the same theoretical paradigms and academic borders.

Researching the voices of those who do not know, we could say, is dealing with unimportant and voiceless subjects: 1) – it sought to know about those who are thought not to have much to say – for they are children; 2) – wanted to build knowledge about them through its practices commonly judged to be less serious – for it investigates play; 3) – did that with the aid of less popular methods in social sciences – for it investigates visual methodologies; 4) – and moved to peripheral contexts – for it is developed in Africa.

In other words, here presented are the broad lines of a research that distances itself from the concerns and values of the western academia, but with this same statement its venture is justified.

In the scope of sociology of childhood and with the support of post-colonial authors, the realities of African children are especially focused in order to fill a gap in research and theoretical production about the processes of childhood’s construction in peripheral countries. Paving the way for thinking about African children, this unique research was carried out in Sao Tome and Principe, trying getting to know more about their daily lives and who these children really are in their communities. The country is an African archipelago divided into six districts in Sao Tomé island, plus the Autonomous Region of Principe located in the Gulf of Guinea, 350 km off the west coast of Africa. The population is very young, with children aged 0 to 14 years representing more than 40% of the population. It is a developing state among the poorest in the world, with a fragile economy where more than two-thirds of the population is poor.

At the same time, improving ethical and methodological approaches as well as tuning epistemological tools, this research aimed at listening to the African children respecting the natural context of children’s existence, the matters in which they are experts, and the ways in which they’re willing to talk.

Giving voice to the African children, or to those who do not know, is here understood as the listening to their own and specific languages in the revelation of the “cultures of childhood” (Corsaro, 1997, Sarmento, 2003, Delalande, 2004).
That is, the symbolic processes put in action by children, whose function is to carry out the interpretative reproduction of the world and the development of their own practices (*idem*).

The Sociology of Childhood recognizes children as competent social actors in their worlds, which implies a break with adult-centrism – here understood as the perspective that studies children from the viewpoint of adults, their expectations towards children, and their own childhood’s experiences. From this point of view, children’s thinking is illegitimate, incompetent, improper, and inappropriate, which greatly influences the regulation of social relations and the way of institutions’ functioning. That is to say, symbolically inhibiting children thinking from their own ideas, representations, practices and social actions (Sarmento, 2005).

Additionally, in the adult-centric discourse it is also presented the challenge of deconstructing the Eurocentric and colonizing discourse of childhood in Africa. Putting it another way, for the problematization of the other that is the child it was added the capture of children’s otherness outside the European context, being understood that child studies can collaborate in the creation of new approaches that require a critical historical analysis of the role of research about the “indigenous world” (Smith, 1999). With the support of postcolonial studies, this approach can bring a new vision to childhood and to the “southern children” rediscovering a discursive place where children can be identified from their own generational and cultural alterity (Sarmento, 2013).

The analysis of childhood cultures, especially the children’s playful daily lives in Sao Tome and Principe’s society, provided a basis for the construction of a new knowledge – so unknown that it can be reported as non-existent as underlined by the title of this article. All children are here considered as active and creative agents in the exercise of their social activity as subjects that transform and reproduce, in diverse ways, the realities that surround them. Thus, children are developing new communicational, linguistic, discourse and action forms that are added engaging in dialogue with dominant adult cultures (Corsaro, 1992; Buckingham, 2001; Ferreira, 2004).

For Sociology of Childhood, and Child Studies in general, it is essential to search the voices of the African children not so much to enumerate, measure, or weigh them, but to hear about: who they are in their communities, along with their families and friends; what they do in their societies; what their dreams and fantasies are; and how it is established their “real imaginary” (Sarmento, 2003). For that, it was chosen the ethnographic approach within the interpretive comprehensive paradigm. The rebuilding of the processes and relationships that shape the daily experience of play and the use of toys by children from Sao Tome and Principe here were mirrored with the support of visual methodologies.

1. Sociology of Childhood and Post-Colonial Theories

Research on childhood should consider, in the theoretical-analytical plane, the diversity of children’s conditions of existence and their effects and social consequences (Sarmento, 2005), thus contributing to the deconstruction of the universal or globalized idea of childhood. The symbolic construction of childhood
in modernity is inherent to the creation of the dominant social order (Buckingham, 2001), imposing modes of social organization and regulation of children’s daily lives mainly regulated by the market, school and childhood’s public policies. In childhood studies it is also stated that the dominant representations of the social order of the north, white, bourgeois, and catholic children produce other childhoods in both the North and the South, so the challenge lies in breaking the disciplinary boundaries that contain them (Balagopalan, 2002; Nieuwenhuys, 2010).

Adopting the colonial perspectives for the study of childhood enhances resisting at the Eurocentrism (Nieuwenhuys, 2010), opening the space to look and experience in alternative ways, avoiding southern childhood being measured according to the representations of the dominating North. In this way, it is also possible the operationalization of the children’s agency, which has a seminal role in children’s studies (Nieuwenhuys, 2010). For example, the idea that children should be protected from work, from the streets or from militias, oversimplifies much more complex social processes and makes it difficult a deeply understanding of the children’s lives (Sarmento and Marchi, 2008).

Post colonialism is here understood as the set of theoretical and analytical currents which have in common giving theoretical and political primacy to the unequal relations between North and South, in the understanding and explanation of the contemporary world. Within them it is considered that both the Western and the non-Western world were victims of colonialism and that “from the edges or peripheries, structures of power and knowledge are more visible” (Santos, 2004: 8). In a very narrow way, postcolonial theories challenge the question of the Eurocentric vision of the world, allowing space for the voices and visions of the “subalterns” – those who during the European colonial domination were systematically represented as not having agency or voice (Sanches, 2005). Eurocentrism is a central concept in postcolonial studies because this is a markedly colonialis assumption and according to Walter Mignolo “(…) eurocentrism functions as if there were no place outside the macro canonical narratives of Western civilization or modernity since the Renaissance” (2003: 665).

The theoretical path framed by postcolonial theories (e.g. Mudimbe, 1994; Spivack, 1999; Mignolo, 2003; Santos and Meneses, 2010; Sanches, 2005; 2012) helped to adjust ethical and methodological procedures in order to go deeper in Sao Tome and Principe children’s social and cultural worlds and got to know the ways they creatively respond to the problems and constraints of their lives. Underlying this, it can also forge the deconstruction of Africa’s stereotypes, like it is said by many African authors (e.g. Cheikh Anta Diop, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Samir Amin), as well as the ways Africans look at themselves (Monga, 1999), take control of their knowledge (Mbembe & Sarr, 2017), or imagine their own future (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014).

Researching play, games and toys, or the playful activities of the children born in Sao Tome and Principe challenges the adult-centric view of the world by researching along with children a “children subject-matter’s specialty” (Barra, 2014). It also challenges the Eurocentric or Western-centric view by revealing that knowledge through the subaltern voices (Sanches, 2005) or through the voices of those who do not know. African children’s social practices and cultures also seem
to challenge the stereotyped images within which they are usually considered and challenging the figures and theoretical constructs within which the sociology of childhood used to think of children’s otherness in the European and Western context: children’s craft, child’s place in the nuclear family, interpretive reproduction, autonomy of the child subject, children’s rights, etc. (Sarmento, 2013).

From the dialogue between childhood studies and postcolonial studies arises a fundamental hearing of the children’s voices both from the north and the south. This validation of the “knowledge from the margins” (Fanon, 1975 in Sanches, 2005) opens to reading the daily life, the actions and interactions of the children from Sao Tome and Principe, also leading to the reflection both on the phenomenon of ethnocentrism and adult-centrism in the context of the peripheral countries.

Carrying out research with children from latitude zero reaffirms the essence of post-colonial studies, where several epistemologies are allowed by the “ecology of knowledge” (Santos, 2004). Postcolonial studies seemed to be decisive in the construction of childhood epistemologies by allowing us to disagree with the places and perspectives from which we observe it, but also because they indicate what is necessary to really listening to the voices of these African children. Exercising a fundamental dialogue between childhood studies and post-colonial studies, this research shows a way to listening to marginalized children’s voices by adult-centrism in childhood studies and those made invisible by ethnocentrism in social sciences, contributing to the deconstruction of the western “normalization” of the children and childhood. In other words, through children’s voices we allow ourselves to discover other ways of seeing the world, and that there are different ways of being a child in the world.

**Qualitative Methodology: a Visual Ethnography Approach**

This research is framed within the qualitative methods (e. g. Lüdke, M. e André, M., 1986; Lessard-Hébert et al., 1990) and chooses the ethnographic approach within the interpretive comprehensive paradigm. So, the rebuilding of the processes and relationships that shape the daily experience of play and the use of toys by children from Sao Tome and Principe here were mirrored with the support of visual methodologies. The use of the ethnographic method reinforces the voice and participation of children in the production of sociological data. Moreover, this “micro-sociological and ethnographic study” (Hengst and Zeiher 2004) is characterized by children’s autonomous and competent action, finding it’s justification in one key aspect of the sociological investigation on Childhood (James and Prout 1990).

The analysis of hundreds of pages of field notes, thousands of photographs and dozens of videos collected during the field work answered about where, when, with whom, how and what do children play with. Comprising more than 1300 children, the study was conducted between June 2011 and June 2012, in all districts of São Tomé and Príncipe – in several places of 12 communities on the island of Sao Tome and 7 communities of the Autonomous Region of Principe (urban, peripheral and rural).
The research presents the playful practices in the 35 observation sessions arranged with children and more than 50 moments of recorded spontaneous play. It also presents the intensive analysis of some of the episodes chosen as paradigmatic of the children’s actions, words and interactions as social actors. The results of all of that (re)conceptualization in new analytical terms enabled its confrontation with the theories that underlie this research.

Visual methods enabled the use of photography and digital video as research tools, carrying out a “visual ethnography” (Pink, 2001, 2006; Ribeiro, 2005) contributing to the collection of descriptive data, reflecting on children “(...) in specific contexts, with specific experiences and in real life situations” (Graue & Walsh, 1998:22). That is the aim of this research which scrutinizes one of the sociocultural worlds of childhood and reveals it through the voices of children themselves.

Therefore, other understandings are possible about children born in Africa and their playful daily lives, going far beyond the stereotype of orphaned, vulnerable victims that African children are frequently label by western studies and statistics. Maybe this study is also helping in the conceptualization of childhood, deepening the meaning of being a child in Africa in a different way from what generally comes in reports by governmental entities or international agencies (Punch, 2003; Paraskeva, 2006; Colonna, 2013).

Here it is understood that the adjustments of methods and techniques, hand in hand with those that new technologies are making possible, allows a fundamental reflexive attitude (Pink, 2006) in which the researcher and researched are image creators, authors of discourse and of the visual narratives (Ribeiro, 2005). It is important to note that visual methodologies and both theoretical framework of the sociology of childhood and of the postcolonial studies are sharing the assumptions of reflexivity, collaboration and participation. Furthermore, these assumptions are underpinned respecting the natural context of children’s existence, the matters in which they are experts and the ways in which they’re willing to talk. In sum, children’s research participation was accomplished through children’s natural playing, which is the most important and well-known activity for children, here listened and recorded when, were, how and with whom children wanted to play (or not).

The Voices of Those Who Do Not Know: Games, Play and Toys from Sao Tome and Principe

The fundamental research assumption is that play is a dominant activity in children’s lives, not as a preparation for their future adult lives but as the present of children’s lives (Corsaro, 1985, 1997, James & Prout, 1990, 1998, Brougère, 1994; Sarmento, 2004; Ferreira, 2004). Playing is understood as “one of the fundamental pillars of the cultures of childhood” (Sarmento, 2004), that is, an activity that is central in the construction of individual or collective visions for the (re)creation or (re)invention of the children’s societies, in the temporal space of childhood (Corsaro, 1992).
Being in the islands for one year permitted to the researcher to observe that the children are in the place where the play is, and the play is where the children are. Although, their play and use of toys many times could not correspond to the parameters in which the western world tends to fit play or the children’s toys, or even what it means to play – the same with selected times, spaces and playmates of these children.

The underlying research has evidenced the existence of three dimensions in the recreational universe of the children from Sao Tome and Principe, or of those who do not know:

– Games: almost two hundred in the categories of: jumping, catching, running, searching, stopping, dancing, sitting games, palm games, and games with other movements;
– Play: several dozens in the categories of: playing with nature, playing with the body, playing with structures, pretending, and other jokes;
– Toys: countless (and often unique) in the categories of: industrial toys, manufactured toys, and the use of materials such as toys (natural or waste).

1. Games from Sao Tome and Principe

About the dimension of games, the children’s predilection is playing soccer. Once it was the most desired, enunciated, and played both in the observation sessions arranged with the children (Photo 1) as well as in the recorded spontaneous observations.

That happened even when the ball did not exist, because, in this case, children played the “human soccer game” which doesn’t need a ball, or they come up with an invented table soccer or (re) inventing a soccer ball (Photo 2). However, not having a ball is not a major problem for children, because it could be immediately manufactured with materials as diverse as those that can be found within the reach of the children in each context (e.g. waste materials such as plastics or fabric wrapped inside an old sock).

2. Play from Sao Tome and Principe

The second largest dimension is the play of the children, which nature often differs in the observations made in an arranged session or in a recorded spontaneous observation – but leaving no doubt about the enjoyment of the body movement as a rule for most of the observed play. Nevertheless, a quick or foreigner glance may not immediately understand as play what children do with some of their peers in the islands of São Tomé and Principe. For example, when children play bligá it is believed at first sight that the children are fighting each other. This idea of movement and enjoyment of one’s own body with peers in very creative and diversified forms (Photo 3), is contrary to the western’s widespread idea that children nowadays only sit to play in front of the monitors of various electronic devices.

Paradoxically, the effusive, infantile bodily manifestations are monitored by the same western world by an industry that urge the regulation of children’s bodies and excitement, often diagnosing them as pathological – hyperactivity or attention deficit disorder, for example. In this way, the reflection on the contemporary games of other latitudes and the analysis of the children’s play seems to corroborate the idea that “(...) the child, childhood, children’s behaviour and children’s play cannot be properly understood through the same explanatory mechanisms” (Jenks, 1997: 196), that is, without taking into account the broader geographic and sociocultural context in which such playful activity takes place (Ferreira, 2004).
3. Toys from Sao Tome and Principe

The dimensions of games and play observed among these children are intertwined with the toys used by children in São Tomé and Príncipe. The potentiality of the various waste materials (ropes, cardboard, fabrics, etc.), as well as natural materials of the surrounding context, do not go unnoticed in order to increase the playfulness of the children from Sao Tome and Principe: the invention of a game, triggering a way to play, or using it as a toy. Sometimes, the manipulation of some toys by the children from Sao Tome and Principe caused some perplexity to the researcher herself: for its nature – the use of living beings, for example; for its diversity – literally everything seems to be potentially a toy; and for its ephemerality – since they lasted for the duration that the game lasts.

It is impressive and remarkable the diversity of toys manufactured by children, and the calling of all kinds of materials for manufacturing it. These materials are so diverse and often within their reach, such as using a used bottle of oil to make a cargo truck (Photo 4); or using the nearest banana tree leaves, for making a doll (Photo 5).

Playing games is the dominant dimension in the universe of playful activities recorded among children, followed by a number of ways of play and, on a smaller scale, the manipulation or manufacturing of toys. Children’s capacities and imagination to invent new games, create ways of playing with peers or manufacturing toys within that source of diversity, is not in accordance with the western normalization of the children’s playful lives or what is known. According
to the wisdom of the Sao Tome and Principe’s children, these games, play, and toys serve no purpose other than play, and this is how they are constituted as fundamental moments for the exercise of resilience and creativity in reciprocity with their significant peers.

**Conclusion**

Without denying the truly difficult lives of the African children, both in the island of Sao Tome and Principe, the intent of this article is to give voice to the African children, revealing the children’s cultures and listening to their languages. That is to say, to listen and reveal the African children as social actors – or as *those who do know* - well beyond the frequent vision of the Africans as merely needy people. In today’s diverse, and more often misunderstanding world, it is essential to search the voices of the African children, exercising the interpretation of the social conditions and practices of these children as social actors, and making the necessary adjustments of the methods and techniques for listening to them.

One of the conclusions is that children from Sao Tome and Principe are simultaneously handling the challenge of being a child in their own society and defying the standardized western childhood imposed by occidental adults and their hegemonic institutions. It seems that adults both in the north and south of the world don’t see the specificity of the children daily routines, their time, spaces

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**Picture 4.** “Cargo Truck”. Marlene Barra, February 16, 2011

**Picture 5.** “Making a Doll of Banana Leaves”. arlene Barra, January 2, 2012

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and intergenerational interactions, or in short: they don’t recognise the knowledge within the cultures of the African children.

Finally, listening to the voices marginalized by adult-centrism in childhood studies and made invisible by “overwhelming Eurocentrism” (Chakrabarty, 2000: 27) in social sciences, may help us to see other possibilities to research the African children’s daily life and ways of living, avoiding “new (re) inventions of Africa” (Mudimbe, 1994).

References:


Children’s Songs and Games 
in the Albanian Folklore: General Observation

Vlorë Fetaj Berisha, Ylberza Halili

Abstract: Folklore prepares children for life. Through different games and songs, children learn how to think and act. Children’s songs and games in our folklore portray the tradition and identity of Albanian children. Children’s folk materials represent a special kind of our folklore and are treated as children’s folk poetry. Characteristic of these creations is that they are created by adults for children and by children themselves, thus growing complacency in children. Moreover, the songs and games are used for entertaining activities, hence impacting their self-esteem, creating the feeling that they are useful for the community where they live. Another characteristic is that they are synchronized with musical art and play. These creations, besides the entertaining character, are also diverse in the thematic aspect, because they deal with relations of the child with the phenomena of nature, with the plant and animal world, and also reflect their relationship with the reality of life. In this kind of folklore, different stages of development of Albanian society have been preserved. In them we find the ancient pagan worldview. These songs and games, even though they are a rich source of folkloric materials, and have been preserved and carried by many generations, today with the development of technology (smart phones, internet), their practice has become dim.

Concluding, the paper focuses generally on children’s songs and games of Albanian folklore: firstly, by presenting an analysis of written sources, secondly by analysing of the function and role of children’s songs and games in the development of children’s imagination, thirdly with the presentation of classification conducted by previous scholars and, concluding with the level of preservation by observing activities that aim the preservation of traditional children’s songs and games, tackling the reasons for their disappearance.

Keywords: Songs, Games, Childhood, Plant and animal world, Poetry, Rhyme

Biographical note: Dr. Vlorë Fetaj Berisha was born in Peja, Kosovo in 1971. Graduated from the Department of Literature and Albanian Language of the University of Prishtina, she has completed her PhD studies at the Centre for Albanological Studies in Tirana in 2016. For 10 years she has worked at the Kosova Museum, in the Ethnology Sector. Since October 2011 she is a scientific associate at the Department of Folklore, Institute of Albanology, Prishtina. Her research interests are the spiritual culture and oral tradition. She has published several papers and scientific articles and the monograph:
**Introduction**

Songs and games for children are rich and have a variety of themes, mainly of educational content that develops in the imaginary world. They talk about social relationships, and represent the imaginary world of children about everything that surrounds them. Through these songs there is shown sincerity but also their naive world, since they do not understand many things and their reflection comes naturally. In general, the main feature of songs for children in the Albanian folklore is that children are their creators, bearers and performers.

The theme of children’s songs is different, but certainly it belongs to the reality in which they live. So, in these songs, they usually sung about work and poverty through humour and irony. They speak of thievery and lies, mock greedy and selfish people. And then there are traces of the myth such as the magicians, mocking the elders. A feature in these type of songs and games in the period of communism in Albania, where the practice of religion was prohibited and was propagated against it by the state, affecting the creations of children as mocking of the religious clerics, the priest and the imam. The curiosity of children is very big, they harass everything new, unknown, whether by their surrounding or by natural phenomena such as snow, rain, moon, sun, night, day, darkness, etc. Also in the songs of the children there are present flora and fauna. Counting songs have an important place in Children’s Songs and Games, although in most cases they do not make sense but are rhymed. Regarding the stylistic figures, tropes, onomatopoeia is the most present in these creations, and then there are also present apostrophe, epithet, comparison, rhyme, etc. The language is simple, understandable; therefore...
the language is suitable for the ages of children from 4-10 years. These songs also teach children how to pronounce the words, which is useful for their speech development as toddlers.

We find in some sentences that their content is difficult to understand, but rhyme is always present, and rhyme is what children like the most. Counting songs contain more words that are not understandable and unfamiliar. Songs of children are sung individually and in groups, but in most cases they are recited. The most popular form of creation of the verses in children’s songs and games is dialogue. The length of the songs is mostly short, up to 15 verses. As for the number of syllables in the verse as it dominates almost in all Albanian folk creativity, they contain 6 and 8 syllables, despite the fact that there is a variety of verses in these songs; there are also verses with 4 syllables, and rarely with 3 syllables. The collection for this kind of oral creativity begins with the early collectors of Albanian folklore, despite the fact that children’s songs and games have been published from time to time in different magazines as well as publications.

As an important part of the Albanian folklore, the children’s songs and games are presented in four parts in this paper. In order to fully comprehend the level of research of the children’s songs and games a complete analysis of all publication regarding this matter was conducted and is presented in the first part of the paper.

In the second part of the paper the function and role of children’s songs and games in the development of children’s imagination is presented. The impact of these songs and games based on written sources is elaborated. Moreover, an observation from everyday life is conducted. Following, in the third part of this paper, scholars that have dealt with classification are presented. As we evaluated these classifications, only one example of classification conducted by Sadri Fetiu will be presented.

In the last part of the paper, the level of preservation of the children’s songs and games was measured, by observing activities that aim the preservation of traditional children’s songs and games and comparing them with the written sources, and also tackling the reasons for their disappearance.

**Children’s Songs and Games**

Children’s folklore has styles and themes that distinguish it from lore of other ages, despite the fact that many of the forms that children hear are inherited from adults. Children establish their cultural independence by employing techniques of parody, antithesis, and nonsense (Bronner, 1988: 30). Children’s folklore does not consist of short forms only, but it consists also of prose narratives (legends).

William Wells Newell, author of *Games and Songs of American Children* (1883), suggests that children are both conservative and creative; once they learn traditional texts, they will pass them along to others, adding some creative changes of their own (Newell, 1963: 23-28).

Folklore scholar Gary Alan Fine explains that “Newell’s paradox” – the combination of tradition with creative variation – makes sense in terms of text,
context, and performance. He notes that the performance components of children’s folklore lead children to be both imaginative and conservative. He continues that if we focus on themes, we discover that children are extremely conservative, but if we focus on specific images or language, then children, because of the imperfections of memory, may be innovative (Fine, 1980: 183).

Children songs and games begin a children’s social life with very entertaining activities such as bouncing, finger and toe counting, and tickling to the accompaniment of chants. All these rhymes performed in connection with gestures or other actions, are combined with a rhythmic verse.

Albanian folk creations of children with its many specific features, especially in the field of poetry, represent a special kind of poetry, which has long been treated as the folk poetry of children. Although this poetry is close and similar to other types of folk poetry, especially with poetic creations for children such as lullabies, songs of birth and walking, and so on, it is distinguished from these because it is created or interpreted by children. One of the most distinctive features of this poetry is the special element of synchronization of poetry with music, especially with the game that is an inseparable part of the folk poetry of children (Fetiu, 1983: 3).

The folk poetry of children, as part of the game and their various actions, besides the fun of play, in the thematic aspect is varied, because it treats numerous relations of the child with the phenomena of nature, such as with the plant and animal world (Fetiu, 1983a:4).

Also in the Albanian songs of children are important counting songs, although in most cases they do not make sense, the rhyme is always present. Regarding the stylistic figures, onomatopoeia (imitation sound) is the most present in these creations, and then there are apostrophes, epithets, comparisons and rhyme, making the verse.

Collection and Publishing of Songs and Games for Children

Children’s creations, and therefore children’s songs and games in Albanian folklore have awakened the curiosity as well as other literary genres to be collected and published. Their collection begins with early Albanian folklore collectors, and also with foreign scholars who have collected and published this kind of creativity. The first collection and publication was published in 1854 by the German Albanologist Johan Georg von Hahn (1811-1869), who in the work “Studime Shqiptare” (Albanian Studies) together with some other materials has published four children’s songs (Sako et al., 1961:79-80). While in 1855, C. H. T. Reinhold published five poems for children that he had collected among the Arvanites of Greece where he had served as a Greek Navy doctor (Sako et al., 1961: 104-105). Another foreign scholar who has collected and published songs for children is the known German Albanologist Gustav Mayer, who also gave explanations on what cases are being sung (Sako dhe Haxhihasani, 1961: 306). Albanian folklorists dedicated an importance to the collection of
children’s creations. An important contribution has also been given by Thimi Mitko, who in the work *Bleta shqiptare* (Albanian Bee), in the section, *Old Allegorical and Laughing Songs*, among the 35 units that are published, most are children’s songs (Sako dhe Haxhihasani, 1961a:36-49). Thimi Mitko even in the *Dorëshkrimi i Pragës* (Prague Handwriting) begins with songs for children (Sako dhe Haxhihasani, 1961b: 192-194). Spiro Dine in the folklore collection *Valët e detit* (Sea Waves), besides involving a large number of folk poetry for children, also makes the first classification in three groups: 1. **Fireplace Games.** 2. **Game-counting and actions of children** and 3. **Allegory.** The first two groups have 20 songs that are all genuine songs for children, while the third group, which has 85 units, are children’s songs and games (Sako, Haxhihasani dhe Fico, 1962: 153-181). In the work of At Vincenc Prenushi (2005: 151-160) *Kangë gegnishte* (Gheg Songs), in the chapter *Vjerrsha fmîsh e lojnash* (Children and Game Poetry) are included 35 children’s songs. Folk poetry for children has continued to be published later, and it has also been published in various newspapers and magazines, where there is no doubt it played a significant role in the magazine *Vatra e Rinisë* (Youth Hearth), which has been published for six years beginning in the year 1933. The interest for these creations has been increasing in continuity, being published continuously in children’s magazines and the press of the time, but also in various folklore collections of certain areas or of national character. Some of these are: *Këngë popullore shqiptare të Kosovë-Metohisë III* (Albanian Folk Songs of Kosovo-Metohija III) published in Pristina in 1953, prepared by Vojislav Dančetovič and Anton Çetta, in which are included four children’s songs. The collection *Këngë popullore lirike* (Folk lyric Songs), published in Tirana, in 1955, prepared by Gjergj Komnino, includes seven units of *Vargje fëmijësh* (Children Verses), as well as eight units titled: *Vargje lodrash dhe këngë zbavitëse* (Playground and Entertaining Songs), but only the first one can be considered as a text of a genuine game for children. Then, *Xingli-Mingli*, prepared by Halil Kajtazi, 1967 Pristina; *Nani-Nani*, prepared by Petro Janura and published in Skopje in 1971; *Këngë popullore lirike* (Lyrical Folk Songs) by Demush Shala, 1972 Prishtina; Idriz Ulaj, *Këngë popullore nga Gucia* (Folk Songs From Gucia), Prishtina, 1978; Shpresa Tuda, *O ju moj lule* (Oh you flowers), Ferizaj 1979; Abedin Zenku, *Këngë popullore të Kërçovës* (Folk Song of Kerçova), Skopje, 1982, *Këngë popullore të rrethit të Korçës* (Folk Songs of Korça Surrounding), prepared by Jorgo Panajoti, Tirana, 1982, and many other works published by authors and various areas, which no doubt have importance not only for children’s creations but also for Albanian folklore as a whole.

Among many other publications through the years, as a proof that the interest in the publishing collection as well as in the study of children’s creations has been steadily increasing, there is also the publication of children’s volume and games, which has a total of 709 units collected by external collaborators of the Institute of Albanology of Prishtina. This volume is prepared by Sadri Fetiu who has also made a study of all these materials.
The Function and Role of Children’s Songs and Games in the Development of Children’s Imagination

Songs for children are part of their game, which is followed by certain actions, it has a fun, utilitarian-teacher role. Because of the diverse themes it argues and proves the curiosity and the imaginary world of children to understand everything whether with developments in nature, the environment that surrounds them and they live, but also the family, human and social relations within their social community, and consequently the family and the tribe. These creations are distinguished by their unique originality to reflect life, the variety of objects that children value, and the reflection of situations and moments in childhood relationships that reflect their development in life. The game is one of the most important processes of a child’s life, which is achieved with different actions, such as singing, jumping, reciting, dancing, creating knocking sounds, then movements of limbs and mimics, all of these affecting the development of the imagination to make the best of the game that entertains them. Through the game, they develop their physical, mental, spiritual, imaginative abilities, they express love, to all with whom they have contact and communicate, whether it is their parents, family, or peers with whom they play, but through the game they express their emotions as well as joy, happiness, grief, etc. (Ahmeti, 1997; Feti, 2009: 189-227; Shala, 1972). As for the development of the imagination of children, the scholar Leontina Gega-Musa, (2004: 76) suggests that: “Through the personification of the animal world, the imagination of children develops and the interest in living phenomena rises and develops.” Children have curiosity about everything around them, so they constantly ask their parents about the things they do not understand, but now with the development of technology they start to use it early: initially, mobile phones that belong to their parents, then requests for personal phones, TVs, and of course at the moment they start to know how these devices work, they search the internet for everything they are curious about. The answers they receive from parents, TV, educational institution, and internet, make them more informed and their imagination more developed and thus they are able to create thoughts and worldviews not only about things but also about different actions that happen around them. Through the good environment, the good family relationships where mutual love is given and taken, they no doubt they will become more loving and respectful, contrasted with children who grow in closed places, where there are disagreements and an unhealthy atmosphere where they will be unapproachable and aggressive because the child only absorbs and, of course, then it all reflects on the environment where he/she lives. All of these affect the creation of their personality.

Thematic Classification

Children’s songs and games, as an important part of Albanian folklore, have awakened the curiosity of many scholars who have been involved in the collection of materials but also in their study, each of them classifying them in their own way, based on theoretical and scientific basis. Albanian folk poetry is quite extensive and contains a great variety of these creations, including children’s popular creations.
The importance of children’s songs, according to researcher Çabej (1975: 118-119), is based on the rhythm, which children know how to keep quite well. So, in addition to accompanying body movements and gestures, these songs have a rhythm and tact well associated, giving meaning to the songs and making it easier for children to understand.

It was the tradition of the Arbëreshë of Italy (Albanians that from the 15th century lived mainly in Southern Italy) that children’s songs were sung in the main squares in the countryside during the day, while at night during the months of October and November, fires were lit in the main square and children gathered around it, where they sang songs and told fairy-tales and riddles as well (Belushi, 1987: 185). According to this researcher, “in these games we have the ethnic, psychological and social life of the Arbëresh communities”. (Belushi: 186).

Some of the Albanian scholars of children’s folk poetry who have dealt classification include: Spiro Dine, who is the first researcher to classify it into three groups. (Early Collectors of Albanian Folklore 1635-1912, III, 1962: 153-181); Bedri Dedja (1971: 40-46), has divided children’s folk poetry into six types, three types of songs and three types of games. Petro Janura (1971) divides them into four groups. In addition, the compilation “Nina – mother and child songs and games”, classifies the songs into four groups (Shala et al., 1984).

Albanian folklore scholar Sadri Fetiu,(1983) based on his experience and previous classifications, lists all of the folk poetry of children, songs and games, in eleven groups: songs about nature phenomena, songs for plants, songs for insects, songs for birds, songs for animals, songs of girls, songs for children’s actions, witty songs, counting games, fire-place games and other games and songs. In the analysis of each of these songs, we will rely on the classification of this researcher.

**Songs about the phenomena of nature** are poetic creations of ancient origin. They contain the elements of the pagan worldview for the close connection of destiny and human life with phenomena of nature. This set of songs is a large number. Some songs are calls for the sun to rise and heat, for the new moon, the clouds, the fog, the fall of the rain, the fall of the snow, for the night to come, etc. These songs have mostly recitative character and are sung, either individually or in groups. Rhyme is the key element of these songs; stylistically dominate epithets, and rarely metaphors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nxej Diell</th>
<th>Heat Up Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nxej diell,</td>
<td>Heat up sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nxej diell,</td>
<td>Heat up sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se ta jepi një kazan miell!</td>
<td>Because I will give you a kettle of flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nxej hanë,</td>
<td>Heat up moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nxej hanë,</td>
<td>Heat up moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se t’kam nanë!</td>
<td>Because you are my mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nxej rreze,</td>
<td>Heat up ray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nxej rreze,</td>
<td>Heat up ray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se t’kam teze!</td>
<td>Because you’re my aunt (Fetiu, 1983a: 33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Songs for plants**, which can also be called planting songs, are fewer in number. These songs are sung for various actions that relate to work for plants and caring for them. Apart from the care of plants in these songs, there are many elements of popular humour that have to do with the appearance and the process of rapid growth of plants, like in this song:

**MJELLA NI PASULE**

I PLANTED A BEAN

Mjella ni pasule

I planted a bean

Loza shkoi n’hava

Tendril went to heaven.

U kap për loze,

I held on tendril,

Hypa n’hava

I climbed to heaven

Nejta do ditë,

I stayed some days,

Loza u tha!

Tendril was dried!

Për me zhdrypë

In order to fall

E Ishova shokën

I released the shoke

Veç ni fillë–

Just one string

S’um mrrini.

Did not arrive

E Ishova dyfish–

I released two strings

Mrrini!

Arrived! (Fetiu, 1983b: 57)

**Songs for insects** are songs whose objects are insects that awaken the curiosity of children. Children sing to insects that do not pose any risk and can play freely with them. Thus, children sing for lighting bugs, ladybug, butterflies, caterpillar, gadfly, etc. Ladybugs are an insect which in many areas of the songs of children has become a symbol of marriage. This small insect is caught by the children; they put them in their hands and sing prayerfully to fly, because according to popular belief, toward its flight will be the child’s brother’s bride. These songs are repeated several times until the insect flies:

**HAJT MOLLAKUQE**

PLEASE LADYBUG

Hajt mollakuqe,

Please ladybug,

Pika luse,

The dotted one,

M’kallxo mue,

Tell me,

Kah do t’zanuse?!

Where the bride is? (Fetiu,1983c: 65)

**Songs for birds** are many and have wide coverage throughout the territories in which the Albanians live. In the tradition of the people, some of the birds represent distinct symbols, which are associated with the ancient and mythical actions of the ancient folk beliefs. Thus, the cuckoo is based on this belief, which is also manifested in some types of popular ballads, is the metamorphosis of the unfortunate girl whose brothers died. In children’s songs it is a symbol of forewarning of the fate and of the length of human’s life.

**The nature of girls** is stated also in Albanian children songs as in other folklore traditions. These songs are mostly early songs, because they sing for free
life in the family. They are sung in play, at work, at different holidays, at home, as well as in the field and in other settings. The girls also sing various witty songs that express the rivalry between two or more girls who harass and cheer each other with alternative dialogues.

**Songs of derision** which, can be classified are fun rhymes, fun at least for those who chant them against the fat kids, skinny kids, weak kids, feign kids, children who have glasses and all the other unfortunate qualities to have in a child’s worlds are also present in our children’s songs and games. These songs are many, because play, thrill, laugh and mocking as forms of children’s entertainment are an inseparable part of children’s life. Many songs have been created about the various habits of children, as well as the relationships between them at work and in play, in everyday behaviour, which have certain moral social starting points or are caused by contradictions or contradictions of the case. In many songs the mockery objects are also adults.

**Counting songs** are those creations that are created together with various games, the basis of which is counting. Widespread is the counting of fingers or toes that are nonsense rhymes:

**ELËM BELËM**
Elël – Belël
Belbasiqi,
Shara-shara,
Grumutiqi.
Piç – piç
Krasniq,
Qita mere,
Qitâhiq;
Qitâshhine
Nërkaðliq! (Fetiu, 1983d: 269)

These songs are often called counting rhymes. Some rhymes accompany other games and reactions. Respecting these rhymes, we observe that they are meaningless.

Among the various games are also **games of chase**. Such is the game *Po shetisim nëpër pyje* (We are walking on the woods). That is a game very much liked by kids with wolf character in it. Such characters are very much experienced, which in addition to having fun, they also arouse fear in children:

Po shetisim nëpër pyje
Ndoshta ujk su'është atye
Ujk, ujk, çka po bën,
Du me tê hongër ty.

We’re hunting through the woods,
Maybe the wolf is not there
Wolf, Wolf, what are you doing
I want to eat you.
Conclusion

Albanian children’s songs and games are rich and have a variety of themes, they have educational content that expands the imaginary world, and they talk about social relationships, and represent the imaginary world of children about everything that surrounds them. Through these songs they show their sincerity and their naive world, because they don’t understand many things and their reflection comes naturally. The main feature of songs for children is that children are their creators, carriers and performers.

A little attention to the language invented by children might have been useful to certain philologists. They often create new languages, which are formed by changes in the mother speech, but sometimes have quite complicated laws of structure, and a considerable arbitrary element.

Nowadays a question arises if children’s folklore is alive and well, or has it declined in recent years? As technology advances have moved from television to videogames, e-mail, instant messaging, cellular telephones, and YouTube, the question arises whether increasing emphasis on technology is destroying young people’s oral and customary traditions.

Changing lifestyles as well as social and technological developments have also changed the way of life, as well as the development of folklore practices and traditions. The development of technology and the immense and often uncontrolled use by children has stolen the attention of traditional games in spite of the enjoyment of children. The advantages that children can have when playing traditional games are physical activity, imagination development, socialism, etc. Some of these games that are played by moving around and singing are: hide and seek, tag, rope pulling, rope jumping, dodge ball, sliding in snow, etc.

Globalization also plays a key role in the decline of the traditional songs and games, given the technological and economic developments which are now very present and can be influenced by other cultures. Cultural globalization brings new changes to the traditional as a result of other cultures and people, thus adapting to the local culture in a way that also the traditional is preserved. It should be noted here that at all times and in other stages of social development there have been influences from one culture to another but today this is enabled and accelerated by the development of technology. Globalization is present in all spheres and directions, be it in language, art, culture, clothing, business, in one word everywhere and for all.

But we think that it is very necessary and crucial for institutions that deal with the preservation, promotion of cultural heritage to organize activities with traditional games and songs in order for their preservation. The Museum of Kosovo has been organizing activities for several years now, to help the preservation of this type of intangible heritage. These games are organized under the care of grandparents who teach children how to play them. Grandparents come with their grandchildren and, in collaboration with the Museum staff, practice some of the popular traditional games that they played as children. One way that I believe could be successful and attractive to children, is to record these games by professional videographers and then upload them to YouTube to give children a chance to download and watch constantly, or even create animated films. Another way is that
these games are transformed into applications-games that can be played online. This could be an opportunity to awaken the desire and curiosity for them to play these games together.

Moreover, at state level preservation of this type of folklore can be done through inclusion of the children’s songs and games in school curricula, as school assignments during activities such as physical education or musical education. Also children’s songs circulating on the internet can be used to organize a racing game such as karaoke. Performing these songs and games for children in various cultural activities with emphasis on those for preservation of heritage, these recordings could also serve as documentation for preservation in the archives of cultural institutions. Another way could be to organize festivals with only traditional songs and games, given that the race is usually the best motive for learning.

Culture undoubtedly is represented through songs, dances, rites, and practices of various rituals, thus also the traditional children’s songs and games serve as a crucial part in the representation of Albanian culture and traditions. Moreover, these songs are of special importance because they show us the presence of this genre in our oral creativity, serving as a source of inspiration for many Albanian writers for future creations. It is very important that the advancement of technology to serve to the preservation of intangible heritage, although living sources are fading every day, leaving only literature as a source.

References:


184
Socialisation of Boys and Traditional Children’s Competitive Games: Case Study Tovariševno

Aleksandar Krel, Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja

Abstract: The present study aims to demonstrate and analyze the ways in which traditional competitive games for children served as an instrument of socialization of boys in a rural environment. Traditional children games constitute a spontaneous instrument of socialization. Their play systems are adjusted to bringing up children in rural environments. They were part of the traditional culture and were based on the experience of previous generations. The rules of the games were transferred orally from generation to generation and were adapted to the methods of raising children in rural community. The primary task of the study is to establish and demonstrate the most important aims of the socialization of boys in a rural environment by means of children’s competitive games in the first half of 20th century. The research was conducted in the village of Tovariševno in Vojvodina.

Keywords: Traditional competitive children’s games, Socialisation of boys, Rural environment, the village of Tovariševno, the first half of 20th century.

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Introduction*

The concept of socialization has been in use in social studies and humanities since the third and fourth decades of the 20th century. It is defined in different ways depending on the psychological, social or anthropological context and/or research in which it is used (Rot, 1989: 66-68).

Anthropologists believe that an individual adopts cultural patterns, generally accepted social values and behaviours typical of the specific social community through socialization. Their attention is therefore directed at the relation between an individual and the social structure/culture. The interconnection between the socialization of children and adolescents, social structure, cultural features, personality types, and children’s games in a social community were noted by the pioneers of American anthropology Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict during their field research. During her stay on Manus Island, Margaret Mead noted that the children spent all day playing games. She believed that their playing practice was deprived of imagination and that they were very poor. She attributes this to the insufficiently developed cultural contents in that social community (1968). Ruth Benedict conducted her research and concluded that the children who live in traditional social communities engage in joint work and play from an early age and are thus prepared to become members of the community while constantly keeping in touch with the adult world (1976).

Anthropological studies differentiate between early socialization and/or children’s upbringing and the way new social roles are acquired in adulthood, which is defined as culturation (Kluckhohn, 1939: 98-103). In both cases, be it a socialization of children or adults, an individual is considered to be “a product of culture” and at the same time “a carrier of culture” (Krech, Cruthfield and Ballachey, 1962: 355), with the focal point of this process being the relation between an individual and a social structure of the community where the individual lives.

The present paper reviews traditional competitive children’s games and their relationship with the socialization process of boys in a rural area at the beginning of the 20th century. The results we present are based on empirical research conducted between 1993 and 1997 in Tovariševevo with a chosen sample of interlocutors.

* This paper presents the results of the research by Aleksandar Krel on the project: “Multiethnicity, Multiculturalism, Migration – Contemporary Processes” (No. 177027) and research conducted by Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja on the project: “Interdisciplinary research on the cultural and linguistic heritage of Serbia and the creation of a multimedia internet portal – Glossary of Serbian Culture” (No. 47016). Both projects are fully funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

1 The term traditional children’s games in this paper refers to games recorded in Serbia in the early 20th century. Some authors link traditional children’s games to patriarchal culture (Trebišanin, 1991: 281).

2 The village of Tovariševe is located in the central part of south Bačka in Vojvodina. It is a flatland type of village with developed agriculture and animal husbandry.
through the combined techniques of interview, survey and observation. The research was focused on traditional competitive children’s games. The study of traditional children’s games in Tovariševó indicated that they can be divided into two basic groups: a) competitive games, and b) imitation and drama games. The competitive traditional children’s games, with or without props, are played almost exclusively by boys who compete to accomplish tasks of different natures. The final goal is to defeat the opponents, although the criteria to determine the victory can vary (Krel, 2005a).

The Study of Children’s Socialization and Traditional Children’s Games in Serbian Ethnology

The beginning of the study of the socialization of children in Serbia is related to the ethnographic and folkloristic work of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. Inspired by romanticism, he collected folk creations among Serbs who lived in Serbia and beyond its borders in the 19th century. Village priests and schoolteachers followed suit and gathered local songs, stories, legends, fairy tales, customs and beliefs, descriptions of children’s games, and the like. In line with the ideas of romanticism, the vast body of material they collected should have served to prove the value of Serbian traditional culture in rural areas (Krel, 2005b: 274). Unfortunately, the largest part of that material has not been subject to modern ethnological and anthropological analysis. An ethnological interpretation of the empirical data is not available in most cases. In the rare situations where it does exist, it remains on a connotative level, with a denotative analysis completely lacking (Kovačević, 1988: 53-54).

The first theoretically and methodologically grounded approach to studying traditional children’s games in Serbia was conducted by renowned Serbian ethnologist Tihomir Đorđević at the beginning of the 20th century. He attempted then to define and classify them, but he did not carry out a detailed analysis. He studied traditional children’s games indirectly, as an integral part of the entire corpus of Serbian play and dance activities (1907). He analyzes traditional children’s games at a denotative level, using similar cultural phenomena to explain them. In this way he went a step further than his predecessors by elevating the research process to one level above the descriptive, i.e. to an ethnographic one. After this study, Serbian ethnology showed no interest in traditional children’s games. They were studied by pedagogues, psychologists, and ethnomusicologists. Children’s games

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3 In order to determine the situation in the first half of the 20th century interlocutors between the ages of 60 and 80 were chosen, and in order to determine the situation in the second half of the 20th century, interlocutors between the ages of 30 and 60 were chosen.

4 In terms of its international character and the significance of the results obtained in that period, special mention should be made of the project for collecting and revitalising traditional children’s games conducted in co-operation with OMEP (Organization Mondiale pour L’ Éducation Preescolaire) and started by Ivan Ivić and Aleksandar Marjanović in the 1980s (see Krel, 2005b: 275).
became a subject of ethnological and anthropological studies only at the end of the 20th century, when a certain number of scientific and expert papers was produced. Their authors focused on describing children’s games collected in the field, and missed the opportunity to at least partially provide answers to some of the issues related to the study of this topic in Serbian ethnology and anthropology, such as the lack of methods for their conceptual analyses and standardised criteria for their classification (see Marjanović, 2001: 529-538).

Traditional Children’s Competitive Games and the Socialization of Boys

Traditional children’s games can be defined as forms of children’s folklore which are intended for the youngest members of the community and based on social, economic and cultural patterns typical of traditional rural culture (Krel, 2005a). They are considered to be spontaneous forms of socialization for two reasons. Firstly, they do not belong to the techniques and methods of the educational and didactical corpus applied by state educational authorities. Secondly, their pedagogical content coincides with the unwritten laws of traditional society and is adjusted to raising children in rural areas. They incorporate the pedagogical experience of previous generations, and by participating in them, children form and develop different aspects of their personality. The games stimulate the joy for life and satisfy their need for sensory, motor and spiritual pleasures (Ivić, 1986: 19). The process of the socialization of children in traditional Serbian society was carried out through both explicit and implicit forms of social influence on a child’s personality (Trebješanin, 1991: 331-332). Within the explicit forms and/or instruments, there are two factors which have specific roles: the family and peers. The family, as a carrier of socially accepted norms of behaviour and cultural patterns, influence the children to identify with the personality and values of their parents (First-Dilić, 1974: 7-8). Peer influence on adopting social norms is very significant during late childhood and occurs in their joint work and play.

The competitive games were different from other children’s games in Tovarišević due to the fact that they were played exclusively by boys and/or young men. Players were expected to demonstrate the following features: physical strength, speed, resourcefulness, courage, honesty, eloquence, and motivation to win. A young man possessing those features and able to publicly demonstrate them gained respect, while those who did not possess them were met with ridicule. The present paper reviews 27 competitive children’s games. Their description model was made on the basis of the empirical data gathered and the existing literature. The majority of these games are not played nowadays and we therefore have to use model descriptions. We divided the games in two groups in order to fully define their formal characteristics and functions:

a) Competitive games are played without props, and there are five games in total. Some of these games are: running, jumping (spot jump, run-up jump and sack race jump), leapfrog.
b) Competitive games are played with props, and there are 20 games in total. Some of these games are: *knock down the emperor, skittles, ring toss, horseshoe toss, tug-of-war, stone put* (standing put, step put or run-up put), *wrestling* (belt, chest or back hold), *slingshot, ring spin, marbles, stilts walking*.

The empirical data on traditional children’s games recorded in the older ethnographic literature of the south Slavic peoples (Đorđević, 1907; Miodragović, 1914) testifies to the fact that almost identical games were to be found throughout this wide geographical area. They were played by different ethnic and religious communities whose economy was mainly based on agriculture and animal husbandry (Krel, 2005a).

Traditional competitive children’s games in Tovariševo have collective and a combative nature. Played by boys aged 8-13 who compete in different skills, the games may have two players, two groups of players, or one player who competes against a group. The competitive character of these games, which is their main feature (although elements of imitation and drama games are also sometimes present) is demonstrated in offensive and defensive actions, based on tactical suppositions aimed at winning the game. The type of task the players are given defines the function of the game, while the way in which the task is fulfilled defines the structure of the game.

The games emphasise the sensomotoric elements (running, jumping, etc.) that enable offensive and defensive (tactical) actions (Krel, 2005a). These types of games have predefined rules which each player must respect. Some have a certain verbal content, while others also have different props made of natural materials. The game can be repeated several times in a row; in other words, the game can last as long as the children remain interested in playing it. The rhythm in which winners and losers change places is very dynamic. It often happens that a winner in a previous round becomes a loser in the next. It is precisely this circumstance that stimulated the children’s interest in continuing the game and made its outcome uncertain and interesting. Winning the game was a source of satisfaction because the winner gained respect from other children. At the same time, these games helped the children learn how to deal with losing (Trebješanin, 1991: 335-336). Rewarding the winner and punishing the loser had a symbolic character and was aimed at increasing competitiveness among participants. Victory brought the child satisfaction for the time, energy, and mental and physical effort invested. Punishing the defeated players had both physical and ethical forms. Physically, the defeated were hit with a stick or a whip, thrown into water or mud, flicked, and so on. Ethically, the punishment was carried out in several different ways: giving the losers derogatory nicknames, forcing them to perform some disgraceful action (they had to take and/or pick up some dirt from the ground; imitate the sound an animal makes, etc.), or even banning them from participating in the next round of the competition. According to Trebješanin, the ethical punishments were meant to morally humiliate and disenfranchise the defeated players (1991: 335-336).

By playing these types of games, the boys adopted the values and norms of behaviour desirable for men in the patriarchal society in Serbia (see Ivanović, 2002: 375-408, Gavrilović, 2005: 197-212, Đorđević Crnobrnja, 2007: 205-206,
Their play systems and structures were meant to attain the manifested and latent goals during the socialisation process. The most important goals manifested in the competitive games in Tovariševo were:

1. **Physical development and movement**
2. **Social integration**
3. **Social stratification**
4. **Sex/gender stratification**
5. **Group differentiation**

1. It is generally accepted that the physical development of children and the satisfaction of their basic need to move represent one of the main goals of their socialization. It is reflected in satisfying their need to move and manifested in sensomotor actions such as jumping, running, and climbing. The rules of the game envisage that the arrangements made before the game must be observed and that they determine the behaviour of the players during the game. The rules are made in proportion to the complexity of the game. The difference between today’s sports disciplines (also based on motor skills) and traditional competitive children’s games lies in the way they are structured. The motor skills of those participating in sports disciplines are defined by standardized rules of engagement, the size of sports grounds and the props used. In contrast, the rules for the games considered in this paper are not standardized and can be altered by the consent of the players. The content of the games is adaptable in relation to the needs of the players. The games help the children, in this case boys, develop their speed, strength, balance, flexibility and accuracy. The majority of the games reviewed here are correlated with extensive animal husbandry, which was a dominant economic sector in Tovariševo. The games were instrumental in developing the motor skills needed to perform in a rural environment with intensive agricultural production.

2. **Social integration** was ensured by the fact that the boys playing the games accepted and observed their rules. In this way, the common value system of the group consisting of the players was strengthened and made more cohesive, as indicated by Trebješanin (1988). Social integration was more intense in games with complex rules (*knock the emperor, skittles, ring toss and horseshoe toss*). The players of these games were requested to observe rules of common behaviour and to simultaneously develop their relationships with both their own team members (co-players) and the members of the opposing team. The boys were in this way prepared to take part in the social life of their village community as their ability to have complex interpersonal relationships was fostered.

3. **Social stratification** is developed by accepting the existing social roles in the games. Social roles can either be an imitation of real-life social roles (players take on the role of an emperor, beggar, warrior, land-owner, day labourer, shepherd,

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5 We use the term play system to define elements that comprise a children’s game: the roles played by the participants, game rules, verbal and non-verbal ways of communication, props / accessories, toys. These concepts can be viewed separately, but an analysis of their mutual relationship reveals their true nature (Krel, 2004: 92).
farmer, etc.) or their symbolic representations. By playing games, boys become familiar with the social model and structure of their community. They accept the existing social roles and adjust to the prevailing social differentiation which promotes their personalisation process.

4. **Gender stratification** is based on gender role differentiation and is part of the children’s social integration. Gender labour division is one of the main instruments of the traditional rural community, as is clearly visible in the traditional games reviewed in this paper. The games enable the boys to become familiar with content related to their gender identity, accept them and prepare accordingly to perform the economic and social functions typical for men in the given social community. The youngest family members in the village community adopt a stereotype of male-female relationship. By playing these games, the boys acquire necessary knowledge and skills, and prepare for future real life assignments. The most popular games among Tovariševo boys were those that required the whole peer group to participate: *skittles, ring toss, horseshoe toss, slingshot, tug-of-war, stone put (standing put, step put or run-up put), and wrestling*. We recorded other games in Tovariševo which boys play separately from girls (Krel, 2005a). This further confirms the gender role division in children’s games recorded during the research period (see Krel, 2005a).

5. **Group differentiation** occurs in joint activities the children have with their peers, both in work and play. By actively hanging out together, children of a similar age form a peer group which is very important in their socialization in late childhood. Furthermore, the peer groups do not take an antagonistic stand in relation to parental authority and the company of adults (Trebješanini, 1988: 331-332). A greater number of boys take part in competitive games, and such collective participation helps them develop a variety of different feelings: sympathy, affection, consideration, solidarity, sacrifice, discipline, self-control and the ability to accept what the group wants. Concurrently, it promotes a spectrum of interpersonal relationships with other co-players. By participating in games, the boys learn how to understand other members of the community and to form their own behaviour when interacting with others (Fulcher, Scott, 2011: 113).

### Conclusion

The review of the form and content of traditional children’s games in Tovariševo proves that they were determined by the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the traditional rural society in which they took place. Their play systems reflect the social patterns of their daily life. Peer relationships were formed in these games, and simultaneously, by means of social, economic and cultural content adopted by boys on a symbolic level, a communication between them and other members of the community was formed. Hence, the games can be considered folkloristic means of communication between members of the village community.

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6 Folklore communication can be present in different segments of society and / or culture, and is defined as “a special type of expression common to all people and groups.
The characteristics of the traditional games reviewed in the present paper confirm their educational and didactical value. Their play systems and content were formed in accordance with the economic and cultural patterns of the traditional rural society in the research period. Thanks to these games, boys were able to accept the social and cultural values of their rural community at an early age.

The transformation of Yugoslav society that took place throughout the second half of the 20th century in its turn caused the transformation of traditional competitive children’s games in Tovariševò, and the modification of their content. The games, which failed to adapt to the changes brought about by the economic and social developments in socialism, gradually disappeared. They were replaced by games that match the models and cultural values of socialism.

Understanding the realtionship between traditional competitive children’s games and the social environment in which they unfolded can partially explain why they are not popular among children nowadays. More appealing modes of entertainement are not the only reason these games are no longer played, but it is a fact that they have lost their role in the socialisation of children. In this relation, from the point of view of anthropology, it would be interesting to look into the connection between present day children’s games and the socialisation process, both in rural and urban areas.

References:


that use folklore speech and folklore genres in certain situations as an important means of communication” (Antonijević, 2005: 249). This type of communication takes place within a group whose members have a common system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviours and customs (Žikić, 1996: 123- 124). The small groups that conduct the folklore form of communication can be also children’s peer groups (Jakovljević, 2009: 33).

Pedagogues (kindergarten and school teachers) nowadays try to teach children to play some of the traditional children’s games (on school trips, for example). According to the empirical data we have, the most common games are: tug of war, blind man’s buff, stone put, roast goat. Boys and girls take part in these games together.


Children’s Games in the 21st Century and Their Connection to Folklore Culture

Irina Kolarska

Abstract: In our times, technology and electronic devices are so highly developed, and social networks are popular. There are discussions in school boards, TV shows and social media about the mass use of electronic media among children, which leaves no time for the necessary interaction with peers. Children do not communicate enough and do not play out the traditional way and games that in the past have had a social function. That is why in this report I will focus on children’s games and their functions. I will compare the contemporary children’s games with traditional folklore games. Children not only reproduce different folklore forms but also are bearers of ideas and even transformers, so the paper will also focus on their interpretation of the concepts of “folklore” and “tradition”.

Key words: Children games, Folk rituals-fairy tales-games, Structure and formulas in children games, Age classification, development

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Introduction

The world of children is a part of the culture of every nation and of humanity as a whole. That is why, it is not surprising that it is a subject of research of scholars in different areas of study – philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, ethnology, etc. Part of that world is the children’s folklore. It is very dynamic and is connected with the natural striving to explore the world of nature, as well as the socialization of the child (Kolev, 1987: 217) in family, local community (neighbourhood, village etc.) and children’s society (group of neighbourhood children or kinder garden).

In folklore culture, the person goes through several basic stages of development – birth, bachelor/maiden, marriage, death. The onset of each of the phases provokes social and psychological tension, which is reduced by the corresponding passage rituals (according to A. Van Gennep, 1999). Children’s folklore games are one of the most interesting and challenging areas for children’s creativity. They are a part of folklore culture and have a strong connection with rituals – some of them are performed precisely during the ritual. This is the reason for the ritual features that affect the games. The reason why I think that games can be viewed as an essential part of children’s folklore is because they correspond to the most important features of folklore: anonymity of the author, direct communication, oral transmission among members of children’s groups, informal participation, public performance, collective character, creative recreation without strict repetition, variation, continuation of tradition.

In this paper, I hope to show that the processes of memorization and disappearance of children’s games run in parallel to processes of adaptation of older game forms and of the spread of new ones. In Sofia, I had the opportunity to watch the spontaneous children’s play in different places – in parks, playgrounds, school yards. Cases of play among children between the ages of 7-13 (14) were prevalent, which is the reason why I focus on this age group. The methodology of my research is based on observation, interviews and analysis of children’s games.

Especially, I shall concentrate on the formulae that structure the games of this age group and on the games’ functions in the development of children. I am also going to analyse the current state of children’s games, trying to show the place of traditional folklore games in contemporary urban society (Sofia); to consider and analyse some new games for contemporary children; to deduce rules and formulae on which the games are built. The play is important to children’s development and learning. It can involve physical, cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social aspects. It is the main way most children express their impulse to explore, experiment and understand. Analysing the examples of contemporary games, I will try to find out their functions.

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1 From Socrates to Plato and Aristotle.
2 Jan Amos Komenský, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, Friedrich-Fröbel, Maria Montessori.
3 Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, Henri Wallon, Lev Simeonovich Vygotski.
4 David Émile Durkheim.
Previous Researches

In Bulgaria, the interest in children’s folklore dates back to the time of the Nineteenth-century theoretical movements – the period when the foundations of analytical and comparative study of folklore and its main genres have been laid. It began in the 1860s with the purposeful collection of children folklore. In first collections of Stefan Verkovich (Verkovich, 1860), Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinovi (Miladinovi, 1860), Luben Karavelov (Karavelov, 1861) were published descriptions of children’s plays. After the Liberation of Bulgaria (in 1878), the work in this direction continued with the works of Marko Tsepenkov, Vasil Stoian, Raina Katsarova and other famous scholars. For the first time, the theoretical focus of research was specified by Iv. D. Shishmanov in his article from 1889 “The significance and the tasks of our ethnography” (Shishmanov, 1889: 62). Studies in children’s folklore began in the 1950s with the work of Rayna Katsarova, who examines children’s folk plays with song as part of dance folklore, dividing them according to the figuration of the movements, by the ritual and artistic function, by the interrelation between song and dance, by the size of the song they are played with – regular and irregular rhythms.

Later, in 1965 Tsvetana Romanska was interested in children’s folklore songs and plays as opportunity to study and to understand children’s soul and creativity (Romanska 1965) and offered a systematization of the genres of children’s folklore (Romanska and Veselinov, 1964). Since 1972, children’s folklore has been considered as a separate part of Bulgarian folklore (Dinekov, 1972: 280). In the 1980s, the theoretical research and analysis of children folklore were further developed and as a result many books and articles were published. Mihail Bukureshtliev paid special attention to the musical part of children’s folklore and devoted a great part of his life, his work and his scholarly work to children folklore groups (Bukureshtliev, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1991, 1992, 1999). In 1986, he distinguishes the different groups of children’s folklore, including song-play, according to the organizers and performers of children’s entertainment, by the musical structure of the songs, in relation to the creators of children’s song-play folklore (passed from the folklore of adults and created by children); depending on the movement – word – melody (Bukureshtliev, 1986: 30 – 32).

Children’s games are viewed by sociologists and ethnologists as recreating a minor model of the adult society (Bokova, 1989: 146). They adopt models that can be useful at a later stage of individual development in real life and various social situations. The reason for this is the fact that while playing games, children learn how to communicate, how to be leaders, how to negotiate. Each game is different and has its own advantages (Jakovlevic, 2009: 53).

The childhood as an age period, the participation of children in folklore rituals and games were research topics of Irena Bokova (Bokova, 1989a, 19896, 1990a, 1990b, 1991b). The Romantic Mythological concepts of Jacob and Wihelm Grimm, Evolutionary theory of Edward Burnett Tylor and Theory of Theodor Benfey about traveling polts are basic for folklore studies.

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5 The Romantic Mythological concepts of Jacob and Wihelm Grimm, Evolutionary theory of Edward Burnett Tylor and Theory of Theodor Benfey about traveling polts are basic for folklore studies.
1992, 1999), while the focus of St. Stanoev was on counting-out rhymes, pupil’s forms of fortune-tellings (Stanoev, 1994) and other forms of verbal folklore, spread among schoolchildren. The themes of the child’s place in the community, his/her socialization and education, were elaborated in Rayna Gavrilova’s work (Gavrilova, 1999). In the focus of Petya Bankova’s research are the socio-cultural dimensions of childhood, the stages of child development according to different theoretical standpoints (Bankova, 2011a). She is also interested in the perceptions of childhood – the romantic ideal and the reality (Bankova, 2011b). Another important aspect of Bankova’s work is the theme of the “lost childhood”, closely connected to the questions “where, when, and with whom” to play, and she comes to the pessimistic conclusion of the “unexperienced” childhood and of the death of children’s outdoor games (Bankova, 2012: 315-322). Comparative studies on the children’s folklore in the past and the contemporary situation give us reasons to think that this folklore has remained only a history. Probably, that is why a socio-cultural experiment on children’s games of the elderly generation in the village of Asparuhovo was conducted as it is evident from the work of Svetoslava Mancheva (Mancheva, 2012: 291-300).

As the review of research on children’s games shows, there are different theories and classifications for children’s plays. They can be summarized in the following ways: according to the age, they are kid’s games; teenage games (Theories of O. I. Kapitsa, 1928 and G. S. Vynogradov, 1930); depending on the active person, the plays are adults’ (in case of baby-caring), children’s, teenagers’ (L. S. Vygotsky, 1966); by the gender of performers, there are games for girls, for boys, or, for girls and boys.

According to the usual playground, the games are played outdoors, or inside (at home, at school, etc.). Play in specific environments has different cognitive, social, and motor developmental influence on children (Bartlett, 1999). An important condition is that the immediate environment should be safe for children plays. She also suggests that the hazardous places stimulate their creativity and imagination and they use whatever comes to their hand. I agree with it and would like to add that if parents always want to keep their children of danger, they will deprive them of the opportunity to gain their own experience and skills to deal with difficulties – mentally and physically. Usually outdoor games involve more movement, such as chasing, running, hiding, freezing, various ball games, frisbees, rollerblading or biking. This makes them important for the development of motor culture and child agility. Usually outdoor play places in Bulgaria are parks, playgrounds, playgrounds, school yards, streets (in smaller settlements where there are still “quiet” streets).

Indoor plays are played at home, in the kinder garden or in children party clubs. Children usually play with different toys or other objects: to find a hidden object, to build house of blocks. These plays teach them to be concentrated and

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6 Adult’s action to children creates special personal bond between them (or between older and infant), while also introduce play or song to the child. Speaking in rhyme and finger plays teaches babies of rhythm, imitation, fun.
are useful for develop of mind and the fine motor skills. Indoor children also play imitating plays, for example of a family, where some of them are “adults” and have to behave as adults and others are children, babies or grandparents. This way, children demonstrate what they have learned about the world, lifestyle, work habits and relationships of the adult.

The games can still be divided according to the repeated actions of participants, to the pronounced texts, and according to material objects (G. Piryov7, 1979; J. Piaget8, 1965) that are used in the game.

In Bulgarian folkloristics the stages of development, defined by the Russian school (LS Vygotsky, SL Rubinstein, DB Elkonin) have been accepted. In this paper, I shall use following categories of children age groups:

- new-born children/infants
- little children – children up to 3 years-old
- preschool age children visiting kindergartens – 4-6
- children in primary school – 7-12 years-old
- middle school age – 13-15
- upper school age – 16-18.

New-Born Children/Infants

Traditionally, the Bulgarian children’s folklore games for children are reads, rhymes, games of hands and fingers performed by adults for children – for their reassurance, cheerfulness, fun. These types of games have an effect on the infant’s perceptions and teach him rhythm, movement, play skills. They cultivate in him aesthetic sense and emotionality. In content terms, they usually refer to everyday life, but there is also a connection with folk tales. They seek a connection with a mythical being (Suncho, Sonjo), who is invited to take the child out into the wild, where to sleep him in “golden swings”. Stoykova (1985: 298-299). For example, this next song sang of my father:

Come, Suncho, out of the woods, Take Lily by the hand, And I swing in your golden swing, and swing it until you fall asleep! Nani, Lily, Nani, Suncho invites you again! (Kolarsky, 2006, private arc.)

The issues related to this period of the child’s development are widely considered by folklore, pedagogy and psychology (Kapitsa, 1928; Vinogradov, 1930; Vygotsky 1933; Melnikov, 1987; Piaget, 1965; Katsarova, 1955, 1969; Romanska, 1964; Bukureshtliev, 1972).

7 Gencho Piryov’s theory of object games (with environmental objects, without following certain rules and without involving them in any plot), creative games (based on objects, but differ from them in that toys and objects are include in some plot, and the child enters a certain role, story-role-playing games) and rules games (they are built according to previously determined content and according to known established rules, without which one cannot participate in them).

8 Constructive Stage of play: using objects—blocks, Legos, Tinkertoys, or different materials (sand, modelling clay, paint, blocks)—in an organized, goal-oriented way to make something.
Using observations, personal experiences and conversations with parents, I can say that in contemporary times there are still families that use lullabies, but they are influenced by different cultural involvements. Example of it is singing Bramse’s Lullaby with Bulgarian lyrics.

**Little Children – Children up to 3 Years-Old**

In the second age group of children, the adult parent/granny/grandpa was making fun and was educating the kids. In this way, there was a direct communication and transmission of children’s folklore from the older generation to the young (Stoykova, 1984; Dinchev, 1977, 2009). In these two age groups, the number of children might be reduced to a minimum of one child, while, on the opposite, the number of adults might consist of all members of the family who had enough free time and thus, who were able to devote their attention to the child – either together or, separately. The games played on these occasions are of the type: *Drus, drus konche* (Race, horse, race!) (Picture 1), *Piu, piu, vrankya* (Caw, caw, crow!), *Balonat se naduva* (The balloon inflates!), *Ringi, ringi, rae* (Turn, turn the circle) (Picture 2).

**Pictures 1.** On her crossed legs, mother plays with her baby *Drus, drus, konche* (Race, horse, race!). Irina Kolarska, April 20, 2019

**Picture 2.** Number of adult members of the family, playing *Ringi, ringi, rae* (Turn, turn the circle) with 14-months-old baby. Ivan Kolarski, family album, 2003

**Children Aged 4-6 – Visiting Kindergartens**

Along with the entertainment and the education of the child, playing of such games was also aimed at children’s socialization in family milieu.

In the third age group is a period when the range of social communication significantly expanded (Stoykova, 1984). The children already start to gather in
larger groups to play games. Earlier, this happened outdoors – they played in the streets or at the village square; today, children meet in the kindergartens, in the parks and at playgrounds. In the kindergartens, children are taught different games by a teacher, or, there is again adult participation. Children are taken to parks and playgrounds by a parent and can communicate with peers without the intervention but under the supervision of an adult. In that way, they learn to communicate with each other and to reproduce and interpret new things they have learned.

**Children 7-12 Years-Old – In Primary School**

With the introduction of secular schools in Bulgaria⁹, some of children’s folk games became a part of the school educational process. On the one hand, thus the games could be preserved, transmitted and disseminated, but on the other hand, their spontaneity, creativity and the natural direct transmission among the members of the children’s groups, had been lost. Ivan Shishmanov drew attention to this process in his paper from 1889, which was also mentioned (Shishmanov, 1989: 62). He believed that the introduction of Bulgarian children’s games in the school education was an important tool for the child’s physical, mental and social development, and a means for the preservation and popularization of folk games. Indeed, many of these games had been included in the curricula, and thus they had been preserved for the next generations. Unfortunately, we find that children often perceive games in kindergartens and in some cases at primary school – in the first and the second grade, as an obligatory part of their education. Thus, they refused to recognize those games as their own and stopped to play them in another environment. This was the fate of games as: *Puskam, puskam prasten/karpa* (I Drop, Drop A Ring/A Handkerchief), *(Picture 3)*, *Spukano garne* (Cracked Pot), *Kralyo-portalyo* (King of the Gates), *Beli peperudki* (White Butterflies), *Preskochi kobila* (Leapfrog). The perception of the traditional games as an “obligation” was the main reason for their forgetting and dropping. The fate of the children’s games was to remain only a part of the school programs. Of course, this does not mean that they will altogether disappear. On the contrary – just as the adult’s society is changing over the years, the children’s one undergoes reflex changes. There is a persistent need for a constant updating and renewal of both the games and of the research on children’s folklore, on childhood and on the place of the children in society.

The age group of 7-12 years-old seems to be more independent of adult participation/presence, because the children of this age are more self-contained and can meet their peers in parks, playgrounds or in the schoolyards. This determines the independent development of their qualities and skills, and the folklore forms

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⁹ On January 2, 1835 the first Bulgarian mutual school was opened in Gabrovo. In 1834, Neofit Rilski prepared and printed Bulgarian grammar and a teaching program. Translates textbooks and teaching aids. Four years later (until 1839) many elementary schools were opened in Koprivshtitsa, Veles, Karlovo, Sopot, Karlovo, Kotel, Sofia, Turnovo, Samokov and others.

are disseminated within the group. Sometimes the age boundaries are not strictly fixed and children of different age may join the group, with the older ones learning the games of the younger children.

**Basic Formulae in Children’s Games**

Daily communication with adults affects children and their perception of the world. The behaviour, work habits and creativity of parents and grandparents educate and educate adolescents. In their games, children often imitate and transform models of behaviour, hierarchical dependences, social and ritual roles. Just as in the folk rituals, the ritual personae accept new, different identities, rights and duties, as soon as the children’s game starts, new rules come into action, rules that are quite different from the quotidian ones. Similar to adult ritual groups, while playing children also chose a temporary leader/guide. This is most often done by means of counter-out rhymes. The first one indicated by the rhyme, becomes a leader *(the chasing, the searching, the throwing, the targeting)*, and this is the first formula on which the children’s play/game develops. Thus, framing the beginning by random choice, is stimulated by a verbal formula.

The children’s games can be also compared to the folk tales (Propp, 1986: 16-35). They have a **starting formulae** by means of counter-out rhymes – tales usually start with “once upon a time”. There are difficulties to pass through – the temporary leader must catch, find, touch etc. the other participants same as in tales the hero must win a mythical enemy. The end of the game is always marked by the guide’s **winning** when all the rest have been captured, frozen, caught or recognized as the tales’ final frame it is usually: “and they lived happily ever after”. This closes the **final frame of the game** but also unlocks the possibility to restart the game, same as cumulative tales.
Among the most common games to which children have an uninterrupted interest, are *huntsman, freeze, hide-and-seek, blind man’s buff / blind grandmother*. In the games of the same type, there is a **second starting verbal formula** after a guide has been chosen. It consists of **counting from 1 to 10** (or further), whereby the guide must allow the other participants to hide or distance enough to be caught, detected, recognized.

An interesting verbal formula in the children’s games is the dialogue, consisting of succeeding questions and answers. Usually, the participants ask the guide questions in turn, and, depending on his answer, they approach (or move away) from him. The content of the answers is alterable, as it determines the number of the steps at which the approach/moving away is taking place. Such are the games as *Your King’s Honour* and *Queen, Queen*.

In the first version of the game, the question is: “Your King’s Honour with the fat belly, full of bones and cream, what’s the time?” And the possible answers are: “Two giant steps forward/ one mouse step back/ three rabbit steps forward …” etc. This version was well-known during childhood of the 1980s generation. The second version is popular in the present-day games. The dialogue begins with the following questions: “Queen, queen, would you like some chocolate/ apples, broccoli, candy etc.?”. And the answers are the same as in the previous example. The chosen wording is not important in itself – much more important is the result: as fast as possible to approach to the *King/Queen* and take his/her place and start the game again.

**The password combination** is another verbal formula for starting a game, used in some *chasing* and *freezing* games. All children know the correct combination of words, and the guide aims to deceive and to confuse the other participants and thus to faster catch them. So, he pronounces a wrong wording. Such are the games like *Cobra with Cobra, Milk with Milk*, where the guide misleads the others by saying “Cobra with a donkey, a cobra with a fly, a cobra with a grass…”, etc. When he says “Cobra and Cobra”, participants run away from him fast. If the guide succeeds in catching someone, the guy must *freeze* (stop at his place, and in the same position) but the others may “thaw him out” by touching. The aim of the guide is to *freeze* everyone and then the last *frozen* becomes a guide.

**Functions of the Games**

Among the most important features of the games are: immediate communication, adaptation to a new environment, socialization in family and children’s societies, shaping of character specifics, development of different skills such as wits, agility, speed, knowledge, leadership, desire of self-expression, creativity.

Ball games are a good example of agility, as they help children improve their ability to throw and catch accurately, as well as quick response, as in some games the player who throws the ball must mislead others that way they lose. They contribute to the physical development of children and the culture of movement. In addition, ball games are popular in different cultural environments, making them an appropriate means of getting to know each other and communicating.
These types of games were very popular in the past, but here I shall present some examples that can be defined as **new and up-to-date versions**. They are played by children aged between 7 and 11-12 in a mixed group. The number of children, their exact age and gender are irrelevant. These are, for example, games such as “7-7” (Seven – seven), Skeleti (Skeletons), Bolnitsa (Hospital).

The game of 7-7 (Seven – seven) is a new version of well-known game from the 1980s as Kartof (Potato). (Picture 4) Children are arranged in a circle. The central point is the ball and its passing over among the participants in the play. The younger children aged 7-10, simply throw and catch the ball, while the play of the elder participants who have better developed skills; the game resembles volleyball. This is indicative of mastering new skills in the process of growth. The ball is not passed over in a specific order but according to the choice of the person holding the ball and while passing the ball, children count from one to seven. The child who receives the ball at “7” must hit the centre of the circle. Initially, the centre is not outlined, but imagined, thoughtful. If the 7th participant fails, he must occupy this imaginary place and thus become a *centre*. The game continues as the next child, on whom it falls “7”, must hit the child in the centre. If he is successful, the child can exit the centre and continue playing with others. If not – the second child enters the centre. The exit from the circle is according to the successful “hit” – i.e. only when “hit” the child in the centre can come out. Sometimes many kids are gathered in the centre and if the ball bounces off one child and hits another – then they both come out of the centre. The game continues until there is only one participant left.

![Picture 4. Children, playing the game of 7-7 (Seven – seven). Irina Kolarska, October 20, 2018](attachment:4.jpg)

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11 In the older game, played in 1980s, children had passed the ball to each other, as saying “potato” by letters. The child, who received the ball on the last letter, had to hit the centre.
The game allows for an equal start, as there is no conventional/chosen guide and it also helps children to develop their physical and mental qualities, and communication skills. The qualities children display during the game create relations of equality but also of leadership and leaders enjoy respect and recognition in the children’s group. Thus, here we observe processes of individual formation and development, resembling processes in the adult’s social system.

Similar are the games *Bolnitsa* (Hospital) and *Skeleti* (Skeletons), where targeting leads to a change in the status of the players in the game, while complete elimination is achieved.

In the play *Bolnitsa* (Hospital) the children arranged in a circle. No leader is selected, but throwing the ball must be in an unexpected for the others direction. Frequently, misleading moves are made in the direction of a player but the ball is passed over to another. The purpose is to hit someone who cannot catch the ball. The participant who has missed the pass is “registered” as sick. Re-tapping leads to a pill phase, followed by taking the Sick person to Ambulance, In intensive care, then he is labeled Deadly sick, Dead, A little spirit. The Dead has no right to catch the ball, while the Spirit acquires new possibilities and he starts to hamper the others. Children tell that some players aim faster to become Spirits and thus to interfere mockingly in the play, to distract the participants and to make fun and have fun themselves. The play continues until there is only one player left or when children get bored.

The game *Skeletons* starts with the ordinary formula for choosing a leader – with count-out rhymes. The guide is called the Skeleton. The game goes as a dialogue but is only the Skeleton who is speaking; the others respond by their actions while fulfilling his orders. The children stand in front of the Skeleton in a row. He throws the ball targeting the children in the row. If a participant fails to catch the ball, the Skeleton tells him what part of his body he has lost and in the next turn of the game he is not allowed to use this part. Losing down of body parts reduces children’s mobility and they need to be very creative. For example, a participant who has lost both his legs continues to play in a sitting or kneeling position but he still can catch the ball with his hands; and when both hands are lost, he should try catch the ball with other parts of his body – the chin, the legs, the waist, etc. Failures lead to further losses until the looser is turned out of the game. The game is performed by older children because it is considered more complex and requires more imagination and creativity to preserve participants activity in the game for a longer time.

Another interesting example of a resourcefulness-developing game is *Sadzhe*. The guide, called Sadzhe, stands in front of the players holding a ball. He starts passing the ball to children in the row one by one, saying: “You will be born in a …bucket”. If the addressee does not approve of these words, the kid returns the ball with a volleyball stroke. Then Sadzhe makes another suggestion and if the participant likes it, he catches the ball and throws it back to Sadzhe, remembering what has been said. Sadzhe continues with the next one. If, instead of a specific suggestion, the guide pronounces “Sadzhe”, the participant catches the ball and makes a choice of his own. If he fails to catch the ball, remains the guide’s last suggestion. When the line is over, the guide starts from the first child and starts
to make suggestions with another content, for example: “You will be a boy/girl”, “Your name will be…”, “You will live in a city/country”, “You will marry when you are...years old”, “You will have a house...”, “You’ll have [a number] kids”. The game is over when everyone has answered the questions. The ultimate aim for each of the participants is to remember all information about himself and to be able to repeat it from the beginning to the end.

The Sadzhe game is built on formulae for the guide selection, formulae of the dialogue and keyword formulae. It develops fantasy and gives children a chance to share their wishes and dreams; the game trains agility and physical skills, agility of mind and wisdom, as well as memory. In addition to its pronounced communicative function, it is also intended to entertain children and cause laughter and cheerfulness. At the same time, it reflects the sustainable image of the development of human life and social realization in the real world. In some cases, participants deliberately choose funny or impossible combinations that cause a lot of laughter among children at the end of the game.

When playing a game is over, the children leave their game roles and return to their real personalities. The relationships of subordination are terminated and no social changes result from them. On the contrary, in the next game children can play different roles, i.e. there is an equivalent interchangeability of the participants.

The age group of 13 to 18 years-old – as in the past, so in present days – decrease their participation in the games because the social expectations to the youths is increased, and there are more obligations and prescriptions to be followed. The physiological maturity leads to psychological and social changes in teenagers’ status. In the past, they started to participate in passing rituals (Van Gennep, 1999), after which, they were expected to gradually integrate into social activities of the adults – in keeping the household, in fieldwork, in their fathers’ workshops. Then also began their first participation in initiation rituals.

Conclusions

1) In present day, teenagers rarely play games at their meetings, or their games come close to adult entertainments. The expectations of the adults are most often focused on their better education, so that children could take a better social position. But to a large extent, the young people prefer to make their own choice of belonging to a specific group, of their interests, of the way they perceive the adult society, folklore, etc. The new age we live in offers opportunities to rethink Friedrich Froebel’s idea of using folk games in education and developing them to a new level through the methods of electronic educational games.

2) The games and their variety are changing over the years, partly or as a whole and in various interactions, but the formulae on which they are built and operated are sustained.

3) Game formulae ensure the structural stability in the game-play.

4) Gaming variations depend on the skills of the participants and their imagination, interpretative and communicative abilities.
5) The functionality of the games remains constant, regardless of societies and time-periods, and achieves: direct communication, adaptation to a new environment, socialization, development of physical and mental skills, such as agility, speed, wisdom, imagination, desire to find an expression, and artistry.

6) In conclusion, we can say that regardless of whether the games of the previous generations are treasured and re-interpreted, or not, the most important thing is that children’s games are still one of the most beloved children activities in the present. The continuous processes of creating new or re-thinking and reproducing old game patterns, give reason to believe that the children’s games are not threatened by extinction and complete replacement by electronic and virtual games. Recently, there has been a trend towards the use of electronic devices, the internet and social networks for the purposes of education and the development of children’s imagination and creative skills. Examples in this regard are educational and creative electronic games such as “Triviador” and “Word snack”.

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Parodies in Lithuanian Children’s Folklore of the 21st Century: The World Turned Upside Down

Laima Anglickiene

Abstract: Currently, a lot of traditional and new folklore genres are popular among children and teenagers. It is also noteworthy that children at different ages tend to give preferences to genres that are more relevant and interesting for them. In early childhood, it is more often parents and teachers who try to make young children acquainted with traditions and folklore. Later, teenagers decide on their own (from the large package of cultural heritage) what is actually for them. It is characteristic that teenagers like to destroy the world of various folkloristic genres and plots in order to create a new one. They know how to create parodies of well-known plots and tend to demonstrate their changed attitude to the plots which were important to them at an earlier stage of life.

The main goal of the chapter is to show how two opposite genres – fairy tales and horror stories – are parodied, and to discuss the changes in their form and content. Parodies of horror stories, just like their true versions, help children to overcome various fears. Parodies of fairy tales, in which the actions and values of heroes are turned upside down and are very different from those of the dwellers of an ideal world, still teach children and teenagers how to behave and evaluate various nowadays situations.

Keywords: Parodies, Horror stories, Fairy tales, Teenagers’ folklore

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Parodying folklore plots is not an exclusively contemporary phenomenon. Since ancient times, people have created parodies of famous literary works, even the Bible, sermons, and other “serious” texts. A lot of folk songs, tales, legends or proverbs also have their funny recreated versions. Thousands of versions of
these texts were created earlier, several centuries ago, by unknown countrymen for whom traditional folklore was part of their everyday life. Currently, a lot of writers create new, contemporary versions of well-known tales\textsuperscript{1}, poems, or songs. Scientists have already carried out research into this topic (e. g. Opie I. & P., 1959; Monteiro, 1964, et al.). Recently, parodying has become even more widespread, especially because of the Internet, which helps spread these new narratives wide and fast (see: Frank, 2011).

In Lithuania, the most significant research into various genres of children’s folklore has been carried out in the last decade. In 2013, the monograph “Contemporary Schoolchildren’s Folklore” was published (Anglickiène, et al). This wide research revealed that children’s folklore is very dynamic and it changes in every stage of the child’s development. A large amount of collected material helped to identify the main features of contemporary folklore. It was proved that older schoolchildren master the art of parody and demonstrate it when expressing the changed attitude towards folklore narratives that they valued at a younger age (Anglickiène et al., 2013: 342).

This chapter will present parodies that are spread (orally or sent via the Internet) among children. Two opposite genres, tales and horror stories, will help to reveal what means are used for the creation of more impressive characters as well as suggestive and funny images with an unexpected end. The main goals are to show how parodies are created and why these stories are important and interesting for young people. The same tendencies towards parodies’ creation are characteristic to teenagers of other countries, however, because of the limited extent of the chapter, we do not analyse the question of the internationality here. Therefore, the chapter is illustrated only with Lithuanian examples, though identical or similar versions can be found in many other countries and languages.

The Image of the Teenager Parodies’ Creator

Young creators and tellers of folklore parodies share several common features:

1) 12-18-year-old teenagers are creators and tellers/senders of parodies. This is due to several main reasons. First, if you want to understand a parody of any folklore plot, you need to know the original, on the basis of which a parodied song, story, fairy tale or proverb is created. Normally, in every culture in the early childhood, a child gets acquainted with a certain amount of folklore. Secondly, it is related to the psychological and social development of the child because only middle-aged and older school-age children can understand the parody while younger children do not understand figurative (indirect) meanings of the phrases or stories. Thirdly, at this age, children stop admiring the ideal world about which parents and teachers were telling them earlier. As the Italian children’s writer Gianni Rodari (2001: 60) argues:

\textsuperscript{1} See list of retold fairy tales by Ella Peterson and Diane Tuccillo (Tuccillo, 2001: 67).
In every child’s life, there comes a time when the Little Red Riding Hood cannot say anything to the child any more. At that moment, he can say goodbye to her like an old toy. It is then that the child does not mind the fairy tale to be converted to a parody, partly because the parody sanctions the leave but also because the new attitude revives interest in the fairy tale turning it over.

Fourthly, teenagers are interested in new ways of self-expression, and for that reason they like to remake the old and parody folk narratives which for them were important and looked serious in the younger age. Besides, teenagers get in conflict with the world of adults, criticize its order, and oppose its rules. Distorted pictures of folk plots help them to rebel against the regular order and reflect the spheres of life, which are very important in the stage of adolescence.

2) A lot of parodies are passed directly and exclusively from children to children. Parents usually do not tell parodies to their children even though they liked to tell them themselves in their childhood / adolescence. Adults look at such plots from a different perspective, their baggage of knowledge and standing estimations tend to block their mind and imagination. In Lithuania, as well as in other countries, the idea to forbid telling, reading, and publishing “scary” tales for young children is raised from time to time. Some adults are afraid to tell even traditional tales such like “Little Red Riding Hood” or “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids”. It is thought that they are cruel and can damage the mind of a young child. The cruel, obscene and distorted world of parodies causes not less fear to adults, that is why they do not share them with their children.

3) Parodies are usually performed in an informal environment when adults do not hear and see children. Researchers’ observations indicate that children share them among themselves when they feel safe, in places related to the school environment: on the bus, playgrounds, canteens (Bronner, 1988: 96), or where children have more free time for informal communication (in camps, hospitals, children’s homes) (Grechina and Osorina, 1981: 97). Today, the most popular space where such narratives spread is the Internet, where users can remain anonymous.

4) Obscene speech, a lot of vulgar, offensive phrases, and swear words are common to parodies. The Internet gives even more possibilities to reveal teenagers’ free and unrestricted imagination. For this reason, the major number of very rude versions of parodies are found namely on the Internet.

Main Features of Horror Stories’ and Tales’ Parodies

Currently, a lot of traditional and new folklore genres are popular among children and teenagers: fairy tales, counting-out rhymes, funny or horror verses, snappy songs, teasing rhymes, horror stories, contemporary legends, love stories, short sayings, anecdotes, riddles, magic spells, etc. All the genres listed here have their “serious” and witty versions – parodies. Some of these folk narratives are performed only orally, the other part is transmitted in the virtual environment, i.e. children send them to each other by electronic means, through social networks. On the Internet, in addition, they are visualized by the means of pictures, drawings, photos or videos.
The chapter focuses on two specific genres, namely, horror stories and fairy tales, and the traits which are characteristic to their parodies (see table No. 1). These genres are controversial in their content. Horror stories are short, frightening stories about death, they are always very cruel. In fairy tales, on the contrary, depict the beautiful ideal world where good defeat evil, and it is shown how to behave correctly and morally. Thus, parodies of these genres are reversed; the world of horror stories is mitigated, “decontaminated”, and the world of tales is vulgarized, positive heroes are substituted by evil, cruel or disobedient ones.

1. Main features of “true” versions and parodies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horror stories</th>
<th>Fairy tales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example. In the dark dark wood there was a dark dark house. In the dark dark house there was a dark dark room. In the dark dark room there was a dark dark coffin. The coffin opened and ghost / the dead appeared. Booo! (VMU 1500/56)</td>
<td>Example. Cinderella is mistreated by her stepmother and step-sisters but, because of her kindness and with the help of her godmother, she becomes a princess. Step-mother and step-sisters are punished.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- short stories about death, very cruel
- the world is mitigated, “decontaminated”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parodies of horror stories</th>
<th>Parodies of tales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example. In the dark dark wood there was a dark dark house. In the dark dark house there was a dark dark room. In the dark dark room there was a dark dark coffin. In the dark dark coffin there was a pink piglet (VMU 1672/68) / happy cockroach (VMU 1893/20) / The coffin opened and said “Is it Las Vegas?” (VMU 1893/33)</td>
<td>Example. The Little Red Riding Hood walks in the forest. Suddenly a wolf jumps out of the bushes and asks if the girl is not afraid to walk in the dark forest. The Little Red Riding Hood answers “I know the way, and I like sex”. (VMU 1259/116)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 Examples which are quoted in this chapter are collected by Lithuanian researchers and students of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU), Kaunas, Lithuania. The texts are archived in the ethnological archive of the university. The first number of the reference indicates the file, the second shows the number of the plot.
First, let us compare horror stories and their parodies. When children tell parodies, they try to choose the same environment that would be chosen for proper horror stories, i.e. any dark place and tell them using similar intonations, in silent and frightened voice. The characters of parodies usually are the same as in their cruel versions (e.g. Black hand, coffin, the dead, vampire, piano, curtains, children’s toys, etc.), and similar situations are depicted. If the story’s plot requires, a frightening phrase is cried out at the end. In parodies, tension increases gradually, but the last sentence or a witty, unexpected phrase of the potential victim ends the horror story in a happy way:

Once a family lived – a father, a mother, a son, and a daughter. Once, the dad went to the cellar to take something and did not return. Then the mother and the son went out and did not return. Finally, the daughter decided to go. She was very afraid, but she decided to be brave and went to the cellar. And there she found that... all the family was eating jam! – VMU 1672/85 (in the proper version the daughter finds her family killed in a pool of blood)

In parodies, the comic is created with the help of popular films, cartoons, and anecdotes. For example, several parodies mention a clever child named Petriukas (little Peter), who is a very popular character of Lithuanian anecdotes. If such a well-known character is mentioned at the beginning of the narrative, the happy end of the horror story can be predicted at once:

Once Petriukas’ family bought a picture with a vampire. In the evening, dad draw near to the picture. The vampire from the picture said: “Give me blood! Give me blood!” Soon after these words were uttered, dad disappeared, and nobody could find him. The next evening mother came to the picture and the same happened again. In the same way, his mother and sister disappeared. One evening, after some time had passed, the orphan Petriukas came to the picture. The vampire said again: “Give me blood, give me blood!” Petriukas answered: “And what about milk? Don’t you want some?” (VMU 1500/2)

Another way to create a comic effect is a sudden and wilful reduction of tightness. Instead of the usual frightening shout “Give me your heart!”, any funny phrase or unexpected question is asked – for example, “Do you have sandwiches?” (VMU 1988/5); “Do you have a patch?” (VMU 1675/2); “Is it Las Vegas?” (VMU 1893/33); etc. This shift from a tragic perspective to a comical one is typical of both the genre of horror stories and the culture of folk comedy (Trykova, 1997: 56). Even though the horror story ends with an unexpected shout, the quote is ridiculous. When you tell it live, the effect is almost the same as that of the true horror story with the shout “Give me the heart!”; an unexpected shout is scary in both cases.

Stories told by teenagers sometimes can be distinguished by bitter irony, which is often reflected in the style of telling (when jargon and swear words are used).

Researchers have noticed that almost every type of “serious” or “true” horror story has its own parody variant. Why are these opposite versions (cruel stories and their mild versions) told and liked by children? Researchers have proved that horror stories play an important role in the psychological and social development of the 7-12-year-old child. They help children realize their fears and get rid of them. Collective telling of horror stories is meant to arouse fear, an emotion which
gives children a kind of satisfaction accompanied by emotional catharsis (Grechina and Osorina, 1981: 97). Parodies of horror stories have more goals. Children jeer the lack of courage with parodies where fears are mocked. Children mock the believers of such stories – elder children sneer at the younger ones, and boys scare girls (Virtanen, 1978: 74-76).

With regard to tales’ parodies, it can be said that most parodies are of well-known and popular tales such as “The Little Red Riding Hood”, “Cinderella”, “Sleeping Beauty”, “Snow White and Seven Dwarfs”, “Three little pigs”, etc., written by Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen, and the brothers Grimm are parodied. Fairy tales’ being made into parodies is an international phenomenon of contemporary folklore. The Internet is the most conducive medium for the spread of this genre. Thus, the way of the spread of parodied or recreated tales changed and, in the Internet age, this genre from oral turned into written.

Looking at parodies of fairy tales, a dual transformation of the traditional tale can be seen. On the one hand, the tale becomes a rehabilitated, marginalized genre, which does not exist only among young children but becomes relevant to a broader group of society. A new (or “updated”) folklore genre has the traits of the traditional tale (e. g., it depicts moral or immoral behaviour). On the other hand, the tale loses its aesthetics and magic (Anglickiene and Grigonyte, 2016: 223).

An important feature of parodies is their entertaining function, which is stronger and dominates over the didactic one. However, it is only at first sight that it may seem that these plots are created just for fun. Parodies, like proper fairy tales, continue to perform the didactic function that is easily noticed by a clever reader. According to philosopher Henry Bergson, “laughter corrects customs” and “pursues a utilitarian aim of general improvement” (2014: 25, 28). Through comic situations, hyperbolically portrayed heroes, models of bad behaviour or defects, we can see “sins” of the society as well as people’s negative traits, and in such way evil is openly shown, downgraded, and defeated (Anglickiene and Grigonyte, 2016: 223-224).

It is typical that parodies of fairy tales either change the form (they are shortened, see example in the table No. 1), or the way in which they are told. Sometimes their main ideas are transferred to other folklore genres (see examples of the anecdote and aphorism below).

Anecdote:
Grandmother teaches her granddaughter:
“You should always obey the elder. The Little Red Riding Hood didn’t obey and the wolf ate her…”
“But the wolf ate the grandmother, too,” answers the granddaughter. (VMU 2086/118)

Aphorism:
“How happily could the wolf live if he did not meet the Little Red Riding Hood in the forest.” (VMU 1734/167)

In the modelling of different scenes, total freedom predominates. We can see that the parody often deviates from the main storyline or ends in another parodied situation. Sometimes, the plot is not described consistently, and only one scene is
developed. Some tales have continuations about the life of the characters, such as the unhappy marital life of Cinderella and the Prince (VMU 2214/22), sometimes new characters are invented (the three little pigs have a fourth brother, whose name sounds like a swear word (VMU 1308/28)). A complete absurdity can be created by changing the situation and using rude words or jargon. In parodies, often the roles of the characters are switched and, in consequence, the weak and positive ones from traditional tales become strong and sometimes even very negative and bad.

Parodies reflect the contemporary world: “there is something for everyone in these old stories in new skins” (Tuccillo, 2001: 67). In these texts, we can find famous local (Lithuanian) and foreign people or showmen. In order to make situations seem contemporary and real-life, their creators try to depict the environment as accurate, normal, and common. That’s why, in parodies, we can note various realities from the contemporary life: the Skype video chat program; the online shop E-bay, popular TV shows, concrete alcoholic drinks, and famous companies, such as “Versace”, “D&G”, “LG”, “Mercedes”, “Maxima” (the most popular chain of supermarkets in Lithuania), etc.

The miracles and fantasy attributes that were important in traditional tales are replaced in modern tales by modern and common things: the girl has to wear iron Nike shoes instead of traditional iron ones (VMU 1835/85); Ali Baba has to enter the PIN code in order to open the door of the cave (instead the word “Sesame”); the golden fish gives the fisherman the newest model of Porsche, and his wife wants to become an astronaut, Bin Laden or the Sun (VMU 1730/108), etc.

Fairy-tales’ parodies depict different societal problems or relationships between different groups, often marginalized ones. Thus, sexual minorities, drug users, and criminals become the main characters: the wolf from “Little Red Riding Hood” is depicted as gay, Snow White is a prostitute, Cinderella uses drugs, etc.

Another striking feature of parodies is the extraordinary abundance of obscene scenes, sometimes with very detailed descriptions. As pornographic content becomes quite common in everyday life, especially in the virtual environment, it is not strange that it takes up an important place in fairy-tale parodies as well. A person sitting at the computer screen is convinced of his / her anonymity and is not limited by psychological brakes and, in consequence, uses this uncontrolled fantasy for the creation of various sexual images and views. Sometimes it is difficult to determine the authorship of obscene stories, and vulgar versions can be created by adults, however, teenagers like to share this creation and thus they often become active senders or distributors of such stories. This should not be of surprise, because maturing teenagers tend to vent the accumulated sexual energy with the creation of vulgar content, not only through fairy-tale parodies but also texts of other genres, including vulgar poems and anecdotes. All texts usually are overloaded with obscene vocabulary referring to the genitalia or the organs and physiological processes related to evacuating one’s bowels, and they picture intimate relations in especially open and vulgar manner. On the one hand, taking pleasure of vulgar folklore in teenage male groups has performed the function of social identification since ancient times. On the other hand, the growing amount of vulgar texts is becoming one of the most distinctive features of contemporary
children and youth (and not only male!) folklore, the establishment of which is related to the rejection of many old rules of decency, especially the ones related to sexual behaviour.

As an example, we could analyse the main ideas of the parodies of “The Little Red Riding Hood”. This tale has the largest amount of parodied versions in the collection of Vytautas Magnus University archive\(^3\). In many of them, the Little Red Riding Hood is portrayed as a young, beautiful, innocent, but often more or less offended girl, while the wolf impersonates a seducer that attracts the attention of the girl and may even be portrayed as a sexual maniac and a persecutor. The content of parodies is often strongly erotic, and there are a lot of open, obscene scenes. The fairy-tale’s “good / positive” and “bad / negative” heroes in parodies can be changed: the Little Red Riding Hood turns into a strong, sly, even violent woman, and the wolf becomes naive, weak, and easily deceived man.

Summarizing, we can see that both traditional tales and their parodies have many common features. Parodies preserve the didactic function; sometimes it is not direct, but some of them do have a quite direct moral part. They are very similar in form; tales and their parodies have the same beginning and the same ending formulas. The aspirations of characters remain identical as well; they want to be happy, find a partner in life, secure a good material situation, and so on. Although it sometimes seems that moral attitudes in these narratives differ, and the roles turn upside down, if we look at the parody as an independent narrative, we realize that its characters are still rewarded for good and punished for evil.

**Conclusion**

Young children and teenagers who come into conflict with the world of adults, criticizing its order and opposing its rules, do the same with traditional folklore, too. They like to destroy the world of various folklore genres and plots and create a new one. Creators of parodies try to attract the listener or reader by changing characters and storylines, and using witty, ironic or vulgar language. It is like a game with the plots and forms of different narratives, archetypal images, and stereotypes.

Parody is an effective means for creating carnival laughter. Sometimes it may seem that parodies are created only for mockery, but we should not think that they only distort or vulgarize traditional versions. Parodies, as part of traditional folklore, have their own goals and are important in childhood / adolescence. Just as their proper versions do, parodies of horror stories help children to overcome their fears – like those of darkness, closed rooms, strange people, monsters and death, or living alone. Tales’ parodies in which the actions and values of heroes are turned upside down and are very different from those of the dwellers of an ideal world

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\(^3\) It is widespread not only in Lithuania. Numerous authors have rewritten or adapted this tale in various countries and languages. In English version of Wikipedia, we can find the largest list of works in which this tale has been adapted into a wide variety of media: literature, drama, films, animation, comics, TV, video games, music and music videos, etc.
still teach children how to behave or not behave. Parodies help to illustrate today’s problems and shortages by, for example, mocking at our adherence to material values, the Internet, fake friends or bad habits. In this way, the “non-ideal” world that these narratives portray still forces critical teenagers think about the norms and values of the society indirectly, and sometimes make fun of themselves.

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VMU – Ethnological archive at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania).
The Tradition of Riddling Questions in Contemporary Lithuanian Children’s Folklore

Jurgita Macijauskaitė-Bonda

Abstract: Riddles and riddling questions play an important role in children’s life and education. However, Lithuanian researchers have dedicated only very little attention to them as children’s folklore. Thus, the aim of this paper is to present and discuss riddling questions in the context of children’s culture, i.e. as a genre of contemporary children’s folklore. The methodology of the research consists of analytical descriptive and comparative analysis. The following are the main research questions that the present study aims to investigate: By who, when, and how are riddling questions performed nowadays? What are the main features of children’s riddling questions’ repertoire? What are the tendencies in the development of riddling questions’ tradition? The present research has shown that, on the one hand, parents and grandparents give riddles to children for entertainment and educational purposes, traditional variants are published in schoolbooks and other children’s books. On the other hand, riddling questions are performed exclusively in children’s groups for amusement, without the participation of adults or are even given to adults by children. Children’s riddling skills improve with age; the first young children’s riddling questions tend to be quite simple and primitive, whereas older children share more sophisticated texts, and new (sometimes, translated) riddling questions found on the Internet.

Keywords: Contemporary children’s folklore, Riddling questions, Riddling tradition

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Introduction

Riddles and riddling questions play an important role in children’s life and education, and, as a rule, are included into handbooks and collections of children’s folklore, as, for instance, *Children’s Folklore: A Handbook* by Elisabeth Tucker (2008), *American Children’s Folklore* by Simon J. Bronner (1988), *Children’s Lore* by Leela Virtanen (1978) or *Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* by Iona and Peter Opie (1959). In Lithuania, the tradition to publish riddles in different publications dedicated to children dates back to the 19th century and is related to the educational function of these texts (Kensminienė, 2018: 27; Sauka, 1998: 129-136), whereas in research publications and folklore collections, riddles and riddling questions are usually presented and published only as one of the minor folklore genres (see, for example, Grigas, 1968; Kensminienė, 2018). It is also noteworthy that Lithuanian researchers have dedicated very little attention to them as children’s folklore yet. Nonetheless, as Leonardas Sauka in his handbook of Lithuanian folklore states, “at the present time, riddles belong almost exclusively to children’s folklore” and still are “an important value of children’s poetry” (Sauka, 1998: 130,136).

In the Lithuanian scholarly research, riddling questions, compared to riddles, are less studied. They are often presented only as less poetic and less figurative “cousins” of proper classical riddles (Grigas, 1968: 38; Skabeikytė-Kazlauskienė, 2005: 244), even though the tradition of riddling questions is quite long and numerous examples of riddling questions were printed even in the first known collections of Lithuanian minor genres of folklore in the 17th – 18th centuries. Riddling questions are also found in other genres of folklore, for example, traditional wedding songs where a young girl is asked: “What is without blood, what flies without wings, what grows without the blossom?” These songs recall ancient wedding traditions and were sung at the betrothal, i.e. when the young man and the girl would agree to marry and would perform certain rituals, such as, exchange branches of rue, gifts, and drink together. Riddling questions here sound as an exam for the girl who demonstrates her cleverness by answering them (Kensminienė, 2005: 73-75).

The aim of this paper is to present and discuss riddling questions in the context of children’s culture, i.e. as a genre of contemporary children’s folklore. The methodology of the research consists of analytical descriptive and comparative analysis. The following are the main research questions that the present study aims to investigate: By who, when and how are riddling questions performed nowadays? What are the main features of children’s riddling questions’ repertoire? What are the tendencies in the development of riddling questions’ tradition?

The question of riddles and riddling questions belonging to both children’s and adult’s culture is quite complicated, as it is not possible to draw a clear line that would divide these short texts into two groups, i.e. one part known and shared by children and the other part that is adult’s folklore. Similar questions arise when, for example, anecdotes are studied. Lithuanian folklore researcher Gražina Skabeikytė-Kazlauskienė defines children’s anecdotes as a variety of the anecdote genre and claims that “contemporary repertoire of Lithuanian children’s anecdotes is dominated by the texts absorbed from the grownups’ folklore”, even though a separate group of anecdotes shared only among children can also be distinguished (2013: 132-133, 149).
This research is based on manuscript material from the Archive of Ethnology and Folklore at Vytautas Magnus University (VDU ER) and two major folklore collections: *Lietuvių tautosaka. 5 T: Smulkioji tautosaka; Žaidimai ir šokiai* by Kazys Grigas (ed.) (Lithuanian folklore. Vol. 5: Minor Folklore Genres; Games and Dances, 1968) and *Lietuvių mįslės* by Aelita Kensminienė (Lithuanian riddles. A Collection, 2018). The latter collections are based on the data from The Database of the Lithuanian Folklore Archive (LTR), collections of the Lithuanian Scientific Society (LMD), and the Lithuanian Folklore Archive (LTA). In this article, only the primary archival information on published and unpublished texts is provided, i.e. the archive, the file (indicated by the first number), and the number of the narrative in it (indicated by the second number). It also deserves to be mentioned that personal observations were of big help as well, as the author is the mother of two sons, aged 10 and 14 years; seeing how children perform folklore in natural environment allows the researcher to provide more accurate insights regarding texts as well as contexts in which they are performed.

**Contexts of Riddling**

Riddles have existed since ancient times to demonstrate one’s wisdom, for entertainment, or part of wedding rites. In the past, riddling was considered “a serious” and even potentially dangerous activity, controlled by the masters of riddles (the devil in Lithuanian folklore) (Macijauskaitė-Bonda, 2015: 108-122; Kensminienė, 2018: 24-34). As Lithuanian researcher Aelita Kensminienė, basing her ideas on the findings of the Finnish researcher Leea Virtanen, states, riddles were usually performed in the cold season (autumn and winter), inside the house, passing the evening time in groups working together. In the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century, riddles were riddled primarily for entertainment mostly by young people and by adults or elderly people to children. In the latter case, riddling also performed the educational function (Kensminienė, 2005: 81).

By who, when, and how are riddling questions performed nowadays? Parents and grandparents give riddles to children for entertainment and educational purposes, as the latter help to develop cognitive skills and make children think, look for associations in a playful way. For the same reason, traditional riddles and riddling questions are published in schoolbooks and other children’s books or journals as well as websites for children and parents (see, for example, Sauka: 1998; Tipu tapu). It is noteworthy that most often riddles are not distinguished from riddling questions and are presented together, even though some schoolbooks focus on the differences in their form and children are taught to distinguish between the riddle (Lith. *mįslė*) and the riddling question (Lith. *minklė*). It should also be mentioned that riddles make part of contemporary children’s literature and this genre is also liked by Lithuanian writers and poets.

However, riddling questions, for the simpler form of expression, compared to that of riddles and their playful character, are also performed exclusively in children’s groups, without the participation of adults or are even given to adults by children. As a kind of linguistic trick, they permit children to express their
creativity, demonstrate knowledge and wit, and therefore children of different age
groups like them and enjoy creating new variants, which is one of the conditions
for the tradition to continue and remain vivid and up-to-date. Verbal tricks and
equivocal word play, “is another way of tripping up one’s fellows” (Virtanen, 1978:
58) or “a playful dialogue between those who ask and those who answer” (Sauka,

Even though, currently, children learn most riddles from books (see, for
example, Virtanen, 1978: 57), the tradition of riddling questions (Lith. minklės)
seems to spread passing them from older children to younger ones, and among
peers. Folklorists of childhood identify the earliest age for riddle telling as seven,
however, it may be observed that even much younger children demonstrate
their interest in this genre (Tucker 2008: 51). The first learned or created young
children’s riddling questions tend to be quite simple and primitive but riddle telling
skills improve with age (Virtanen, 1978: 56). As Finnish researcher Leea Virtanen
notes: “The real experts in riddle presentation are seven to ten-year-old children
who will ask each other riddles at any and every time, both for amusement and to
catch out their friends,” (1978: 56). Here I could give an example from my own
family life. When my sons were six and ten-year-old, once, while travelling by car,
the elder one started giving riddling questions to the whole family and the younger
one also wanted to do the same. He tried to imitate his brother but he did not have
his repertoire yet, in consequence, he simply invented questions that had a similar
form to that of proper riddling questions and asked about the objects that he saw
inside or outside the car, as, for example, what is yellow and shiny or black and
makes noise, etc.?

Riddling Questions

As it was already mentioned, the most important criteria that defines
Lithuanian minklė (riddling question) is the question form. In Lithuanian folk-
lore classification, three major types of riddling questions are distinguished
(Kensminienė, Zaikauskienė, 2016):

1. riddling questions about objects (objektų minklės);
2. proper or true riddling questions (tikrosios minklės);
3. riddle-jokes (anekdotinės minklės).

1. Riddling questions about objects that belong to the first group are very
similar to the riddles about objects. The only difference is that in riddles figurative
language is more common, even though answers (nouns indicating real objects)
often are alike (Kensminienė, Zaikauskienė, 2016). The question form of minklė of
this type is considered to be ancient because, as it was already mentioned above,
they are also found in ancient wedding folk songs: Kas auga be šaknu? – Akmuo.
(What grows without roots? – A stone.).

Riddling questions about objects usually start with a question word “who” or
“what”, as, for example:
• Kas buvo vakar ir bus rytoj? – Diena. (VDU ER 2144 /31) (What was yesterday and will be tomorrow? – The day.)
• Ką pasaulis vienu metu veikia? – Sensta. (LTR 4952/96) (What does the whole world do at the same time? – Is becoming older.)
• Kas gali visomis kalbomis kalbėti? – Aidas. (LTR 271/281-77) (What can speak all languages? – Echo.)
• Kas po mirties raudonas? – Vėžys. (LMD I 860/139) (What is red after death? – A crayfish.)

The last riddling question about the red crayfish is one of the most popular riddling questions of this kind, and has more than 100 variants. It also deserves to be mentioned that a significant number of minklės (riddling questions) of the following group that are present in the archives of the Institute of Lithuanian literature and folklore were recorded in the past century and are about the objects from peasants lives, i.e. they clearly recall the life of Lithuanian farmers of the 19th – beginning of the 20th, for example: Kas trimis dantimis šieną valgo? – Šakė. (LTR 3157/1474) (What eats hay with three teeth? – A pitchfork), Kas laiko kubilą? – Lankas. (LMD I 895/16) (What keeps the barrel together? – A hoop), whereas newer variants are not numerous.

2. **Proper riddling questions** are tricky and mislead the person who is being given them, because they make her / him think about something complex and complicated even though answers usually are simple and unexpected. Proper riddling questions usually start in more various ways, the most common question words are why, when, how much, how many, etc., even though “who” and “what” are common as well (Kensminienė, Zaikauskienė, 2016). Riddling questions of the first and the second group can be distinguished by answers: the latter most often are not nouns and do not indicate concrete real objects, sometimes the answer is a longer phrase. For example:

• Ką turi drambliai ir neturi jokie kitie gyvūnai? – Drambliuks. (VDU ER 2144 /25) (What do elephants have and other animals don’t? – Baby elephants.)
• Kokį akmenų upėje daugiausia? – Šlapių. (LTR 3613/1544) (What stones are the most numerous in a river? – Wet ones.)
• Švarcnegeris turi ilgą, M. Ali – trumpą, Madona neturi iš viso, o Popiežius turi, bet nenaudoja. Kas? – Pavardė. (VDU ER 2700/1) (What is that Schwarzenegger has long, M. Ali – short, Madonna doesn’t have at all, and the Pope has but does not use? – The surname.)

In the newest published collection of Lithuanian riddles, the latter riddling question and other similar ones are grouped into a separate category entitled “Riddles, riddle questions and puzzles about sounds, letters, and words; charades” (Kensminienė, 2018: 367-369, 509). Currently, the variant of the riddling question that is given above is popular on the Internet but, as the data of the above-mentioned collection indicates, numerous similar texts have been registered since the second half of the 20th century. A closer look to their variants reveals that riddling questions
like these are being “updated” by substituting elements that were important in the past by new ones that reflect nowadays world.

At the present time, the Internet is not only the means of communication that helps folklore spread, it might also influence the repertoire. A perfect example of this phenomenon is the riddling question that my 14-year son once asked me: *Kaip vadinasi meksikietis, kuris prarado mašiną? – Karlosas* (What do you call a Mexican who lost his car? – Carlos). Nonsense, invented, foreign words or references to foreign languages are common to children’s folklore. In Lithuanian children’s folklore of the second half of the 20th century, because of the historical-political conditions, Russian words may be found (Anglickienė, et al. 2013: 65-69), whereas nowadays, when English as a foreign language predominates among the youth, English words are common. My son explained to me that he heard this funny question on YouTube, which also illustrates a tendency to translate folk texts that further spread in different languages (you may already find the Lithuanian version on the Internet!). However, this tendency is not new, as many Lithuanian riddles share international motifs (Kensminienė, 2018: 15).

3. **Riddle-jokes** are similar to proper riddling questions for the wit and the intention to joke. However, in this case, the answer from the second participant sometimes is not expected as it is given by the riddler herself/himself. The latter folk creation can make part both repertoire of *minklės* (riddling questions) as well as jokes (Kensminienė, Zaikauskienė, 2016). However, formally, if the answer is given just after the riddling question was asked, it could be considered a riddling question. It is also noteworthy that, among all riddling questions, riddle-jokes have the closest relationship with the contemporary children’s culture and seem to be more popular than other texts:

- *Ką gausime, sudėję ežį ir gyvatę? – Spygliuotą vielą.* (LTR 5417/377) (What happens we you put a snake and a hedgehog together? – A barbed wire.)
- *Kas yra smuiko raktas? – Sliekas, baigęs konservatoriją.* (LTR 5455/672) (What is a treble clef? – An earthworm that graduated from a conservatoire.)
- *Kas yra agurkas? – Nusiskutęs kaktusas.* (VDU ER 2700/2) (What is a cucumber? – A shaved cactus.)
- *Kodėl gandro kojos ilgos? – Kad varlės užpakalio neišspardytų.* (LTR 5040/1110) (Why are stork’s legs long? – Because thus frogs cannot kick his ass.)

Many contemporary riddle-jokes are based on the poetics of nonsense, i.e. both the question and the answer are absurd:

- *Skrido du krokodilai: vienas žalias, kitas į Afriką. Kiek girtam ežiui metų? – Kam man šaldytuvas, jeigu aš nerūkau.* (LTR 4934/429) (Two crocodiles were flying: one of them green, another to Africa. How old is the drunken hedgehog? – Why would I need a fridge if I don’t smoke.)

Even though riddle-jokes are especially liked by children, some texts known by them are clearly related to the adult culture, as, for example:
• *Kuo skiriasi restoranas nuo geometrijos? –* *Restorane pirma ieškom laipsnio, po to – kampo, o geometrijoje – atvirkščiai.* (LTR 5417/380) (What is the difference between a restaurant and geometry? – In restaurant, we first look degrees and then for a corner, and in geometry it is the other way around.)

This particular riddling question in two variants is from a folklore collection compiled in a children’s summer camp in the year 1935. Riddles and riddling questions with adult (erotic, death, etc.) references or connotations are usually kept away from children (see Virtanen, 1978), however, adult topics have always attracted children.

Two or three riddle sequences or joke cycles are also common. In Lithuania, most probably it is a feature of the contemporary tradition of riddling questions, as Lithuanian researchers have not made reference to them before:

• *Važiuoja per sieną ir barška, kas? – Musė su dviračiu važinėja.* (Drives on the wall and rattles, what is that? – A fly is riding a bike.)

• *Kaip sužinoti, ar musė yra šaldytuve, ar ne? – Pažiūrėti, ar prie šaldytuvo stovi dviratis.* (How to find out if a fly is in the fridge? – To see if there is a bike next to the bridge.) (VDU ER 2700/3)

The person who is asked questions usually does not relate the information provided with the first answer to the second one, and it makes the joke cycle even more effective, comic and witty than a single riddle-joke.

Leea Virtanen draws back the tradition of such riddling questions to the 1960s, stating that they came to Europe as a loan from the United States of America. The first most popular riddle jokes were on elephants, that is why she refers to them “elephant” jokes: “The commonest elephant jokes in Finland are those about the elephant getting down out of a tree <…>. New forms somewhere between jokes and riddles have risen with the extension of elephant jokes to include other creatures – mice, giraffes, rabbits and the like,” (1978: 54-55). For more examples of similar series of riddle-jokes see: Tucker, 2008: 50. In the Lithuanian tradition, they do not have any special name.

**Conclusions**

Riddles and riddling questions, even though part of both adults’ and children’s folklore, are an inseparable component of contemporary children’s culture. On the one hand, parents and grandparents give riddles to children for entertainment and educational purposes. For the same reason, traditional riddles and riddling questions are published in schoolbooks and other children’s books. On the other hand, riddling questions are also performed exclusively in children’s groups for amusement, without the participation of adults, or are even given to adults by children.

Children’s riddling skills improve with age. The first learned or created young children’s riddling questions tend to be quite simple and primitive, whereas older children share more sophisticated texts, look for new variants unknown to
others, and expand their repertoire by including texts found on the Internet or even translating riddling questions from foreign languages.

Three major types of riddling questions were presented: riddling questions about objects (objektų minklės), proper or true riddling questions (tikrosios minklės), and riddle-jokes (anekdotinės minklės). An analysis of riddling questions reveals that they tend to be “updated” by substituting elements that were important in the past by new ones reflecting nowadays world. Riddle-jokes seem to dominate over other groups of riddling questions, whereas two or three interrelated riddle sequences or joke cycles seem to be a new feature of the contemporary tradition of riddling questions in Lithuania.

References:


LMD – collections of the Lithuanian Scientific Society at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. The first number indicates the file, the second one shows the number of the narrative in it.

LTA – Lithuanian Folklore Archive at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. The first number indicates the file, the second one shows the number of the narrative in it.

LTR – The Database of the Lithuanian Folklore Archive at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. The first number indicates the file, the second one shows the number of the narrative in it.


VDU ER – Archive of Ethnology and Folklore at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania). The first number indicates the file, the second one shows the number of the narrative in it.
Children and Ethnological Museum in Prishtina, Kosovo

Valon Shkodra

Abstract: The topic that I have chosen is related to the fact that for ten years I have worked as a curator at the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina, Kosovo, and for those ten years I have worked with many children at the museum. While the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina does not have any special sector for children, it is nevertheless a very attractive location, and makes children very happy. For example, they are surprised with the buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries, and they were impressed by old, handmade artefacts made from metal, wood, and textiles. My research is based on the behaviours of the children at the museum, questions from them for the curator, presentations of exhibits for the children, and their learning experience.

Research studies have previously focused on how and what children are interested in learning during their museum visits, why they are visiting the museum, and whether these children’s parents have any nostalgia for their childhood. Most of the research on children in museums is based on surveys, interviews, observation, and free talking with them.

Keywords: Museum, Children, Education, Curator, Exhibition

Biographical note: Valon Shkodra is an ethnologist from Prishtina, Kosovo. During the period spanning 2006 – 2016, he was working as a curator at the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina. For several years at this institution he conducted research on artefacts at the museum, presentations of the exhibits, collections of materials, and has done fieldwork in Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia. He has been coordinator of several projects for cultural heritage implemented at the Ethnological Museum. During 2006 – 2016, he conducted various training programs in the field of ethnology and cultural anthropology in Finland, Greece, Albania, Kosovo and the USA. In the year 2015, he started a Ph.D at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. In 2017, he was offered a position at the Albanian Institute of Albanology in Prishtina as an Independent Scientific Researcher.

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The Ethnological Museum in Prishtina is part of the Museum of Kosovo and has been open to the public since 2006 (Ethnological Museum in Prishtina, 2012). The aim of the permanent exhibition at the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina is to present the traditional values of Kosovo’s folk art. With the opening of the museum, visitors will have opportunity to pick up more knowledge for the way of life of Kosovo from the past. The museum it is set within houses from the 18th and 19th century. The museum is part of Kosovo’s cultural heritage, and is a cultural monument protected by the state (Shkodra, 2014: 195).

In regard to the type of housing that is used to accommodate the Ethnological Museum, the houses can be classed in the “house with çardak” category. The “houses with çardak”, was one of the most prevalent in the cities of Kosovo during the 18th and 19th centuries (Emin and Njazi, 2006: 93).

These types of houses can be found right across the Balkans, and usually consists two floors. The houses in the Ethnological Museum have a surface area of approximately 300 m2. The houses that we presented here are, we can say, among the oldest houses in the city of Prishtina, and are probably the oldest houses in Kosovo. I argue that the architecture is the museum: it is precisely the architectural configuration that gives the museum meaning. (Giebelhausen, 2006: 54). (Picture 1)
The houses where the permanent exhibitions have been installed were previously residential homes, and in 1964 these houses were converted into a Museum of Nature, where the flora and fauna of Kosovo were presented (Nishefci, 2013: 2). This exhibition of flora and fauna was closed in 2001 with the idea of changing the location of the Museum of Nature and opening the Museum of Ethnology, a goal which was realized in 2006. The permanent exhibition was installed by researchers from different fields in Kosovo and Albania, including ethnologists, architects, historians, designers, students, etc. The exhibition presents a cycle of life that includes the following topics:

- Family and its organization;
- Rituals of birth and death;
- Folk art-handcrafts;
- The guest room (oda) its function;
- Marriage rituals;
- Kosovo’s folk costumes;
- Traditional instruments etc (Ethnological Museum, 2012).

**Ethnological Museum and Its Organization**

Each year, in countries throughout the world, millions upon millions of people visit museums. As a result of growing interest in their collections and their work, the number of museums of all kinds is increasing year by year (Timothy and Pain, 2006: 4).

The Ethnological Museum is visited by audiences of different ages, including children (Durksen and Volman, 2017: 2). Museum staff actively cooperate with schools of all cycles. With the opening of the exhibition in 2006, museum staff started the initiative to invite children to visit the museum in groups for their education in the field of museology; in addition, other cultural and creativity-based activities were organized by the staff of the museum. School groups represent the most frequent visitors to the museum (Greenhill, 2013: 104). The reason why the children visited Ethnological Museum during our research was the staff of curators, activities, and permanent exhibitions. If we make a comparison with other museums in Kosovo, children say that the environment in ethnological museums is different, with big yard, big doors, big walls, old wells, and beautiful old houses.

There is a general view that the most frequent and most practical form of museum collaboration with schools is trips to the museum for the purpose of seeing the exhibition (Gjoshaj, 2014: 116). The initiative of the Ethnological Museum staff to invite pupils from schools was the starting point; following this, pedagogues with their students began to visit the museum, even without being invited. The museum exhibition is constructed in such a way as to provide visitors with new knowledge of museology and cultural heritage. In addition to the exhibition, with its artefacts, the museum also offers a special presentation for children. The material was written by pedagogue and Kosovar poet Mr. Agim Deva. The purpose of this program is to teach the tradition to children in a way which allows them to understand it as
best they can. The pedagogue may not be a writer, but a writer who writes for a child must be a pedagogue (Gega Musa, 2011: 87). The exhibition is also put into fairy-tales for the children just to make them easy, because sometimes when the curators are doing presentations in the museum for adults and for children, the children don’t understand the concept of exhibitions. Presentations for the children start with:

Dear children, from the very beginning I welcome you to the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina. Here the hourly indicators will be very, very behind, because as you see between these precious exhibits, we will live together through a few moments of our ancient centuries. In this house where we are now, which was built in the 18th century, there was born a very beautiful child, called Ukë. Oh, how beautiful Uka was; an energetic little boy who grew fast, very soon... So, almost 200 years ago, Uka was rocked by his mother, in this cradle, singing the most beautiful lullaby that she knew ... They say when Uka walked he was much stronger than all of his peers. He had muscular body, curly black hair, and strong legs prepared to climb all our mountains... (Deva, 2007).

What makes the museum more attractive for children is the other projects that have been realized, such as the creation of traditional food. This initiative was taken to promote the museum and to increase the number of visitors. In the museum’s courtyard during the summer season, children and adults have the opportunity to try some different foods. The foods which are prepared include mainly “flija”, although there is also “mantia”, “pitja”, and “leqeniku – krelana e kollomjë”1 which are served with honey, cheese, salads and drinks. This practice of enjoying food at the museum was a novelty for museology in Kosovo. It was observed that children felt very satisfied, and now this activity is only carried out when visitors make a booking. All over the world museums are focusing their attention on their audiences by designing spaces, materials, and exhibitions to encourage visitors to make repeated visits (David et al., 2002). (Picture 2)

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1 The foods I mentioned are prepared from flour and are enriched with meat, yogurt and cream etc. Each food has its own preparation.
The museum has also now started to celebrate World Heritage Day, European Heritage Day, and the Museum Day. These holiday days have become traditional within the museum’s programs. The celebrations occur in the form of different cultural activities, and children are present continuously either as visitors or as part of the program. Learning is not just about the facts – it also includes experiences and emotions (Timothy and Pain, 2006: 46). These practices have started to be celebrated in other museums in Kosovo. (Picture 3)

Valon Shkodra, 2014

For some years the Ethnological Museum had the youngest staff in the region, perhaps even in Europe, with the average age standing at approximately 25 years old. It is worth mentioning that volunteer employees did not miss out during the implementation of the projects. The volunteer job is a novelty in the museums of Kosovo. Announcements for museum activities are made in daily newspapers, on the radio and on TV, in brochures, and on social network platforms such as Facebook. School and kindergarten teachers contact the museum staff via Facebook and telephone, but also directly in person. The number of visitors is noted in the museum notebook, and the evidence of these numbers is backed up on a regular basis. Digital technology today plays an extraordinary role for museums because it notifies visitors about their activities. Visitors are informed directly about working hours, how to find information about the museum, and the exchanging of materials such as photos, etc. The Ethnological Museum uses the social network Facebook to communicate with its audience; there are several members in this network who are notified about the activities being organized by employees. The social networks have made life easier for both employees because the museum is promoted, and their number of visitors has increased. Information plays an important role in
developing and expanding cooperation between museum institutions also between schools and opinion institutions (Gjoshaj, 2014: 126).

Besides the service for visitors, the museum has also manifested itself through the organization of various cultural activities, highlighting the many values of tradition in Kosovo. Other museum activities include: photographic exhibitions, figurative art at the museum, singers, and folklore ensembles at the museum. “Wiseman in the guests room (oda)” is an activity designed to inform the visitors about old Albanian customary law, demonstrate work on the loom, photographs in the museum from the perspective of the artists (the most beautiful photographs are selected for postcards), and crafts in the museum (demonstration of folk art such as the crafts of goldsmiths, plisi hat makers, wood carving, pottery, knitting works etc.) (Shkodra, 2014). (Picture 4)

At the museum, during the presentation for the children, curators use proverbs, riddles, or even some stories related to the artefacts in order to make the children’s visit more interesting. For example, during my presentation, when I worked as a curator in this museum, on certain occasions with the children I used riddles related to certain artefacts in the museum by asking the children to solve said riddles:

Meat and fur sleep on the wood,
Cray and laugh without rest?
Baby in the cradle (Gega-Musa, 2009: 137)
Around and around
it goes to one tree; it bonds.
Sash (Gega-Musa, 2009).

Or:

You look at it, it looks at you,
Seeing the exact you.
Mirror (Gega-Musa, 2009).

The biggest number of child visitors to the museum is seen when the new school year begins and at the end of the year. At these points, the children have a great deal of interest in the museum (Greenhill, 2007: 136). These two periods are more popular with groups, whereas during the summer holidays children...
come more with parents and families. In summer season museum is visited from diaspora. Parents bring their children to the museum – they like explain to their children different stories. For example, how they themselves spent childhood, what did they eat, what they were wearing, how they slept etc.

There are instances where teachers have prepared their children for museum visits and rules. There are also cases where children have learned at school about certain artefacts, and the pedagogue has brought the children to the museum to see these artefacts; in addition, after visiting the museum with the children, some of the pedagogues give some homework, asking the children to write about what they liked the most at the museum. The museum does not have any special room dedicated to working with the children but uses the spaces of the rooms they are in to discuss exhibits. So far, in the organization of museums; the educational needs of the children have not been taken into consideration – everything has been reserved for adults (Olofsson, 1979: 29). Even today, the situation is worrying, because not only have we not been paying attention to the children, we have also done nothing to ease their access to museums, especially in regards to children and adults with disabilities. From our viewpoint, Museums of Kosovo are missing projects and budgets for disabilities people.

Children at the museum like visiting, and are very impressed with the museum’s courtyard, big doors, high walls, traditional houses with many windows, and the exhibitions with original artefacts from an earlier period. The museums offer unique opportunities to well-learned from exhibition that we visit (Crowley and Jacobs, 2002: 3). According to the interpretations of pedagogues in schools and the parents of children visiting the museum, it is also practice for children, because there are many things that they read but do not know about in practice, and the museum is an ideal place to see such things closely. The materials and information provided have clear connections with the cultural message of the museum. (Dockett, et al., 2011: 17). (Picture 5)

![Picture 5](image.jpg)  
**Picture 5.** Activity in the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina. Valon Shkodra, 2016
Such activities have begun to be continually developed for the world of children. For example, we have the Kosovo Museum where the curators have organized different activities and programs for children. Visitors to museums should be aware that their learning experiences offer more than family entertainment and pleasure; indeed, these experiences can contribute to early childhood learning and cognitive, social and emotional development (Munley, 2012: 9). It is also of great interest to keep and catalogue the materials produced in the museum during the activities for the children, because it opens up opportunities for further analysis of the study, and can be used as part of the exhibition (Arnisa and Trena, 2013: 9). Of importance is the fact that all the activities carried out at the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina are organized at a very low cost, thus making them affordable for the institution. When we mention cost of the activities in the museum, prices has been from 500 – 5000 euro.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I have tried to present a research study regarding the visits of children at the Ethnological Museum in Prishtina. For this paper I applied an ethnographic method. I conducted half-open and half-structured qualitative interviews with children from different ages, parents, and teachers. The second ethnographic method that I applied was participant observation in the museum. The third ethnographic method that I applied was date analysis and interpretation. I was lucky enough to be part of organizing and coordinating projects for the realization of these activities. The presented activities have been realized for several years at the museum, the museum has an educational and creative program for children but also for adults. It would be useful further develop these activities in cooperation with other local and regional museums in order to create friendly bridges over which to share ideas and knowledge from the museums themselves, because our future depends on our children.

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234
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Section 3: RISK AND VULNERABILITY IN CHILDHOOD

The Vulnerable Child and Its Contested Kinship Identities

Elya Tsaneva

Abstract: The paper interweaves the relations between two major thematic topics for anthropology (both considered classical): identity and kinship, additionally complicated by the deriving point and focus of the “Vulnerable Child” (which is also a traditional subject, but just recently reaching a more abstract anthropological conceptualization). Children’s identity is discussed within the frame of social and cultural reality; and the text provides a typological comparison of some significant historical and cultural situations. Although very actively exploited, this text provides an innovative moment – the inclusion of the group of “children-in-need”, “children-at-risk” or simply – “vulnerable children”, in the process of creating different family- and kinship-identities when involved in care from various types (mainly by fosterage and adoption). Through children’s new social encounters and experiences in these institutions revealed are the dynamics (importance, decline, changes) of some kinds of identifications and identities based on different kinship affiliations, and their malleable role in building children’s personalities.

Keywords: Vulnerable child, Kinship, Identity, Adoption, Foster care, Alternative care.

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Conceptual and Terminological Issues
as Introductory Words

Turning into a more socially applied discipline, the recent Bulgarian ethnology approaches some fields considered sensible until now, mostly because of a delicate balance between the individual (with his anthropo-centric goals and naturally determined aims that couldn’t be a focus in a collectively-organized society which we had until two decades ago), and the family, the community, and the state (all of them with their own goals). As it is well-known, until probably some 25 years ago, speaking of different forms of “alternative child-care” was not possible, at least not openly in public (even within a scientific context). In recent years, a distinct “Anthropology of vulnerable children” has slowly emerged, closely related to new ideas in the discipline. Focusing the public’s attention and rhetoric on this subject, was one of the results of an “openness” of the ethnological/ethnographic/anthropological discourse in Bulgaria after the Changes in 1989.

In the full investigation of the theme, the process of creating different family-and kinship-identities regarding the so-called “vulnerable children” or children in care from various types should be studied. Directing the interest recently to them not only enriches the scholarly horizons of anthropology, but also contributes reaching a more abstract anthropological conceptualization. As a way to do this three different case studies are presented in this paper. Although they occurred in very different historic, economic and cultural environments, they are expected to highlight some definitions of identity and kinship in relation to “vulnerable child”. The aim of the paper is to situate this topic in the changing contemporary Bulgarian anthropology which in many aspects is looking for its conceptual and methodological grounds.

The category of a vulnerable child is defined by the social position of the subject: a minor, a young person under the age of 18 years and currently at high risk of lacking adequate care and protection. Accordingly, all children are vulnerable by nature compared to adults, but some are more critically vulnerable than others. Being vulnerable puts the child in defined situation of negative potentials which can be overcome only by building a substitute ties and identity. In the “World Bank OVC Toolkit” one can read about the perspective of the Vulnerable Children: “Child vulnerability is a downward spiral where each shock leads to a new level of vulnerability, and each new level opens up for a host of new risks. In other words, the probability of a child experiencing a negative outcome rises with each shock”, or an expected welfare loss above a socially accepted norm, which results from risky or uncertain events, and the lack of appropriate means to deal with them. Therefore, vulnerability is this characteristic of child’s position and status, that leaves it at risk of exposure to stressful (meaning harmful) situations. The degree and type of vulnerability however, varies in each context and specific time and place. Despite the variety of situations however, its main content includes: orphaned by the death of one or both parents; abandoned by parents; living in extreme poverty, often malnourished due to extreme poverty; living with a disability; affected by armed conflicts; abused by parents
or their carers; HIV-positive; and finally, those marginalized, stigmatized, or even discriminated against (World Bank, 2005). All vulnerable children have one common denominator: they have no reliable social safety networks at hand to depend upon in order to adequately manage the risk to which they are exposed permanently and everywhere in their lives. Someone else should provide this management, and usually to that person/persons the vulnerable children develop certain kinship affiliations which can affect their identities.

Through children’s new social encounters and experiences in the institutions of alternative care the dynamics (importance, decline, changes) of some kinds of identifications and identities will be visible, and controversies between the such types of kinship as: kinship by conception vs. kinship by up-bringing; kinship by breast-feeding vs. kinship by nurturing; kinship by ancestry vs. kinship by ritual, respectively their malleable role for building children’s personalities, will be highlighted. As for this introductory presentation I would choose to shed some light on the relations between those major thematic topics of anthropology approached in this subject: identity and kinship, additionally complicated by the deriving point and focus on the “Vulnerable Child”.

Child’s kinship identity is a significant ingredient of that child’s Identity which is itself an immutable, subjective, and evolving concept, defined by the process of identification from the earliest periods of life. Among the various identifications, the identity that matters mostly is the one that the individuals as members of the group of any kind, including kin-group, ascribe to. It is socially constructed as self-identified, and is perceived as such. In contrast to the other identity elements (e.g., ethnic, religious, professional, etc.), kinship identity is constructed under the direct influence and guidance of, not as much as societal interests and culture in interplay, but of early intuitive reactions, of first survival impulses, instinct impressions and their respective cultural expression. The process of this identity establishment draws much of its content and energy from the first built forms of solidarity and first emotional encounters, that create at their initial state the multifaceted images of belonging. Child identity is a complex socio-cultural phenomenon, which includes a variety of representations of a child about itself, about the people closely associated with it despite of their position of a “natural” or “ritual” connectedness with the child, about the world, about its place in this world. The child Identity is a dynamic construct that can change under the influence of the environment, education and family (Thomas and Holland, 2010). Structurally it consists of two major sets of subjective constructive systems that feed and provide arguments for identity creation, and can be seen as the following schema:
Belonging means acceptance as a member or part of a structure – obviously a simple word for huge complex concept with historical, spatial and temporal dimensions. A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter, for tender care and love. Feeling that you belong is needed in seeing value and perspective in life, in sharing joy and success, but most importantly in coping with intensely painful happenings and problems, and respective negative emotions. Built upon them is the sense of identity, evolving in life to be a constructive element of human consciousness.

Further are presented some briefly and schematically told stories about three historical types of children, exposed to vulnerability, need and therefore – risk, that have developed their characteristics and particularities within different even contrasting social environments: the first case is the famous “Stolen generation” in Australian aboriginal society; the second one is the Bulgarian contemporary picture of dealing with children-at-risk; and the third one is a current situation in Northern Europe, the so-called “Barnevernet-question”. The idea of presenting them within the context of the theme is, to produce a general contour of the problem, extrapolated from polarizing situations but subjected to similar reasons and goals. These case-studies show that, even if vulnerability is historically specific as a happening, its consequences for children’s identities are similar and create therefore a common typological research ground. As a whole, these case studies have limited author’s empirical contribution – except the Bulgarian examples; but they offer, in author’s opinion, an excellent ground for creating a theoretical discourse on this particular subject, and are exploited in this abstract way. In this logic, they are not intended to provide empirically precise field data, but rather to show three summarized cases writ large, that draw the possible frames of the problem discussed.

Presenting the Data Used

The many ethnographies that make up the topics of identity, kinship and children’s vulnerability suggest a great diversity in definitions of those terms according to their cultural background. They also highlight the heterogeneous nature of their mixture and the impact that issues as gender, age, birth order, and ethnicity have on children’s identity experiences. Attempting to approach this nature, I have chosen at first place, one of the chrestomathic examples for this: the tragic, full of passion and sorrows pages of Australian social and demographic history known as “Aboriginal stolen generation”, which is my Case-Study A. It explores what happens with the identity of children forcibly removed from their native environment (and respectively put in the category “vulnerable children”) in early childhood age. Even if this situation occurred far in the past – some two hundred years ago, and also far from Europe – in the less known continent “Down Under”, it presents general similarities to the key instruments of population change in Europe today which are mobility, migration, and refugees with thousands of children involved. As a result of the processes of mobility, migration, and integration, many communities and group members, including children, develop multiple affiliations and more complex group identities (Castles and Miller, 1993; Vertovec and Cohen,
Research on how personal kinship identity is constructed (mainly through its symbols) is especially meaningful for communities perceiving themselves and being perceived as “different/outsiders/newcomers”, and this is the case in both mentioned situations despite their mutual historical and geographical remoteness.

This case-situation is about a story that is evaluated as one of the darkest chapters in Australian history – the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families. Children as young as babies were stolen from their families to be placed in girls and boys homes, foster families or missions. At the age of 18 they were “released” into white society, left scarred for life by their experiences. Today these Aboriginal people are collectively known as the “Stolen Generations” because the process affected indeed several generations. Authorities targeted mainly Aboriginal children of mixed descent (who they derogatorily called “half-caste”) for removal. The stolen children were adopted, or raised in missions or by foster parents, and the literature is full of sorrowful description of their sometimes very unhappy lives. The situation of growing up in such circumstances resulted in a total cut off from their aboriginality as real background, identity and memory. The process of removal continued right up until the 1970s, with some homes for those children remaining open into the 1980s. Regarding the stories told, many children removed from their homes were never told that they were Aboriginal and often discovered this much later in their lives, if at all, almost always by sad even tragic circumstances. Since the 1990s, the Australian government began periodically apologizing for this, each government providing such apology seeking political advantage. Internet and the literature are full of stories about these events. I would like to point readers’ attention to only one famous photograph associated with the subject: a picture in the newspaper of that time showing a group of young aboriginal girls (“half caste”) displayed to be adopted by “white” families; the preferences of the families are quoted, and a cynical phrase beneath read: “I like the girl in the centre of the group (marked by the sign of X), but if taken by anyone else, any of the other would do, as long as they are strong” (Australian identity, 2012). So, to resume the situation: the children were forcibly accommodated in a foreign environment, and their cultural identifications were forced to balance between “foreignness and indigeneity” even if the multi-ethnic civil nations of that time in most cases willingly welcomed them (Read, 2006)

1 The years 1994-1999 which I have spent in Australia, incl. as a PhD student at the Dept. of Sociology and Social Anthropology of UNSW in Sydney, coincided with the first political pick in the process of “Australian reconciliation”. General and concrete talks on the relationships between the Aborigines and the British government were held, the subject and its details entered the scholarly circles. Among the mostly debated questions were those about the “stolen generation”; during the years mentioned came also the first official excuse of the government for this. I did not conduct any field research on this in particular, but took part in some seminars, and had many talks with parents from Aboriginal background whom I met at my child’s kindergarten and primary school, about what the recall and think. I also went through the respective section at the University Library with extended collection on it. As a result, I became aware of what happened in historical and cultural sense, experienced the direct consequences in our modern time, and the strongly “compressed” story above is my reflection about it.
This is a process profoundly affecting the children’s kinship identity: kinship is at the heart of the Indigenous society. A person’s position in the kinship system establishes his relationship to others and to the universe, prescribing individual responsibilities towards other people, the land and the whole environment. Traditional kinship structures remain important in many indigenous communities today, they are often remembered as focusing values and norms long ago lost but deeply cherished. Today there are over five hundreds indigenous groups across Australia. They cover wide geographical areas, and have distinct borders, also a very specific and distinct culture, language and social rules. Within the major groups (sometimes even called “nations” in the anthropological literature), there are clan groups, and within the clan groups there are family groups. Clan groups share a common language and kinship system, which is based on either patrilineal or matrilineal lines of descent. As it is well described, there are several levels of kinship affiliations among the traditional aboriginal society: the first level of kinship is *Moiety*. *Moiety* meaning in Latin is “half”. In *Moiety* systems accordingly, everything, including people and the environment, are split into two halves. Each half is a mirror of the other, and to understand the whole universe these two halves must come together. People from the same *Moiety* often acknowledge a special bond with an animal, bird or other creature, they are considered siblings. The second level of kinship is *Totem*. Each person has at least four *Totems* which represent the nation, clan and family group, as well as a personal *Totem*. *Totems* link a person to the universe – to land, air, water and geographical features. The third level of kinship is the *Skin Name*. Similar to a surname, skin Name indicates a person’s bloodline. It also conveys information about how generations are linked and how they should interact (Berndt and Berndt, 1996). Therefore, any change of kin, as it is expressed in many texts, changes the universe, the being, the self, the surrounding nature, the living place, the protectors, givers, care-takers, names, loyalties, endowments, attachments – everything the child feels “naturally” to be related to as its own “kin”.

**Case-study B.** Regarding the contemporary examples of vulnerability and its reflection on kinship identity of Bulgarian children, two descriptive terms stand out as common issues in these matters: 1. The category “children-in-need” (a situation frequently evolving to a category “children-at-risk”), and 2. “Family care” in contact and/or contrast to “institutional care”. Both related social institutions – *adoption* and *foster care* themselves, are indicated in the public sphere as “systems”, “services” and “programs”, providing “alternative care” for the children-in-need/children-at-risk. Both are well situated in Bulgarian traditional culture, which creates positive psychological pre-requisites and motivates the good starting position of both programs in our present day. In the same time, they reflect extremely vividly the socio-political nuances of the official view on those children, and follow very closely the international influences on the subject.

The common ground of both practices is well researched now and is obvious: adoption and fostering worldwide and in Bulgarian culture are any customary or optional procedures for taking as one’s own a child of other biological parents. In Bulgarian law, *adoption* usually refers to the legal transformation of a child’s familial status-quo, through which individuals permanently assume the major responsibilities of birth parents. The legal term in our country for the second practice
is foster care, although in other family codes terms as fostering and fosterage are used. Fostering also more often concerns the process of child rearing and not necessarily the legal definition of the child’s status quo or relationships; while the second one is used to describe substitute-parenting arrangements in premodern or non-Western cultures. Just recently, I have recorded two related stories connected to the subject:

– P. M. is a pensioner, former accountant in kinder-garden care and a foster mom from Black Sea region. She and her husband adopted their first foster child after caring for him for about a year. They were voluntary foster couple, which occurs very rare now in Bulgaria. The foster boy has been put in their care, because they were related to his parents who have neglected the child. The boy was just approaching school age. Being a “very difficult” boy, who refused to forget his native parents, his native house, and his beloved dog and vividly recalled the situation at home, he was rejected from adoption in Bulgaria several times, and his only choice was to enter the International Register for out-of-country adoption. Despite the risk, after caring for him for about a year, the foster parents-relatives successfully accomplished the adoption process. Just a few days ago before meeting with them, they have heard the words “mom” and “dad” from that boy’s mouth; when they asked, why just now, the boy replied, that it is because they are his birth parents’ blood, otherwise he would never recognize them as such (Basheva, 2017a). He obviously had a strong sense of kinship feeling, which needed to be fed up, stimulated and proven in order to keep the boy’s identity and self-esteem alive. To draw any conclusion, more research is needed on whether placing foster children with relatives, instead of unfamiliar caregivers, institutions, or group homes, increases the effectiveness of foster care and consequently improves children’s well-being. I would say for now, that this special segment in the Foster Program should be elaborated very carefully, to give directions in this important particular situation, which demands deep knowledge on kin-identity issue of the child.

– The following story is recorded in the Rhodopa Mountain where whole villages exist economically on paid foster care. Two different foster families in one village provide foster care for two children – brother and sister from Gypsy’s background. Both those siblings did not receive the so-called “adoption permission” by their birth parents, that is why they were put in foster care. The siblings were separated, although – in compliance with the strict regulations of the programme, they were put in the same neighbourhood and practically were raised together. The one family decided to adopt the girl (5 y.o.), promising that she will be always in the neighbour house to her brother. Her behavioural crisis was extremely strong – refusal to contact with foster parents, decline to eat, to play with other children; the only name of a person around her, addressed by her by a kin term, was the name of the boy, followed by “my brother”. She even neglected all her new toys, some of which her favourite, and played only with a small plastic car brought by native home and favourite to her brother. The crises threatened to turn into sickness, so the family decided to apply for adoption also of the brother, which is now in progress (Basheva, 2017b). This particular case shows the importance of the foster- and adoptive parents’ role that should be strongly considered when taking decisions about the child’s future.
Case-study C: Very briefly I wish to remind (without telling them in details) the cases that developed recently in Northern Europe with Bulgarian children, who could not be actually registered as “vulnerable” or “at risk”, but were called so by the system of a respective foreign country in accordance to the country’s legislation. Barnevernet is the Norwegian Child Welfare Service that recently got famous in Bulgaria by actions of taking children of immigrants and placing them with Norwegian foster families. There is an ongoing scandal with Bulgarian children removed from their families for ridiculous reasons in Norway: mother was talking against the father, children being too noisy/crying, children not paying attention in school. I am not going into the political and social reasons and consequences – it is proven, that this happens in Finland, in Denmark, besides Norway, with Romanian, Czech and Russian kids, besides the Bulgarian (Whewell, 2016). The consequences for the Bulgarian children are shown on the TV, and the definition does not leave place for many interpretations: these are children with scattered kinship identities (Pavlova, 2018).

Debating the Data

The three briefly sketched stories (representing huge variety of summarized similar case studies) give arguments to a multitude of potential theoretical influences on how the researcher might understand kinship identities across a number of disciplines. Children’s kinship identity is one of the basic social elements in identity structure of the person. Its stability is associated with the fact that this particular part of the complex human identity is established in the earliest period of human life, and is susceptible to modifications from the first human conscious or unconscious encounters and impressions. Above all, it is also the most durable, lasting through the whole life. Today the social scientists have proven the inadequacy of the essentialist position that views human identities as “presented as discrete, necessary, historically stable, and personally unalterable” (Verkuyten, 2003). According to a “primordialist” (“essentialist”) position the social markers of kinship (manifested as loyalties, attachments, endowments, etc.) are primary, or taken as given. For the other forms of identity this statement is questionable, but for the child’s kinship identity it is beyond doubt that this approach is fruitful, emphasizing the naturalness and stability of emotional bonds associated with primary care, place of birth and kinship relationships through which they come closer to culture, religion, history, and further emotional links within different communities. The first associations of kinship identity become “natural” for the children and they are the first grounds to provide a basis for an easy affinity with other people from the same background. These attachments constitute the givens of the human condition and might be rooted in the nonrational foundations of personality. They develop in childhood and remain with the person through the whole life; consciously or not, later in life they might provide a basis for the formation of not only kin- or family- but also social and political groupings. Even in threatening moments for the individuals – for example, when the objective cultural markers associated with childhood identities do not really exist, including under forcible or voluntary cultural domination by
migrations, or in situations when people are removed from their origins or have rejected their childhood identifications (refuge cases) – the childhood kinship loyalties are supposed to continue reflecting not real but imagined, memorized, or idealized uniting/distinguishing factors for the person. According to C. Geertz, the personal and collective identity of the ethnic groups’ members, although an interplay between contemporary dynamics and past loyalties, is mostly driven by ties of blood, mother tongue and language, homeland, religion, historical memories and images, and traditional attachments (Geertz, 1996). Therefore, the main advantage of a primordial perspective, applied to past and present-day situations, is focusing the attention on the active emotional power of identity(ties), and it obviously should be considered thoroughly in regard to children’s kinship identity building and functioning. Some paradigmatical ideas are developed recently, stressing on these points: For example, object-relations theorists emphasized how the sense of self is developed in early infancy through relationships with primary care-givers surrounding the child since birth. These theories focus on primary relationships, particularly with mothers, nannies, grannies, etc. They investigate the influence of the first caregivers on the identity building process, the strength of these influences, the degree of their changing capacity. Other explore social relationships in further child’s life, known and unknown people’s roles and the influence of different cultural norms. Cultural encounters stimulate the interaction, and contribute massively to the identity-creation. Recently it is acknowledged that the biological and material interact with the cultural in the “doing” of identity (Segal, 2008). All groups of children, including the vulnerable, construct and accomplish their understandings of themselves through culturally available discourses and everyday interpersonal interactions.

There are a multitude of potential theoretical directions how the researcher might understand identities, across a number of disciplines, and here I briefly survey some important theoretical influences. Despite the different ideological and methodological approaches, the majority among the scholars suggest that the process of understanding and narrating the story of every single person as a separate soul, the story of our own perceptions and views, and how we fit into the world, is the central psychological task of adolescence and adulthood and that the groundwork for this task is begun in infancy. All three shared case studies provide proof that children’s identities are indeed changeable, dynamic and interactional. Because of these characteristics, the life circumstances play an important role: the position of the child in it although limited world, consisting of individual and extended family, determines his first vision and sense of self-situating models.

**Approaching Kinship Identity and Vulnerability in the Context of Data Presented**

All groups of children construct and accomplish their understandings of themselves through culturally available discourses and everyday interpersonal interactions, but a special sensitivity is visible when vulnerable children are concerned. To understand, and especially – to try changing, children’s identity, a
scholar must have a deep interdisciplinary expertize. Respectively, other important theoretical influences have tended to explore wider social relationships, roles and cultural norms, extremely significant and useful here being the sociological insights.

Sociological studies gave a prolonged perspective to the identity studies, putting them at the centre of a multisided research line: Many decades ago G. Mead (1934) saw the self as divided into two halves: the “I”– the inner self, which contains the inner wishes of the individual, and the “Me” – the outer self, which considers the individual’s perception of how others perceive it. As such, Mead considered identity to be a product of social interaction, in that people come to know who they are through their interactions with others. More recently other scholars follow in his steps: P. Berger and T. Luckmann, in their seminal work about the social construction of reality (1966), also consider identities as constructed by social interaction. Post-structural theorists such as J. Butler (1990), when discussing the identity in dependence of the complex context of social and cultural developments, emphasized how identities are produced through socially engaged discourses rather than forming an essential, interior and stable sense of self (Dunn, 1998). R. Dunn proposes a “social relational” approach that explicitly recognizes these contexts of identity formation. He conceptualizes issues of identity in terms of social, cultural, and political transformations in the current transition to postmodernity. He carefully follows the Identity-forming processes as subjected to a socio-historical perspective in all its dynamics, motivations and obstacles. By accepting the changeable nature of encounters and symbols directing and motivating the creation of kinship identity, these “dynamic” theories provide a terrain for studying their manipulation and the potentials for possible pressure on them from different social forces and interests, and also the mechanisms of their forced or voluntary adjustment to new social, political, and economic environments.

Once built, the kinship loyalties that are subjectively distinguishing and uniting indicators for the kin-group members will be interpreted according to their different values and standards. With dynamic and changeable historical and social contexts of their lives, these indicators will experience influence by the culture, history, religion, language, and other identity-related markers. Primary or later constructed, children’s identity refers to person’s classification in a context of “self– other” distinctions on the cultural level, and categories as “own” people, as well as “strangers” or “outsiders” are created relatively early in life and associated particularly with kinship-identity. If brought together, the “own” people and the “outsiders” should share the unique notions of the mentioned cultural “foreignness and indigeneity” in an effort to create their mutual belonging to some of the first groups of person’s rationalized belongings.

Having in mind the present picture of population structure as a result of mass mobilities, the researcher can apply to kinship identity the differentiation between the so-called status and auxiliary symbols (suggested by A.D.Smith for the specifics of ethnic identity but also applicable for the kinship), also called ascriptive (fixed by birth) and achieved (e.g., through culture, language, or religion), takes on a greater role (Smith, 1986). The first group of symbols consists of visible marks such as skin pigmentation, face and hair type, standardized body gestures, and other
physical features and provides an important basis for making the “first-glance” distinction. When displayed, these symbols can differentiate and unite members of the group with both majority and minority status and in this way play an important part in systems of social composition. The psychological ground for this lies in the fundamental of ethnic groupings – since they are believed to consist of people who are alike by virtue of common ancestry, these conventionalized hereditary markers naturally become symbols of identification. However, they cannot be the only or even the most important defining markers. To be recognized as valid by the members of a group, they must always be combined with other symbols of belonging, such as clothing, decals, adornments, flags, manner of behaviour, language, dietary habits, and this is equally valid for areas where ethnic groups from the same race or population stock have long been in contact, so physical differentiation therefore becomes progressively more difficult. Their role is clearly rationalized today by “hosts” and “newcomers”.

One last point: created through social encounters and symbolic attitudes mostly, children’s kinship identity today is a result of the increasingly intense mobility of our time. Major points of interest are today the migrating children, where ethnic and cultural contacts and contrasts, interaction, and exchange occur daily. Both “hosts” and “outsiders” (the sending and the receiving cultures) participate in these processes with their look, dress style, manners and foods, music and dances, followed by more communicational means as feasts and celebrations, religion (faith, beliefs), stereotypes, education, and morals and values. Moving around globally, individuals and groups, families and kins, households, companies and neighbours, carrying this set of endowments, try to (1) keep their home identities and (2) construct their new ones. Both processes are mostly visible by children. The former process is loyalty to an inherited and approbated cultural survival mechanism brought from home, the latter an adaptation to the new environments and experiences with the purpose of survival. This is obviously the interplay between long-established (primordial) and newly learned (constructed) norms, and in this old and new values can mix and change their roles, places, and significance as identity factors and can also disappear or minimize their presence among the markers. The relation with the “vulnerable child” here departs from understanding that family- and kinship-identities acquired by birth, are among the primordial ties of a child. When the child is put forcibly in an unfamiliar situation and begins constructing newly learned identifications, his sense of belonging often loses its basis-causing trauma.

The extended literature relating to the subject conceptualized cases, when any strong hit on the situation of BELONGING to certain family- and kin-circle especially during childhood, deeply and dramatically affects the situation of FEELING, and that results in durable transforming changes in child’s kinship identity. Every child has a kinship identity as part of its social identity. The latter shows how the child perceives his/hers various roles in society in relation to others. These relations are based upon connection first and foremost with the closest kin and extended family. Just above this is structured the relation to the world through social position, culture or ethnicity, interests, achievements, or beliefs, and as a result children derive a sense of pride, self-worth, and consistency from their social
identities. So, when one significant part of their social identity is rapidly changing, threatened, or questioned, it is no wonder that a child loses his/her stability. That is why, this Identity is one of the major developmental needs especially of those children, which are categorized as *Children in Need*. If it is a case of a vulnerable child that is once deprived of his normal status the threat is strong, because his sense of belonging is hit and deformed. His feelings are disbalanced, and his identity as a result is confused.

Concluding Thoughts

It is usually in the best interests of the children to live with their birth families – even the three different stories quoted above agree upon this. Sometimes, however, families are unable to provide the care that children need or the environment within a family may, in fact, be harmful to a child. In these circumstances, it falls upon the child’s welfare system to provide substitutes for the functions parents and families have difficulty performing. The link between the three categories: kinship, identity and child’s vulnerability, lies in the process of socialization and cultural transmission which takes place during childhood, derives from and affects primarily the kinship affiliation. The anthropologists should explore this link correctly and adequately, especially if they try to support the welfare system with sufficient reaction. Respective studies should be based on investigation of at least some of the following problems:

To research on who matters to vulnerable children (in positive and negative ways); how children balance or prioritize different family- and kin-relationships; whom they might count as “family” or “like family” and how they make such distinctions;

To investigate how children’s kin relationships develop and change over time and ask what circumstances and life events might impact on the development of these relationships;

To look at what kinds of communication, activities and practices are involved in establishing and maintaining relationships and to ask how children are involved in these;

To examine the meanings children’s kinship has and explore how such meanings may be related to issues of morality, values, identity, culture and religion.

Hence, the highest responsibility of the scientists dealing with the subject, including the anthropologists. Sometimes on the field, my own professional identity feels scattered when realizing this responsibility, I am sure each professional knows that feeling…
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Experiences and Challenges of Transgender Children Regarding Gender Identity: Desk Research on Cases of Transgender Children in U.S., U.K., and Germany

Bella Yasmin Mehrnissa

Abstract: Children’s own understanding on their gender identity should be seen as “subjective reality” and be accepted beyond the concept of gender binary. The challenges faced by transgender children and adolescents move around the issue of acceptance from their family, society, and even themselves. Not only that, transgender children’s and adolescents’ statuses as minors also affect the way people judge their gender identity and often deny their best interests when it comes to treatment. This chapter discusses the importance of transgender children’s personal narrative in telling the experiences and challenges they face. A desk research method has been used to analyse transgender children’s lives in the U.S, U.K, and Germany. It also focuses on transgender children’s and adolescents’ experiences and on the concept of gender performativity and gender identity as something that one thinks about him or herself, rather than as something that one is born with. This chapter also discusses different perspectives on acknowledging transgenderism as mental disorder and how it is perpetuating the idea that gender is pathological. Such concepts create a pathological treatment for transgender children and often puts a definition on who defines themselves as transgender.

Keywords: Children; Transgender; Gender identity.

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Introduction

In 2017, Leelah Alcorn, a transgender girl from Ohio, USA, took her own life at the age of 17. She was 14 when she learned about the term of transgender and felt relieved for finally finding answers for her own confusion about her gender identity for the last 10 years. In the note, she wrote before taking her own life, she explained the rejection she received from her parents and the way they treated her after she came out as the main reason for her suicide. She was brought to conversion therapy, made to transfer schools, and was banned from accessing the internet. She also pointed out that she gave up after seeing the long transition process and challenges she would have gone through, and how she believed would never be satisfied with the way she looked and sounded. She wrote that, “The life I would’ve lived isn’t worth living in... because I’m transgender” (Alcorn, 2017). Leelah’s story highlight the main challenges that most transgender children and adolescents face during their transition. She faced issues of acceptance from her family, society, and even herself.

Focusing on transgender children and adolescent’s own experience through their perspective is an underdeveloped topic both in disciplines of gender study and, specifically, in childhood study. This leads to many misunderstandings according to the topic of transgender children and perpetuate the challenges that they have in regards of acceptance from their surroundings, and even themselves. This study is based on a literature review of transgender children experiences in USA, UK, and Germany. The diverse background of sources is made due to the availability of sources where transgender children’s existence is being acknowledged. The aim of this chapter is to emphasize the importance of presenting transgender children’s perspective in research and creating a safe space for them in everyday life in order to bring up further research on the topic and to increase the quality of life and well-being of the transgender children.

This chapter is divided into five sections that focus on transgender children’s experiences and challenges and the concept of gender as a socially constructed concept. In the first section, I discuss how gendered childhood is created around the power of the heteronormative culture. In the second section, I focus on the idea that transgenderism is seen as a mental disorder and how such labels perpetuate the idea that gender is pathological, rather than a fluid concept. In the next section, I discuss transgender children and emphasize on the importance of seeing them and their own gender identity as “subjective reality”. Next, I criticize the indecisiveness of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child with certain regulation and stereotypical roles in daily activities. I also discuss transition steps, which could be related to the discussion about seeing transgenderism as mental disorder. Furthermore, in the last part, I discuss the importance of personal narrative from the transgender children themselves. This study also offers a reconceptualization understanding of a child’s concept of their gender identity regarding heteronormative culture, and the way all those affect the life of transgender children.
On Accepting Transgenderism in Childhood: Going against the Heteronormative Culture

The understanding of gender has been related to society’s norms of someone’s body. It becomes more like an unwritten regulation about how someone should behave, dressed up, and live their life. Butler (2004) is a philosopher and a feminist whose theories of performative nature of gender influence the cultural theory, queer theory, and third-wave feminism. She argues that “normative conception of gender can undo one’s personhood, undermining the capacity to preserve in a liveable life” (Butler, 2004: 1). The word “normative” here represents how the socially constructed concept of gender is considered to be what normal is and has become the standard of how society should function regarding their gender. That concept also creates a narrative of how someone who is different from the “normative conception” is seen as abnormal and does not belong to a certain group or society. Butler then explains how “the social norms that constitute our existence carry desires that do not originate with our individual personhood” (Butler, 2004: 2). The normality in this term is related with the concept of men and women, girls and boys, and the regulations and restriction that move around the concept of heteronormative.

Butler offers a concept of gender as “a kind of doing” which also could be related to the concept of how gender is fluid. Her argument focuses on how the concept of “undoing gender” could translate to removing someone’s definition of his or her gender identity or gender expression. The concept of gender as “doing” rather than as “being” is also related to how someone’s “persistence as an ‘I’ depends upon one’s ability to do something with what is done with me” (2004: 1). The idea of something being “done” to someone refers to the concept of society’s expectation regarding gender norms. The concept of gender as “a kind of doing” rather than as “being” could also break down the expectations that are created toward the normative conception of gender. It also emphasizes on how gender is socially constructed as concept of identity that is “done” to someone rather than to be something that they were born with.

As mentioned before, the idea of gender is related with someone’s body authority, subsequently the term gender is also related to sex. In the context of heteronormative concept, the definition of male and female is strongly related to the definition of men and women. It comes with certain regulation and stereotypical roles in daily activities. While sex is referred as the physical appearance that is assigned at birth, gender is the mental idea that someone has about his or her identity. Fausto-Sterling (1999), an expert in biology and gender development who explores the flawed in premise of the nature and nurture debate, argues sex and gender as the body and the culture, which are also explained by Butler on her idea about how gender could be seen as something that is “done” to a person. Fausto-Sterling also argues that culturally constructed gender “forces us to think of the body as something that is fixed” (1999: 55). In this sense, the idea of “fixed” gender then becomes one of the reasons why the debate around transgender issue is focusing on the idea of seeing it as mental disorder, which will be discussed in the next section.
The idea of gender as culturally constructed comes along with the notions of whether gender in children is nurtured or a natural thing. Children are expected to learn certain gender roles based on the assigned sex at birth since the very beginning of their childhood. From their clothes, toys, literature, and cartoons, up to the way their family refers to them. Every aspect of a child’s life involves a gender identity form in which they always have to be separated into girls or boys. As for children themselves, Maclean (1999) argues that children understand the meaning of gender when it “comes to terms with the multiple and contradictory ways in which they are positioned” (1999: 71). Therefore, children grasp a concept of gender when they see the comparison around them. A child fully understands that she or he is a boy or a girl when they see the other kids and from the way people around them treat them based on their gender.

Most of the transgender children start to show resistance against their gender identity corresponding with their sex assigned at birth when they realize that their surroundings are treating them with the opposite gender identity that they have in their mind. That explains how most of transgender children begin to show such act or have anxiety because of their gender identity as early as three years old. Brill and Pepper (2011), authors of The Transgender: A Handbook for Families and Professionals book, argue that children have gender fluid identity. For example, when children are not “permanently fixed in any one sex but think of themselves as sometimes female and sometimes male, or as a mix of male and female, or when they create new definitions for themselves” (Schneider, 2013: 6). The fluidity of children’s gender identity then raises notions of the function of gender in childhood. Is it to regulate and put restriction in their daily activities? Is it to create a sense of identity? Or is it just to follow the norms constructed by the heteronormative society?

Fausto-Sterling (1999) raises the question of “Is gender essential?” in which she relates gender with sex and how the relation between them should not be the reason why the concept of gender is considered essential. However, she argues that it is impossible to completely erase the concept of gender as the sense of identity within the concept of gender itself as part of someone else’s being. I asked the same question of whether there is a childhood without gender. What kind of childhood will there be if there is no heteronormative society surrounding children? To answer that question, it is important to reflect on the progressive conversation about gender and how the main subject of the conversation is not to necessarily remove the idea of gender itself. Rather it is mostly about recognizing the power that creates the stereotypical roles of female and male, girls and boys, the power that perpetuates the heteronormative society itself. However, the idea of childhood without gender is impossible. Therefore, there is a new theory regarding gender identity that would create a much inclusive and non-heteronormative culture and would be applicable for children’s life.

The perspective of gender as nurture for children agrees with the concept of gender as culturally constructed matter. This goes with the way children learn about gender concept from their surroundings, from watching and copying the behaviours of adults around them. This viewpoint makes it susceptible for childhood to get influenced by the power of the heteronormative culture. Blaise and Taylor (2012)
argue that “heterosexual norms, not biological instinct or socialization, that have such powerful influence on children’s gender behaviour” (2012: 89). To change that viewpoint, Blaise and Taylor (2012) explain that queer theory would be the new way to see gender norms and “insists that gender identity development is always linked to heterosexual norms” (2012:89). They again explain that queer theory does not necessarily promote any specific sexual identity – in fact it is not about sexual identity and is not, in Blaise and Taylor’s term, “owned” by the lesbian and gay community. The framework focuses on seeing the concept of gender performativity and gender identity as something that one thinks about themselves; it is from “the way we talk about ourselves as girls and boys or women and men, and by specific bodily practices and expressions – and their repetitions” (Blaise and Taylor, 2012: 92) and not something that is attached to them. This goes hand in hand with Butler’s concept of gender as a kind of doing.

Using the queer theory to expand the gender debate has function to “negotiate the discourse, and how children’s negotiations of these discourse produce dynamics and patterns of inclusion and exclusion” (Blaise and Taylor, 2012: 91). Coming back to Butler’s argument on how the normative concept of gender can undermine someone’s capacity to have a better quality of life the framework of queer theory would create a more liveable life for transgender children, and also adults. As going against the normative concept of gender explores them to series of challenges, one of them being questioned on their own understanding of their gender identity. Allowing ourselves to see more variety of gender expression in childhood would change the way we think about children’s conflicts and anxieties (Rottnek, 1999), that it is not as simple as the colour of pink and blue, or choosing some typical toys to play with in order to fit with the society’s concept of gender. Moreover, a child’s gender identity is not simply affected by their choice of colour or toys. It comes from within the child’s own understanding of themselves, and that going outside the heteronormative culture of gender helps to understand the concept of transgenderism.

Transgender as Mental Disorder

One would say that transgender is a condition of one being stuck in a wrong physical body. The idea of gender that you have in your head, does not go hand in hand with what you see on your body. Beemyn and Rankin (2011) on their major study that examine diverse experience of the transgender community across the US, explain transgender as “individuals assigned male/female at birth who identify as and often seek to transition to the other sex.” (2011:1). The transition process could be done in many dimensions from transitioning socially, from changing names and cross-dressing, to physically transition by taking hormones and having surgery. Further details on the transition process will be explained in the other section of this paper. Beemyn and Rankin (2011) also explain that many transgender people repressed their feelings and acknowledged themselves as transgender later in their life when they can no longer live in denial. For the idea of gender identity being different from someone’s biological sex is still judged as a myth.
Transgenderism is also known as Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria. Giordano (2013) explains that GID was first included as a mental illness in 1980. Although the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders have changed the term of Gender Identity Disorder in 2013 with “gender dysphoria”, it is still considered as a mental illness condition. This perspective of seeing transgenderism as part of mental illness comes with a handful of debate. Is it appropriate to call it an illness? Is it something that is diagnosed to you? Or is it a self-determination? What does it mean to have transgenderism as an illness? And is there a possibility to take it off of the mental illness list completely?

Giordano (2013) explains that the terms of gender identity disorder and gender dysphoria have two different meanings. Gender identity disorder is described as incongruent condition between someone’s biological sex and his or her gender identity, while gender dysphoria, on the other hand, is described as “discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person’s gender identity and that person’s sex assigned at birth” (Giordano, 2013: 57). Even though both definitions are still related to seeing transgenderism as mental illness, the terms have very different meanings which could also be included in a perspective to see whether it is appropriate to relate transgenderism with mental illness issue. Whilst the term “gender identity disorder” puts the focus on defining the condition of having a different gender identity from their assigned sex at birth as the disorder or the illness, the term “gender dysphoria” puts the emphasis on the outcome of being in such condition. Within this perspective, Giordano (2013) argues that putting transgenderism down as an illness does not necessarily mean putting the idea of someone’s gender identity as a condition of illness. A transgender person could be categorized as having a mental disorder only if their transgender identity started to disrupt their mental condition. For example, transgender children are usually facing a serious depression and distress when they are starting to experience puberty in a sex that they do not want. When the changes in their body do not match with their gender identity and it leads them depression and distress, that is when transgenderism counts as mental disorder.

On the other hand, Butler (2004) explains that the diagnosis of someone as a transgender is needed to undergo procedure to transition. A transgender person has to go to a gender clinic, see a therapist, and be diagnosed with such term as gender identity disorder in order to have a legal, safe, and especially insurance covered procedure of physical transition. In this perspective, the term of being diagnosed with gender identity disorder is needed for transgender people. As still there is no other way available for them to have undergo the procedure and been covered by insurance company without such diagnosis. However, seeing transgenderism as disorder is against the argument that has been long promoted as a self-determination towards their own body autonomy; because the idea of disorder itself is still close with the stigma that it is, in Giordano’s term, “dis-order” and wrong. When it should be believed that transgenderism is part of someone’s true identity they have since they are very young, especially with the case of transgender children.

Seeing transgenderism as a mental disorder or having to be diagnosed as someone with gender dysphoria is important for some transgender people who wish to undergo physical transition. The diagnosis would help them to get the
prescription they need legally and in the proper amount, it also helps them to get the funding from their insurance. On this regard, Butler asked the question of who will get the benefit of transgender being a mental disorder, either as GID or gender dysphoria. Can we trust the medical side? Is the therapist progressive and experienced enough to understand the condition of trans people, especially children, who come to them? Giordano explains that doctors usually have dilemma when it comes to transgender as patient. If the term of gender dysphoria is being implemented evenly in every clinics or medical facilitation for transgender people, then the idea of “healing” them would be letting them transition.

Furthermore, it cannot be denied that the term “mental disorder” is followed by many stigmas. In this case of transgenderism as mental disorder, one could be stigmatized that they are not thinking clearly, that it can be healed or changed, that it is contagious, or that it is not naturally coming from their own self. The term “mental disorder” could also be used to restrict transgender space in public, especially children. Such stigma would just add up more pressure that transgender youth face in general, which could lead them to be more invisible, as argued by Dr. Richard Isay (1997) that such diagnose “may cause emotional damage by injuring the self-esteem of a child who has no mental disorder.” (Butler, 2004: 82). Seeing transgenderism as a “mental disorder” could also raise a question of whether people could trust children who are out as transgender to take full responsibility of their decision. Since it is believed that mental disorder could “jeopardize the sufferer’s decision-making capacity, in particular, capacity to make decision about treatment for the illness itself” (Giordano, 2013: 119). However, Giordano explains that since 1990 England has determined that a mental disorder patient can still make their own decision regarding their therapy and physical condition. It shows that mental disorder patient does not lose their ability to make decision about their own body. Therefore, transgender children and adults who are being diagnosed and needing treatment from the medical team to transition are often still being questioned whether their decision is rational.

Butler (2004) explains that having transgenderism being put as “gender dysphoria” gives the tendency that you have to prove yourself if you would like to transition, that it “establishes that gender is a relatively permanent phenomenon” (2004:81). Although a deeper examination on transgender children who wish to transition is needed, still, the idea of one failing the test to be a transgender is bizarre and unnecessary. Such idea would support the argument to, in Butler’s term, “pathologize” the concept of gender and one’s gender identity. Butler (2004) then relates it with Isay’s proposal to call the transgenderism as “gender atypical traits” instead of mental disorder. The term would reject, in Isay’s term, the “pathologizing language” that is being used to describe and define who identifies as transgender. The term “gender atypical traits” would also “refuse to elevate typical gender attributes to a standard of psychological normality or to relegate atypical traits to abnormality” (Butler, 2004: 83) and give more room for the children to explore their gender identity.

Moreover, whether transgenderism is considered as mental disorder or not, medical advice and a team are still needed to help them transition. A gender fluid process is also needed in the transition treatment for transgender people. If
being diagnosed as “transgender” is necessary for them to transition in a safe and affordable way, then the sense of self-determination should still be implemented in the whole process; that it does not have to be dependent on such “pathological” process of seeing and understanding the concept of gender identity. As having to live their life as their true self, with the identity that they have in mind is the goal of the whole process, then the process itself has to support the idea by not considering it as a mental disorder.

Transgender Children as Subjective Reality

In an interview with taz (January, 19, 2012), Alex (changed name), a transgender child who transitioned from male to female, was asked about the time she started to feel like a girl. To that she responded with another question, “Since when did you know that you are a girl? Always!” (Oestreich, 2012). Children’s own understanding about their gender identity appears strongly as early as three years old. Beemyn and Rankin (2011) argue that “a sense of gender difference often occurred very early in childhood, when the respondents first realized that distinctions were made between girls and boys” (2011:40). Whether it is from the way they are being placed in a boy group or a girl group, or in the way they are dressed on a daily basis, a specific gender identity is introduced to children since the earliest time.

Penelope Patterson, a female who transitioned to male from New York, started to show signs of anxiety and anger regarding his gender identity at the age of three. He explained that, “Everyone thinks I’m a girl, and I’m not. I’m a boy!” His statement does not just emphasize about how he feels inside, but who he really is. He explained to his mother again that, “I don’t feel like a boy, mama. I am a boy” (Patterson, 2015). His anxiety came from the way people treated him and the way he was dressed, as he realized that what he saw and what was seen by people did not match with who he really was. The way they are being dressed is the main reason why transgender children are starting to realize that people are not treating them the way that they should be treated. Avery Jackson, a male who transitioned to female child from Missouri, USA, started to ask her parents to buy her a dress when she was three years old. Later on, she told her parents that she was a girl and consistently said that her penis got in the way and she wanted it gone. In an interview with National Geographic magazine Avery stated that, “The best thing about being a girl is, now I don’t have to pretend to be a boy anymore” (Conant, 2017). Her statement shows how the role of gender that was being introduced to her and that she was aware of since she was three years old, was really not part of her and how that pretending to be a boy was what she was doing before she came out to her parents.

Furthermore, more children are coming out and seek for medical help to transition, yet there is no specific data that has the exact number of how many transgender children there are today. Schneider (2013) explains that the majority of transgender children go undetected by their parents and people around them, and also because the various terms that are being used to identify them such as,
trans-identified, transsexual, transgender persons, etc. Nevertheless, Brill and Pepper (2011) estimates that there are at least “one in five hundred children has a gender identity other than the one assigned to them at birth” (Schneider, 2013: 8). Most of the transgender adults who came out later in their life “did not understand their experiences or have the appropriate language to describe them” (Beemyn and Rankin, 2011: 51). Most transgender men and women recognize their true gender identity or have been confused about their gender identity since they were little. Yet, it takes time for them to finally understand about who they are and to fight the strong culture of gender binary norms, and importantly to find a safe and supported space to live their life with their true identity.

The concept of identity comes from one self and should only be defined by her or his own self. The term transgender itself, with its function as categorization, puts definition and restriction to one’s gender identity. Especially when it comes to medical treatment requiring diagnoses. Schneider (2013) argues that the term of “transgender children” is not applied for the kids to describe their identity. Such term used to categorize them usually becomes known once they have reach the adolescence years. Prior to that, they would simply refer themselves as “a boy” or “a girl”. To be able to understand the complexity of children’s gender identity, it is significant to also see children as their own being and to see them as, in Schneider’s term, “subjective reality”. Such perspective also refers to the way children’s own perception about their gender should be seen.

Schneider (2013), with the term of “self-perception”, argues that the term is important to avoid “boxing them into adult categories that are alien to them” (2013:7). It is important to note that “individuals are the experts of their own gender identities and while gender expressions may vary over time, gender identity shows more temporal consistency” (Schneider, 2013:7). For the case of children who show a strong resistance toward the gender identity they were born with, trusting them and taking their own view on their gender identity is highly significant. Payne and Smith (2011:416) explain that it is important to “face our own fears and acknowledge that the dichotomy on which so much of our social structure is grounded is culturally constructed and not clearly pink or blue” (Holdsworth, 2017:96). Recognizing children’s self-perception on their gender identity by not putting them into boxes and categories also works to go against the socially and culturally constructed concept of gender identity in general and let them to act as active rights holders.

**Transgender Children on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child**

Regarding transgender children’s rights in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), there is no specific article or wording that mentions the rights of transgender children. Nevertheless, there are some articles that could be related in terms of their matters in the UN CRC. A right to identity is written under the article 8 of UN CRC, a right to non-discrimination under article 2, a right to privacy under article 16, and a right to health under article 24.
In General Comment No 13 (2011) about child’s freedom against violence and discrimination the transgender children are included in the category of “vulnerable or marginalized groups of children” (Sandberg, 2017:64).

In the article about child’s right to identity, the matter of that child’s gender identity is not specifically mentioned. However, “the obligation of the state is to ‘respect’ this right” and to let them “enjoy one’s identity without interference from the state” (Sandberg, 2017: 67). According to General Comment No 15 (2013) the main concern is regarding their rights to the “highest attainable standard of health” (UN CRC, Article 24), in the article itself it is mentioned that the highest attainable standard of health should be implemented according to the child’s “biological, social, cultural, and economic preconditions and the state’s available resources” (Sandberg, 2017: 69). It means that there is no guarantee for transgender children, or all children in this matter, that they would be given the best health care regarding their transition. The part of the article being implemented according to the cultural condition of the state could also give more chance for transgender children to be denied for having a treatment regarding of their transition.

UN CRC and the General Comment’s indecisiveness take on the issue of children’s gender identity gives a bigger risk for transgender children to experience discrimination on the society, legal recognition, or medical treatment. Deprived of a clear statement on the issue of children’s gender identity and the lack of a report specifically on their own experiences and challenges, the issue will not be treated as it should be. Trans individuals; right to gender identity and to the best treatment of health care in this regard should be taken more seriously. Lack of attention to it will only lessen the transgender children’s visibility in the society as there is no strong recognition of their status as transgender children. For despite of growth attention to the transgender issues for the past years, “trans individuals continue to face alarming rates of discrimination and violence at the hands of family members, peers, schools, and other institutions” (Kuvalanka, et al., 2017: 889) and according to the 2015 National School Climate Survey, “among LGBTQ youth, trans students reported had the most negative experiences” (2017: 889). The monitoring system regarding this issue should be more implemented within the family, schools, hospital, and even legal recognition. By reasons of bringing up their stories more to the surface would help to decrease the number of violence and discrimination against the transgender children.

The Transition Process for Transgender Children

Colin, an 18-year-old female-to-male transgender from Brighton, UK said in an interview with INDEPENDENT (2016, May 13) that being transgender was not something he would do for attention as “there’s plenty of things that I could do for attention that would have been easier and less emotionally and physically painful” (Staufenberg, 2016). Once a transgender person decides to go through the transition process and to live their life as their true identity, he or she has to go through a number of processes, which explains Colin’s description on how it is emotionally and physically painful to be transgender. The condition of one’s
fighting against their own body in order to stay true with their identity, requires a lifetime of prescription to prevent the body to grow in a direction that is the opposite of their identity. For transgender children, the transition process might be different and possibly harder from transgender adults, especially considering their status in society as a child. Minter (2012), a transgender attorney who specialized on advocating the transgender people, explains that in the 1960s and 1970s and even early 1980s, many mental health professionals would have considered a child who insisted that he or she was “really” the other gender to be psychotic or deeply disturbed. Some transgender people had experienced electro-shock therapy, psychotropic drugs, and being taken to psychiatric facility when they were children. Additionally, children would also have to spend more time with the prescription that would make their body stop growing into the other sex that they do not want to have. Therefore, is it appropriate to nowadays let children transition since an early age?

The question of whether a transgender child should go through such a long process of transitioning in order to live their true self comes from a paternalistic perspective. In that view, transgender children are advised to not start the transition early. Dr. Kenneth Zucker, known for his reputation as expert on gender identity issues on children and as gay-trans rights advocates, argues that the term “first do no harm” is important to apply to transgender children. The concern is around how it is endangering the children’s life since there is not much research on how safe the treatments are. Therefore, Zucker, who later lost his job and his reputation due to his perspective on children and transgenderism, offers a treatment to let children be more content about their gender identity that matches their secondary sex characteristics. He offers a conversion therapy for the transgender children because he believes that most children who show a strong resistance towards his or her assigned sex at birth turn out to be homosexual and not transgender (Ford, 2016). The conversion therapy denies children’s own acknowledgement about their true identity. It restricts their space to explore their true identity and would send a bad impression toward their self-esteem. It leads transgender children to internalize from an early age that they are the problem and often hide their true gender identity (Kennedy and Hellen, 2010). Furthermore, the conversion therapy would push them to feel more pressured and make them feel that what they have felt about their gender identity is wrong and should not be encouraged.

For children who come out as transgender, feeling safe and accepted is the most important thing that they need, whether or not they decide to go through the transition process. Di Ceglie and Coates Thümmel (2006) are experts on child and adolescent psychiatrist who have been working in the field of social work with children and families facing gender identity problems. They explain that young people’s “subjective reality” and “self-perception” about their own gender identity should not be denied and “should be accepted as a fact outside any conscious control” (Schneider, 2013: 19). Many transgender children started their transition socially by changing the way they dressed and asking their family and friends to call them by their preferred names and pronouns. The ones who are able to come out and change their gender identity socially are usually supported and accepted by their families.
However, the most challenging part is the way they have to deal with school, as there are still many institutions for children that do not support their decision to change their identity socially. Holdsworth (2017) is an educational psychology researcher who conducted a study that focuses on roles that educational professional can take in order to improve transgender children and young people in the UK. On her research, she explains that the environment in school would have an important role in deciding whether the children who come out as transgender must suppress their true gender identity (nee Holdsworth, 2017: 97). Whittle et al. (2007), who undertook a quantitative and qualitative research on transgender and transsexual people’s experiences of inequality and discrimination in the UK, explain that the unsupportive school system and educational professional would increase the risk of “mental health difficulties and may become withdrawn, anxious and unsociable” (nee Holdsworth, 2017: 97). Through research done by Riley et al. (2013) with transgender adults and the parents of transgender children to identify the needs of this group, it is found that the lack of understanding about gender variance and lack of program to educate people from schools and society in general have been one of the most difficult challenges faced by transgender children and adults (Holdsworth, 2017: 98).

Such rejection from society and their surroundings would also be affected by how they have known the history of a transgender child before he or she decided to transition socially. This is one of the reasons why transgender children wish to go through the physical transition as soon as possible. The main process of transitioning physically is to change the way they look and sound, and to suppress their secondary sex characteristics by doing hormone therapy. The conversion therapy lasted their whole life, as once they stopped taking the prescription, their body would come back with the secondary sex characteristics. For transition processes in children and young people, one of the most significant parts is to suppress puberty. This treatment is allowed to be given to children if they meet the requirements.

One of them is when the changes of their body into the secondary sex characteristics cause intense suffering, depression, or suicidal thoughts. The puberty blockers prescription works to pause any hormonal changes that will happen in someone’s body as their reach a certain stage. Giordano (2013), a researcher whose work specialized on psychiatric ethics, bioethics, and gender identity, explains that this treatment does not necessarily lead to “social transition or to sex reassignment” (2013: 78). This could actually help children to give more time to think about their future decision as their body remain neutral for a few years. Edwards-Leeper and Spack (2012) explain that the puberty blockers would work to buy time for the children to explore his or her identity and to make a more informed and less pressured decision to fully transition, or not. This would also provide an opportunity to see whether suppressing the unwanted secondary sex characteristics has a positive impact on how they function, and to confirm or disconfirm that their distress is caused by gender dysphoria. A six-year research in the Amsterdam Gender Clinic to monitor and evaluate the consumption of puberty blockers prescription to children and young people presents the result of how “quality of life, satisfaction with life, and subjective happiness comparable to same-age peers”
of the transgender children increased and the treatment is considered successful. It has also proven that letting them have the “age-appropriate developmental transitions” would enable them to become “a satisfactory objective and subjective well-being” (de Vries, et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Minter (2012) explains that such medical interventions may not be suitable for all transgender children or adolescents. There are many transgender children who are comfortable with their own body and do not have the need to transition physically by consuming the prescription. The experiences among transgender children and young people are varied, and a personal approach is needed in every case. As Di Ceglie and Coates Thümmel (2006) explain, there is “a need to allow space and time for exploration of identity and for possible development and change” (Schneider, 2012: 19).

Transgender Children and the Importance of Their Own Personal Narrative

Transgender children and adolescents face different challenges from transgender adults, as their own “status” as a child or a minor are usually used against them and their gender identity. Not only do they still need parents’ approval on every decision to make regarding their body, their dependency to their parents and their guardians also becomes the main challenge that transgender children have after they come out to their family and are not accepted. The problem of a child’s best interest also becomes significant in the issue of transgender children and their family. Most transgender children face bullying at school, not only from their peers but also from the school system itself. The depression of being transgender also often becomes a problem for themselves. The number of suicide and self-harm among transgender youth is still high. A survey by HES/MAG in 2009 conducted in France showed that “67% of the trans 16 to 26 years old polled reported having already thought about suicide (in connection with their trans identity)” (Schneider, 2013:11). The term “in connection with their trans identity” has layers of explanation on the challenges that are faced by transgender youth.

Many surveys show numbers and statistics about depression, suicidal thoughts, and self-harm from youth regarding their transgender identity. In a survey conducted in the UK, it is found that “eight out of 10 trans young people have self-harmed and almost half have attempted to kill themselves” (Weale, 2017 for The Guardian). The number and statistics from the survey are needed as proof to keep the conversation about transgender kids going and make the media and politicians aware of the challenges faced by transgender youth. However, personal narratives from the point of view of transgender children is highly important and needed; seen from the unfortunate story of Leelah Alcorn, an American transgender girl who took her own life at the age of 17. After she passed away, Cincinnati, USA, the state where Leelah grew up in, made the practice of conversion therapy for transgender minor illegal. She left her suicide note on her personal social media platform called Tumblr. The personal narrative shared by Alcorn in her suicide note reflects on the many challenges faced by transgender children, and the transgender community in
general, from self-acceptance, rejection, bad treatment from her parents, and the alienated feeling that she had.

Grossman and D’Augelli (2007) found that transgender children and adolescents who had attempted suicide “had suffered more parental verbal and physical abuse than the other youngsters” (Schneider, 2013:11). Their very own status as children makes them dependent to their parents and guardians, which makes their best interests ignored as mostly it is the parents’ final decision that matter. In the case of Leelah Alcorn, conversion therapy and the way she was cut off from social media was the abusive treatment from her parents. Her parents also believed that her questions about her gender identity were only a phase. Fallon Fox, a transgender athlete and an LGBTQ activist, states that telling a transgender person that her or his identity is wrong considered as “the worst things in the world a transgender person can hear” (Fox, 2015 for time.com) and so is the practice of conversion therapy. She mentioned that “conversion therapy is unconscionable. It should rightfully be called what it is: child abuse” (2015, for time.com) as it denies the child’s need for medical treatment regarding her or his gender dysphoria.

Challenges faced by transgender children regarding their under-age status also appear in a custody battle of transgender children whose parents got divorced, and both parents have different stances on the child being transgender. Skougard (2012), a lawyer who conducted a research on best interest of transgender children in Utah, US, found a case of parents fighting for their child’s custody in Utah’s, USA, court. The child is a transgender girl whose parents have different point of view toward her gender identity – the mother wanted to support the kid’s preferred gender identity, while the father denied it. Skougard shows how the court ignores children’s best interests when it comes to custody fights over transgender children. In the case presented by Skougard, it can be concluded that the judge’s understanding and viewpoint on gender identity plays an important role in decision of child custody. Skougard (2012) argues that the court “failed to recognize serious problems with key expert testimony” (2012: 1182) and ignores the child’s best interests. The judge based his argument on the “weaker evidence” (Skougard, 2012) that supported the girl’s identity; the child showed interest in boy toys. This shows how experts’ understanding on gender identity issue have a significant role in creating better and safer surroundings for transgender children.

As mentioned in the previous section, parents of transgender children and youth found that the lack of understanding about gender variance and lack of programs to educate people in schools were significant challenges faced by the transgender children. The misunderstanding and mistreatment they have received in school, as well as the bullying, have caused a sense of insecurity for them and become one of the reasons of self-harm done by the transgender children. Arenas, Gunckel, and Smith (2016) points out that “based on a 2013 nationwide survey, 61% of all transgender students were verbally harassed in the previous year, 29% were physically harassed, and 15.5% were physically assaulted” (Arenas, Gunckel, and Smith, 2016: 21). They also argue that it is important to “acknowledge that transgender students experience the most hostile school climate of any student” (Arenas, Gunckel, and Smith, 2016: 21). Such acknowledgement starts a conversation about transgender children and the challenges they are facing. It also
offers a different perspective on gender identity and on the transgender children’s own personal narrative about their story. Schneider (2013) also points out that the life of transgender children must be taken into account when “framing child welfare policies, which should be cross-sectoral in nature” (2013: 13). Therefore, it could lead to a more accepting society where transgender children’s presence is being acknowledged and taken seriously.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the way heteronormative society perpetuates the idea of a gender binary (female and male, girls and boys, feminine and masculine) and affect children’s understanding of gender identity. To change that viewpoint, a queer theory has been explored to challenge gender as performativity and to see gender identity as one’s own definition specifically through their own body practices, expressions, and its repetitions. In which it relates with the idea of children’s own understanding about their gender identity and the way it is understood by themselves since they are very young. The realization is a product of both the children’s own involvement and the surroundings (adults and society) who judge and position the children towards certain norms that additionally complicate its perception. Therefore, is it appropriate to let a child, having different gender identity from their sex assigned at birth, transition? The answer is definitely, yes. With or without transitioning, the life of transgender youth would still be a struggle. However, the struggle would mean something more if it is done to fight their true identity; they would be able to live a liveable, self-determined life. It is not children’s own understanding of their gender identity that should be changed, but rather the society’s. It is the heteronormative culture and socially constructed concept of gender and childhood that should be transformed.

The reality of transgender children’s life has been explored through their personal experience regarding their coming out stories, transition processes, custody battles, treatment that the transgender children and their families get, and stories about surviving and not surviving as a transgender child. This highlights a main challenge that they face and separates their experience from transgender adults- their social status as a child, which still depends on adults as their guardians when they want to make decisions regarding their body. This shows that further qualitative research on this topic that specifically highlights trans children’s own point of view is highly needed in order to broaden the understanding and to challenge the existing understandings of childhood and gender identity. Further study on transgender children that take an approach on intersectionality such religion, race, and could also explore a diverse perspective on the matter.

More research should be done in the so-called majority world, since gender identity issues are not only a problem that appears in the western world. Acknowledging stories of transgender children that come from global north countries could be a stepping stone into a further study about transgender children. Studies should involve stories from children in the global south countries, where the topic of children and gender identity is still seen as taboo and not discussed enough.
either in mainstream media nor in studies by scholars. That does not necessarily mean that transgender children do not exist in the global south countries, but as it has been discussed, children’s surroundings have a major role on their gender identity understanding. Hence, to be able to explore stories of transgender children from the global south countries a different approach is needed. Making information and stories about transgender children accessible to both adults and children who are not coming from a scholar background could be the first step that would be beneficial in creating a more acceptance society and increase the quality of life of transgender children.

References:


Violence against Children in Romanian Media

Valentina Marinescu

Abstract: Violence against women and children has only been recently recognized as a health problem. Starting in the 1990s, preventing violence against children is now considered to be both a social issue and a public health priority. In order to better understand the ways in which media images may be shaping our understanding of violence against children, this study analysed portrayals of said violence against children in news and articles in, specifically, Romanian media. Methodological triangulation was used for this study. The quantitative content analysis was made on a sample of 58 articles published in three Romanian national newspapers between 1 June 2014 and 31 December 2014 on the topic of violence against children. The study shows that Romanian media presents children as innocent victims of violence. Much more, the journalists’ appeal to medical arguments related to violent acts against children reinforce a child’s place as a key symbol in the media’s social construction of crime. By increasing our understanding of how violence against children is portrayed in news media, the study concludes, the researchers can now study the effects of this coverage and its implications on the public and its policy support.

Keywords: Media, Violence, Children, Frames, Public health model.

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Introduction

Violence against children is officially defined by the World Health Organization in 2014 as a “public health, human rights, and social problem, with potentially devastating and costly consequences” (World Health Organization, 2014). The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2006 assessed that violence perpetrated
against children can be a significant contributing factor in adult illness and death. Referring to the role played by the media in relation to violence against children, Parker et al. (2001) pointed out that: “The news media should portray violence against children as a public health problem that is fundamentally social in its risk factors, its consequences, and its potential solutions”.

Until now, few studies have been focused on this new perspective for understanding violence against children; the vast majority of the existing literature still using the “lens” of sociology, social work or journalism in approaching it (Weatherred, 2015).

The research objectives of the present chapter are: to offer an image of the ways in which media presented cases of violence against children and to assess the ways in which the perceptions of risks associated with violence against children could be changed in the future.

**Theoretical Framework**

For the theoretical framework, we used the frame theory (Entman and Rojecki, 1993; Iyengar, 1990; Vreeseand Boomgaarden, 2003; Scheufele, 2004) and the public health model in media (Dorfman et al, 1997; Mercy et al., 1993; Chenot, 2011) – in this case we refer also to the Berkeley Media Studies Group’s work on reporting about violence using a public health perspective (Dorfman, Thorson and Stevens, 2001).

**Frame Theory of Media**

In their classic work Entman and Rojecki (1993: 52) defined frames and framing as the following process: “To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation”. Referring to the research tradition of framing theory, D’Angelo (2002) identified three central paradigms: the constructionist perspective, the critical approach and the research which used the cognitive perspective. If the constructive approach focused on the interaction between journalists and frames (Shah et al., 2010), the critical paradigm considered that frames are essentially social and that they varied from the social and cultural points of view (Ettema and Peer, 1996; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). In the meantime, the cognitive perspective assessed that framing effects were the result of the negotiation processes existing between the audience’s direct knowledge of an event and the media ways of presenting it (Baresch, Hsu and Reese, 2009).

In the existing literature, one can also identify several classifications of frames. Thus, Iyengar (1990) distinguished between two main types of media
frames: episodic frames – those cover the news in personal terms, providing specific cases, individual accounts, personal experiences, and thematic frames – which offer relevant information for wider analysis, outlining the general trends around the phenomenon or event presented through the use of statistics or data from various sources. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) also identified two different types of media frames: issue specific frames – which are used for specific media events, allowing detailed and in-depth analysis for certain events (however, this type of analysis is difficult to generalize in constructing theories) – and generic frames – these refer to different topics in various contexts and time frames, allowing generalizations of results. In his analysis, Scheufele (2004) presented other two different types of frames: formal-abstract frames (which clearly refer to a particular event or episode covered in the media) and content-related frames (which can transmit meanings centred on more global issues).

A New Perspective on Media Coverage of Violence against Children

The public health model is an approach that sees the causes of death and injury as preventable rather than inevitable. It analyses the interaction among the victims, the agent, and the environment. It seeks to define risk factors in order to develop and evaluate methods to prevent problems that threaten public health (Dorfman et al., 1997). The goal of this model is to alter the basic conditions in society that give rise to and sustain such problems (Mercy et al., 1993) and, although it is developed for use with stories of crime and violence, it has also been adopted for stories of traditional health problems, such as cancer, obesity, heart disease, and diabetes (Weatherred, 2013).

In his seminal paper, Chenot (2011) developed a model about “the vicious cycle of the media’s role in reporting child abuse”. The model presents the stages of reporting child abuse in media. It starts with a child’s death, followed by intense media interest and criminal investigation. Next, political claims, together with calls for inquiry and punishment, are made, focusing on public service accountability. After that, the implementation of minor policy and practice changes follow, and, in the last stage, the case slips into the background until a new case of child abuse reappears (Chenot, 2011).

According to the research of Thorson and Rodgers (2001), the experts (together with journalists) had to develop a methodology to help the readers or viewers of TV programs. They wanted them to learn more about the contexts in which crime and violence appear, in order for them to be more attuned to societal risk factors and causes of crime and violence. The researchers and journalists also wanted the readers/viewers to support prevention strategies, along with punishments for crime and violence within the society. From here, Berkeley Media Studies Group (Dorfman, Thorson and Stevens, 2001) had devised some areas for reporting in the media on violence from a public health perspective (see the summary in Table 1).
**Table 1. Areas of Inquiry for Reporting on Violence from a Public Health Perspective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim or Suspect</th>
<th>Victim’s or Suspect’s Family</th>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Social Environment</th>
<th>Physical Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Effects on family members</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Economic level</td>
<td>Location of violent incident: street, house, apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Effects on children – whom they live with, number of people living per room</td>
<td>Where obtained</td>
<td>Unemployment level</td>
<td>Alcohol outlet density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Economic effects</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Job opportunities</td>
<td>Number of people living per room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income/job</td>
<td>Retention of home</td>
<td>How often used in this type of violence</td>
<td>Youth employment</td>
<td>Lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>How many produced</td>
<td>Population concentration</td>
<td>Healthy community: services (parks, transportation), schools, libraries, supermarkets, entertainment centres, churches, mix of businesses, ratio of abandoned buildings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>How many sold</td>
<td>Crime level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often this incident occurs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol mores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol advertising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Costs of court, hospital, rehabilitation, convalescence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td></td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Dorfman, Thorson and Stevens, 2001)
Methodology

In this paper, we used methodological triangulation between the quantitative content analysis and qualitative content analysis.

The quantitative content analysis was made of a sample of 58 articles published in three Romanian national newspapers: Adevărul (“The Truth”), Jurnalul Național (“National Journal”), Libertatea (“The Freedom”). Under the general term “article”, we included various types of media texts published in the period of time considered. The structure of the sample was: leading articles with photos (12.1% of the entire sample), news with photo (6.9%), news without photos (6.9%), article simple with photos (50%), article simple without photos (12.1%), investigation with photos (10.3%) and interviews with photos (1.7%). Giving the fact that more than half of the sample (62.1%) was made of “articles” (writing with or without photos) we decided to use the general term of “articles” for all above-mentioned types. We define “article” as any media content published on the topic of violence against children by the Romanian media.

The period of time analysed was June 1st through December 31, 2014. All articles on the topic of violence against children published in the three newspapers in this period of time were included in the analysis. The sample has a volume of 50 articles.

The qualitative content analysis was made on a sub-sample of ten articles dealing with the same topic (violence against children) which were published in the same period of time. The procedures used for qualitative analysis were, on the one hand, the use of the linguistic method in the case of an article published in a newspaper (Deacon et al., 1999: 174-183) and, on the other, the application of the Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG) general schema found in Areas of Inquiry for Reporting on Violence from a Public Health Perspective (Dorfman, Thorson and Stevens, 2001) at some articles from the Romanian media.

Following the existing literature (Altheide and Schneider, 2013), we used both quantitative and qualitative analysis to examine the article’s text as a whole (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003; Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017; Riff et al., 2019). We proceed in an iterative manner to randomly extract a sub-sample of fifteen articles, which were first open-coded, then thematically coded (Weber, 1990; De Wever et al., 2006). On the basis of the codes extracted in the first step, we have developed a structured grid of analysis centred on: general information about the publication; the sources and “primary definers” of the situation; the data about the victim (the child) and the aggressor; the types of prevention and action against violence towards children; the mediatisation of the victim’s circuit in the legal system. The qualitative content analysis used the codes developed in the pre-testing stage and refined them for the textual analysis requested by the linguistic method (Deacon et al., 1999). The resulting codes were clustered in five main thematic codes: sources; data about the victim and the aggressor; the victim’s and aggressor’s family; social Environment for the act of violence; physical environment for the act of violence.
Analysis of the Results

The results of the quantitative analysis showed that more than half of the entire sample of articles (53%) had presented bad treatments against children, 21% of them were articles focused on child abuse and 22% of the sample had presented cases of murder committed against children.

The main type of violence against children covered in the articles included in our sample was physical violence against children, which represented almost half (48%) of the entire sample included in the analysis. Other types of violence against children presented in Romania media were: sexual violence (28%), psychological violence (10%) and economical violence (9%).

For the 74% of the entire sample, the offender was one of the parents (mother – 36% and father – 38%).

Our data showed that both the victim and the offender were characterised in Romanian media mainly from the physical point of view – 71% of articles presented the victim’s in this way and 50% of the presented the offender from that perspective. Also, 12% of the articles offered a psychological characterization of victim. But 21% of the articles characterized the offender only from social and
ethical perspectives, while 4% made this characterization when they had presented the victim. At the same time, 4% of the entire sample had not characterized the offender in any respect and 3% of the articles did not characterize the victim at all (see Figure 1).

Regarding the sources which defined the situation of violence against children, our analysis showed that there were two different types of “primary definers”: on the one hand, the persons and, on the other, the institutions or organizations.

The representative of state’s institutions (11.8%), the experts (9.7%), the victim (the child – 7.5%), doctors, a person from the aggressor’s entourage and a member of the victim’s family (each of them with 6.5%) were the most important “primary definers” of the violent situation in which the child was a victim (see Table 2).

Table 2. “Primary definers of the situation” – persons – in the articles which covered violence against children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons as “primary definers of the situation”</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The victim</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The major child</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The minor child</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A member of the victim family</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A friend of the aggressor</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A work-colleague for the aggressor</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person from the victim’s entourage</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person from the aggressor’s entourage</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Police representative</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A representative of the State’s institutions</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A representative of the Court</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Doctors</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of the Municipal Council</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of Romanian NGOs</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of international organization</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorneys</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocates</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientist</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of the Ministries, Parliament</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives from the authorities from other country</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the institutions or organizations which were the “primary definers” of the violent situation in which the child was involved, the most important were the police (18.4%), the state’s institutions (14%), hospitals (12.3%), NGOs and international organizations – each with 10.5% (see Table 3).
Table 3. “Primary definers of the situation” – institutions or organizations – in the articles that covered violence against children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions as “primary definers of the situation”</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State’s institutions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic institutions</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical data and reports</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Organizations</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministries or the Government</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs or articles from other media</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our analysis also pointed out the “neutral” way in which Romanian media covered the legal framework on fighting and preventing violence against children in Romania – 50% of the articles had made reference at the existing laws and regulations for preventing and fighting violence against children. However, they did not contain any recommendation for improving the existing situation. Also, 47% of the articles did not make any reference at the existing framework and did not make any recommendations for the future (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Mediatisation of the existing legal framework in the articles that covered violence against children](image)

The victim’s circuit in the system was not covered by the majority of the articles enclosed in the sample (73%) (see Figure 3).
At the second level of our analysis, the results of the qualitative content analysis showed that the different discursive practices, different types of positions – namely, “the voices” derived from communicative events – were used strategically and with the aim to legitimize the a certain attitude about the topic of interest (that is, violence against children).

Thus, in the case of Article A from Table 4, one could notice the relevance of source’s pre-eminence in determining the news value of an event, and the institutional credibility of the sources was hierarchically ordered. The victim’s voice was central, and it was preceded by an official “voice” in the case of this article. Next, after the victim’s statements, other official and formal “voices” were introduced in the article. In the case of Article B from the same table, the victim was generically designated (and not nominated), while the official sources were named. The journalists had stressed more on the qualification and social position for official “voices” (see Table 4).

Table 4. Examples of the hierarchy and type of sources quoted in the articles that covered violence against children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Types of source</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Types of source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irina Dumitru, the psychologist of the only Emergency Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence in Vaslui County.</td>
<td>Psychologist – expert</td>
<td>Elena, a young adolescent</td>
<td>Victim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana, mother</td>
<td>Victim</td>
<td>Lawyer Diana Teodorescu</td>
<td>Lawyer – expert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As stated at the beginning of the article, we were also interested in applying the public health model to the sample of Romanian articles. The results of using the *Areas of Inquiry for Reporting on Violence from a Public Health Perspective* had pointed out the fact that no article used all areas from this model. According to the results presented in Table 5, the most important elements from the model, which were also recorded in Romanian articles, were “the effects on the children” and “injuries” (nine articles for each of them), “the age of the victim” and “person(s) with whom the children are living” (eight articles for each of them). At the same time, no article had made reference to the “incarceration of the offender”. In addition, only two articles mentioned “death” (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** The results of using “Areas of Inquiry for Reporting on Violence from a Public Health Perspective” in the case of the articles which covered violence against children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim and Suspect according Berkeley Media Studies Group</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Victim’s or Suspect’s Family according Berkeley Media Studies Group</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of the victim</td>
<td>Eight articles</td>
<td>Effects on family members</td>
<td>Seven articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the offender</td>
<td>Four articles</td>
<td>Effects on children</td>
<td>Nine articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of the victim</td>
<td>Six articles</td>
<td>Person(s) with whom the children are living</td>
<td>Eight articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of the offender</td>
<td>Five articles</td>
<td>Economic effects</td>
<td>Six articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income/job</td>
<td>Three articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>Six articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often this incident occurs</td>
<td>Seven articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>Nine articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Seven articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>Two articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td>No mention in any article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial</td>
<td>Three articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

The existing studies of media coverage of violence against children have stressed the fact that the episodic nature of news coverage of this type of violence has remained constant (Beckett, 1996; Cheit, Shavit and Reiss-Davis, 2010), but in recent years some researchers have suggested that media advocacy shifts attribution from the individualistic to societal view of this issue (Weatherred, 2017).

Our analysis has indicated a predominance of the episodic incidence of violence against children in Romanian newspapers. The majority of Romanian articles analysed contained only the details of the particular incident without other thematic information that would give the reader an understanding of the broader social context of violence against children. In the articles analysed, there has been no information about the social environment (What was the economic level of the locality where the violent act took place; what was the level of the unemployment level and the job opportunities in this locality; what was the crime level in general?) or about the physical one (What were the characteristics of the location where the violent act took place; what was the main traits of the access to public services in this location). Much more, there was no reference to previous acts of violence against children in Romania—no statistics cited, no comparison with other countries as Dorfman, Thorson and Stevens (2001) had suggested to be done by journalists when covering this topic.

On the other hand, the police, the courts, the state’s institutions and the Romanian media were the main “definers of the situations” for the coverage of this type of violence (e.g. violence against children).

The quantitative content analysis showed that Romanian newspapers tend to follow: the same “editorial logic” in the case of violence against children; The appeal to the police as the “primary definer” of the violent situation; the stress put on the dramatic and personalized characteristics of a violent event involving children; the presentation of the individual (and not the collective) actors in such acts.

In the case of the qualitative content analysis, our results pointed out the fact that the violence against children in Romanian media’s reporting was presented predominantly as isolated incidents, and there was no attempt to include any patterns that were caused by external, contextual factors that should themselves be examined.

This specific way of reporting violence against children was not linked until now to the more general issues of exploring the journalists’ practices which allowed it or to the difference between journalists and social scientists as regards the issue. Some elements that may offer some indications regarding these aspects appear in the research about the issues of media and domestic violence or journalism and violence against women. Thus, in her analysis of media coverage of violence against women, Comas-d’Argemir (2015) showed that Spanish journalists interviewed requested more clear concepts (they invoked the confusion between “violence against women” vs. “sexist violence”) and a greater concordance between the terms used by the laws, the authorities and the media. They also do
not assess that information violence against women can have a copycat effect at
the society’s level. In another study made in Australia, Simons and Morgan (2018)
pointed out the difference between newspapers and commercial TV stations as
regards the change of the way in which violence against women was covered in
a more contextualized manner. In the case of Australian newspapers, the change
of the police’s attitude has led to a more general presentation of the topic, while
in the case of private TV stations’ coverage of violent acts against women social
media played a key role in changing the journalists’ perspectives on the issue. The
research made by Cullen, O’Brien and Corcoran (2019) showed that in the case of
Irish media, the input from editors places greater scrutiny on journalists working
on domestic violence stories and this, in turn, produces a “chilling effect”, with
reporters and editors covering only stories with clear court outcomes, which are
“safer” rather than pursuing more investigative, open-ended stories on gender
violence regimes. Because of the absence of this type of study in Romania, we
could only assume that some of the aforementioned factors could be at work in the
case of media coverage of violence against children.

For the articles which dealt with the relation between violence against children
and health, the analysis indicated the lack of some elements were absent from
media coverage: the contextual details on the incidence of violence; the statistics
of economic and social aspects related to violence against children; and what are
the economic, social and health-related consequences of violence against children
beyond direct legal implications.

Those results lead us to agree with Rodgers and Thorson (2001: 169) thesis:
“Despite the fact that physicians, public health experts, epidemiologists, and social
scientists now use the public health model to study violence, it seems clear that
newspapers do not”.

The Romanian media has covered the social problem of violence against
children mainly within a “crime frame”. Our findings are in line with other
researches (Weatherred, 2017: 15-17; Lonne and Parton, 2014: 831; Mejia, Cheyne
and Dorfman, 2012: 474) which showed that violence against children is over-
represented as a criminal matter in the news. The emphasis on individual cases, put
in dramatic formats, lead to the presentation of the act of violence against children
as “self-contained, isolated happenings” (Gamson et al., 1992: 387).

But, as Dorfman et al. (1997: 1312) has noticed, while a thematic frame is
not necessarily synonymous with a public health approach, broader coverage that
includes etiological factors contributing to violence remains consistent with a
public health approach.

Taking into account the results of our analysis, we advocate for a different
approach of media coverage of violence against children in Romanian media.
From the perspective of Romanian journalists’ work, this would be equivalent to
understanding of the fact that violence and criminality are general social problems
and that they are not isolated or accidental. In addition, such an approach would
be equivalent to the fact that the prevention of violence would become a subject
of public interest, and that the model of public health in the media would argue
that “violence is not inevitable but can be prevented”. Applied to the media
coverage of violence against children, the public health outlook would also lead audience members (ordinary people and public officials) to assign responsibility for producing these acts to society as a whole and lead to action to try to identify appropriate solutions for distinct cases of violence.

References:


Lost Childhood – the Consequences of Growing up in Care What is the Quality of Life Like for the Girls and Boys Growing up in Homes for Children in Bulgaria?

Zhenya Ivanova

Abstract: Unfortunately, still too many children in Bulgaria are growing up away from their families. Children from disadvantaged groups are overrepresented in care, they experience severe institutionalised discrimination based on their ethnicity, social status, mental health, physical disability, and are often placed and grow up in unacceptable living conditions with a low quality of care.¹ This chapter is based on dissertation findings, built on in-depth individual interviews with minors growing up in homes for children lacking parental care in Bulgaria. The dissertation findings are additionally supported with data² collected during the author’s participation in different research concerning the same group of children’s homes.

Keywords: Children, Residential care, Institutionalisation

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¹ Key findings of a two-year international project called “Children deprived of liberty in Central and Eastern Europe: Between Legacy and Reform” implemented by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) as leading organization, 2014, pp. 292-300. The author of the present chapter is one of the main researchers in the project.

² The word data in this chapter is used with the meaning of sociological research’s findings.
Introduction

The chapter aims to reveal accurately the current life situation of children who grow up in residential homes and who are deprived of a family environment in Bulgaria. It starts with an overview of the ongoing childcare reform, continues by describing the child protection system, and introduces some statistic data. Later, the chapter is focused on homes for school-age children, deprived of parent care in Bulgaria. These types of homes are included in a qualitative research, a case study between Bulgaria, Greece and the Netherlands, as part of the author’s sociology dissertation (in progress). The represented data is collected mainly through individual in-depth interviews with children living in institutions and are supported with findings during the author’s systematic visits as a human rights researcher in child residential services. The critical view of the author is justified by the alarming findings concerning the life of the children in care. The chapter clarifies that there is an urgent need of an unprecedented avenue for total cultural transformation of the social care for children in the country.

Child Care System Reform in Bulgaria

Nowadays, there are different types of residential child services in Bulgaria which function under the authority of five different Ministries – the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and the Ministry of Health. It is a heavy and vast system of state bodies divided into several main subsystems – the child protection system, the juvenile delinquency system, the criminal justice system, as well as institutions for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

Historically, until 1934, the charities had the priority in caring for children without parents. After that period, all forms of charity in the social sphere are forbidden; the well-developed network of organizations involved in child care is destroyed by 1945 and caring for children became a purely state activity. The years between 1945 – 1989 can be defined as the period of institutionalisation of social care for children during which the state encourages the abandonment of illegitimate children and children with disabilities in order to maintain high public morals. A policy aimed at the rights of children in Bulgaria can be discussed after the adoption of the Child Protection Act in 2000.

The process of de-institutionalisation of the childcare institutions in Bulgaria started on July 1st, 2010 with the “Childhood for All” project. The political project was aiming to close 137 institutions (Institutions for children with developmental disabilities, institutions that provided medical and social care for children, and institutions for children deprived of parental care) housing 5,695 children and replacing it with alternative services – family-type (residential) accommodation centres (FTACs), sheltered houses, day care centres for children with disabilities, social rehabilitation and integration centres, etc., until 2025 (BHC, 015). De-institutionalisation is expressed by preventing the placement of children into institutional care, replacing institutional child care with community-based family,
or placing children in close-to-family-environment care, and taking measures across social services and social assistance sectors.

The Bulgarian Child Protection System consists of specialized child protection bodies, which include the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection and the “Social Assistance” Directors at the Agency for Social Assistance. The Directorate of “Social Assistance” is a body of child protection services at the local level, within which operates the “Child Protection” department (CPD). CPD social workers are the specialists who take protective measures for children.

The big number of children living in social residential services shows that the Bulgarian child protection system fails to ensure the right that children have to live with their families. The large number of children in care is a clear sign that the authorities responsible for child protection services are not competent enough to ensure that children’s rights are protected. They cannot protect the best interest of the child and the support of children and families. The Bulgarian legislation in the field of children and the principles preventing child abandonment, support the parents and place children in institutions only in extreme cases. However, they obviously do not correspond with international standards in the field of children’s rights. The local authorities for child protection services are not making sufficiently competent efforts to prevent abandonment, to reintegrate children, and to provide socio-psychological support and financial assistance, which are essential parts of the work in prevention, reintegration, and placement with relatives or in foster care. The extremely important individual approach in addressing cases is often missing, and the specific needs of every child are automatically neglected. Despite the declining number of the specialized institutions and the children living in them, at the end of 2017, the number of 11,641 children live separated from their families (National Network for Children, 2018). Every year around 2,000 children in Bulgaria are separated from their families (UNICEF, 2018). The number of children raised outside their biological families remains alarmingly high and the poverty, too, remains among the main reasons for accommodation of children in homes in the country.

The Bulgarian state authorities do not admit that the children in care are actually children deprived of liberty, and that the child social residential homes/services are functioning as closed institutions (BHC, 2014). According to the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the United Nations against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2002, Art 4(2)) and the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty – Havana Rules (1990, Art. 11b), the running regulation norms of children’s institutions replicate the placement procedure and the living conditions of closed institutions, such as police custody facilities, detention facilities, and reformatories; the children growing up in social residential care in Bulgaria are deprived of liberty.

During the process of de-institutionalisation, Bulgaria becomes “The country of family-type accommodation centres” (FTACs). Children are transferred to the new FTACs, each with a capacity up to 14 children, which in many cases, turn into formalistic services, and extend the institutional stereotypes of exclusion (BHC, 2015: 82). Unfortunately, the placements in the new family-type accommodation centres are aimed at filling their capacity to the maximum, without considering
individual specifics of the children and their freedom. Such practices are a travesty of de-institutionalisation and provision of quality care. The applied approach is not child-centred, contains alarming “dehumanising elements” and contradicts the rights and needs of the children (BHC, 2014: 83). Furthermore, the state does not track whether and how children’s quality of life has changed after the transfer into the new institutions. There are already alarming signals of abuse through years of the existence of the new family-type centres.

Children are systematically not given water; water is used to dilute food. Children are often hospitalised for dehydration. No quality personal care is provided, ears are not cleaned, nails are not cut… Treatment often recurs to slapping. The staff puts an overexcited child in its room and ties the door handle from the outside with a pantyhose. We’ve seen the same child eating its diapers, excrement all over him and the walls… Children are often called idiots, retarded, decumbent… (BHC, 2015: 116)

This transfer of the children to FTACs is accompanied with state inter-departmental wars, formalistic evaluations, lack of any real preparation for the big change, lack of adequate decisions and administrative chaos. The most serious problem with the FTACs consists in the fact that the number of unspecialized staff predominates. The staff lacks the competence necessary for coping with children’s complex problems and needs – the old story of a new voice. For the majority of de-institutionalised children, such change ends at the very entrance of their new “home”. By the end of 2017, a total 3,116 children live in 282 FTACs, and there has been a six-fold increase of the number of small group homes – from 48 in 2010 to 282 homes, of which 145 are for children and young people without disabilities (BHC, 2018: 139).

From the beginning of the de-institutionalisation, the number of adoptions nationwide and the number of the adoptive parents in Bulgaria are steadily decreasing. There are 2,421 children (from which 1,310 are healthy children) who are written in the Adoptions Register in 2017. The number of the adopted children dropped to 507 in comparison to 2010, when the adopted children were numbered at 838 (BHC, 2017: 145-146). Although the last couple of years the number of the foster parents has increased ten times – from 221 in 2010 to 2,446 (2,424 professional and 22 voluntary) in 2017 – there is a problem with the unoccupied places in foster care, where 504 foster families do not have children placed with them (BHC, 2018: 146). Elder children, those with disabilities, and those with antisocial behaviour are not particularly desired, and there is total lack of specialised foster care for these three categories.

**Children Deprived of Parent Care and Growing up at Residential Homes**

The chapter focuses on homes (HCDPCs) for school-age children (7 – 18 (20) year-old) without serious physical or mental difficulties and who are deprived of parental care. Those homes are specialised residential institutions for children
which should provide social services as food, shelter, education and space for play and leisure in a caring environment. They fall under the authority of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and are governed by the mayor of the municipality on whose territory they belong. The HCDPCs provide social services for children at risk\(^3\) who are placed under the Child Protection Act (2000, Art. 1) and Social Assistance Act (1998, Art. 1(1)) with a measure for permanent, weekly or daily care. According to the Child Protection Act, a child at risk is one whose parents are deceased, unknown, with restricted/suspended custody, or who have left the child without their care for a lengthy period of time. Also, a child at risk is one who is a victim of abuse, violence, exploitation or any other form of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment within or outside the family. A child at risk is one for which there is a threat of harm to its physical, mental, moral, intellectual, or social development. The term “child at risk” also refers to one who has a disability or a medical condition that requires specialised care as established by a medical professional. And finally, child at risk is the one for whom there is a danger of dropping out of school or one that has dropped out of school (2000).

Placement in HCDPCs is not connected to the children’s health or any other behavioural specificity. The successors to the former orphanages are “homes” for a broad group of children placed in them and only a few (2%) of the boys and girls growing up there have a deceased parent (BHC, 2014). Through the years, owing to the process of the de-institutionalisation and to the significant decline in birth rates in the country, the number of children living in specialized institutions, and especially in HCDPCs, has dropped significantly, from 7,587 children in 2010 to 1,232 in June 2016 (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2016). At the end of 2017, the number of HCDPCs drops from 137 in 2010 to 20, with 414 children placed there (BHC, 2018). Some of the reasons for which the children leave the HCDPCs nowadays are: placement at family-type centre, reintegration into their biological families or with the extended family, reaching the age of maturity, placement in foster care, adoption, transfer to another institution of the same type, placement in a transitional home, placement in a correctional boarding school, in a social-pedagogical boarding school, or a reformatory, transfer to a social educational professional centre, etc. Often many children in care are moved from one place to another; during their life in care they spend time in different residential services. Such a great change – moving the children to a totally new home environment – happens without any warning and pre-training. Children are literally torn off not only from the place they live but from all people with whom they grow up, and find themselves in an absolutely new place with strangers and without any psychological support.

With a certain age, or because of some of the above-mentioned reasons, the children in long-term care change not only about the type of home but also the populated area. The populated area where the institution is situated and where the children are placed is not necessarily related to the place where their family comes

\(^3\) Child Protection Act, Supplementary provisions, 11, 2000.
from, which is one of the reasons for the sporadic or the total lack of contact with their home. More than half of the children in HCDPCSs are in long-term residential care and they spend years in the institutions without any contact with their families (BHC, 2014). Most children growing up in HCDPCSs come from their biological families and the rest are coming from other institutions and services. Three times as many Roma children as Bulgarian children are placed in these institutions, and this proportion remains steady through the years. (BHC, 2014) Very often, poverty is the only motive to remove a child from the family environment. According to the Child Protection Act (2000), the placement in HCDPCSs is a measure of last resort after all other possibilities have been exhausted. Unfortunately, this is not the case of most children living in the institutions in Bulgaria. The common motive for taking the children out of their family is bad material conditions, insufficient parental capacity, and the need to re-educate and handle a child’s anti-social behaviour. There is no legislative provision that requires that the child to be placed in institution near their parents or relatives; there the child does not keep any connection with their family. The length of placement in an institution is determined by the court and may vary for a specific period of time – it could be at the age of maturity, or have no time limit – until the grounds for protection are no longer valid. Because of that, the child spends years in an institution (or institutions). There is a total lack of connection between the initial risk assessment for placement and the monitoring of the reasons for placement of the children in institutions, which automatically revoke the chances of taking them out and successfully reintegrating them with their family. For the children who spend long years in institutions and isolation, it is really difficult to become socially integrated and to continue their adult life in the society.

The HCDPCs are housed in huge, dangerous, and chaotic old buildings that lack a child-friendly appearance (BHC, 2014). The huge size of the buildings makes it impossible to control everything that happens in them. Because of this, many of the administrators of the homes resort to other extremes, as they totally restrict access out of and into the home. As a result, the children live in isolation, which can very easily become a prerequisite for abuse.

The children spend years in the same building without having a word with whom they would like to share a room. The main criterion for accommodating children in the same room is the lack of obvious and frequent conflicts between them. Inside, there is very easy access to the children’s room, which is a prerequisite for frequent theft, lack of privacy and personal space, bullying, abuse, conflicts, etc. Children are raised in conditions that do not teach them to distinguish boundaries in interpersonal relationships and to respect personal space. Their personal space is seriously limited. One of the big problems inside the big institutions is the safe access to the lavatories, which are shared and insufficient in number. This problem is strongly expressed through the night, when the only night educator is usually missing somewhere in the big building, and the younger, vulnerable, and

\[\text{4} \text{ Child Protection Act (2000), Art.3, (2).} \]
\[\text{5} \text{ Child Protection Act (2000), Art 27, para.1} \]
defenceless children can be sexually abused by stronger children. Because of that reason, many children prefer to piss in their beds rather than to go to the toilet. On top of this, those children are punished by the educators for their urination at night, mostly by deprivation of something, without finding out, in most of the cases, the real reason for their behaviour.

The general hygiene in the institution is substandard – the bathrooms are often out of order, lacking an acceptable level of hygiene; they are common, insufficient and have limited access. Many children have problems with their personal hygiene, which is clear sign of neglect and frequently found at the beginning of and/or deepening of psychological suffering. The children’s rooms usually lack proper hygiene as well, but also, quite often, lack basic furnishing. There is a big difference in the treatment of different children, which can be seen with regards to the amount of personal belongings – clothes, furnishings, money, toys, etc., which automatically reflect on the children’s popularity among the rest of the inmates. The material possessions are of great value among the boys and girls growing up in institutions. In most of the cases, those who possess the most material objects are those who physically and mentally dominate over the rest. The “disappearance” and the “borrowing” of different items without the knowledge of their owners is a frequent cause of conflict between the children. Many children growing up in institutions get money and material items through begging, theft and prostitution (BHC, 2014: 235). The food for the children placed in HCDPC is bad quality – not only does it taste bad and lack nutritional variety, it is insufficient, and many children do not have access to food outside meal times. Those children spend their monthly pocket money (the same monthly personal allowance for all of them) mainly on food, but some of them possess more money from other sources and can afford more food. Often, depending on the attitudes of the staff of the institutions, some children are deprived of food for punishment, and others are given extra as encouragement. The food in the institution is one of the leading reasons for conflict between the children, and between the children and the staff (BHC, 2014: 225). Shoes and clothes come mainly from donations and many children wear them even if they do not like them, but others who have more money than the rest have different and better outwards appearance, which is clearly demonstrated. In comparison with ten years ago, the general outward appearance of the children living in institutions is much better – better clothes, better hairstyles, and better shoes, and still many children in care wear mainly second-hand clothing.

The share of children living in institutional care who have some disabilities and/or some chronic and other diseases is too high (BHC, 2014: 226). Despite that the children suffer from different chronic diseases, mental and neurological illnesses, inborn malformations, different degrees of learning disabilities, physical disabilities, multiple disabilities, and being underweight, the health care for them varies. In many of the child institutions there is no medical position at all. In others there is such a position, but there is no medical stuff who wants to work there. Therefore, the medical needs of the children are assessed by the unqualified staff of the institution. In the few institutions where some medical stuff is appointed by the respective municipality, they do not exercise their duties independently of the institution. The medical care is provided by external general practitioners
and dentists, and the children’s access to them is a subject to a staff assessment. The lack of access to quality, independent health care leads automatically to the impossibility of prevention and combating the children’s abuse and their ill treatment in the context of institutionalisation and beyond it. In spite of numerous cases of abuse of children by personnel, “there were no cases in which medical staff had established or documented such incidents” (BHC, 2014: 227). The situation with the psychological care in the institution is even worse and can be characterized as absent. The children placed in HCDPC do not have access to a thorough medical examination upon admission and have limited or no such access during their stay in the institution, which makes impossible the identification of existing difficulties and leads to their deepening. Many of those children unlock physical and mental illnesses after the placement. The institutionalisation, together with their health diseases, mental illnesses, and learning disabilities make the children growing up in institutions extremely vulnerable. All this, together with the fact that some of the children are lured into prostitution, engaged in trafficking, and use drugs, puts the health and lives of the children in serious danger.

In general, every child who lives in an institution has an individual care plan but in practice, a genuine assessment of the children’s needs does not take place. The children are not aware of the existence of such an individual plan, do not have any access to their personal files, and automatically are not aware of the facts concerning their placement and duration of stay in the institution. What children know for sure is that they are abandoned and unwanted. Their everyday life is boring, monotonous and depressive, filled with bitterness, conflicts, suffering, and fear. The approach to the organization of leisure activities for those children is formalistic, documentary-based and their needs, opinion and desires are not taken into account. The organized walks, trips, camps and different events from the side of the institutions include only children from the particular institution and sometimes children from different social institutions, which increase their exclusion and stigmatization. The unprofessional approach and the limited financial means of the institutions to organize children’s leisure results in its low quality and real social isolation of the institutionalised children. Quite often, children’s unorganized “leisure time” includes inactivity (doing nothing, lying on the bed, watching TV, aimlessly wandering), boredom, conflicts, aggression, violence, running away, vagrancy, begging, theft, prostitution, and trafficking.

Children growing up in institutions are enrolled in community school, where the main criterion for the choice of school is the proximity to the institution and the willingness of the directors of the schools to accept those children in them. The truancy is a big problem for the institutionalised children who run away from bad attitude, embarrassment, lack of knowledge, failure, boredom, etc., which they meet every day at school. They are usually stigmatized at school because the others know that they are “orphans”. The behavioural problems and the intellectual and learning disabilities of many of the children placed in HCDPCs are not diagnosed correctly or are not established at all, and that is why they are not taken into account, which leads to unrealistic assessments and ineffective educational support at their schools. At the institutions additional educational classes is not ensured, although there is a regulated time for this and one of the main reasons for that is the lack
of staff in general, and the lack of specialized personnel for that in particular. The children’s educational level is low and do not correspond to their grade.

Most of the children placed in social institutions have families, parents, and relatives but do not maintain frequent contact with them, and in many cases do not keep contact at all. The longer the stay of the child in institution, the more excluded he or she is from the outside world, with restricted contact and lack of communication. Going to public schools do not help them make friends out of the institution. Children who live in HCDPCs receive attention from outside world – donations, visits, organized activities, mainly when the public holidays are near.

The high workload, the low remuneration, the lack of opportunities for career development, the lack of systematic external supervision, the inefficiency of the security services, etc. make the personnel of HCDPCs not motivated to work with children and result in high emotional tension and cases of aggression against the children. In fact, the people who work in institutions do this job because they lack another possible perspective to make a living. In most cases they are totally unqualified to work in such place even if they acquire some additional qualifications and training.

Working mechanisms through which the children can file a complaint or report a violation do not exist. In the majority of the cases what happens in the institutions stays in the institutions.

The violence between the children occurs daily and it is not a secret to anyone. The cases of physical violence from the side of the staff towards the children are considerably decreasing in comparison with the years before de-institutionalisation but this does not mean that such violence does not exist. Nowadays, the violence against children is even harder to be uncovered because the abusers are much more cautious. The long-term institutionalisation put the children at high risk of psychological, physical, and sexual violence and exploitation, both from the staff and other cohabitants as well as people from outside the institutions. Most of the children living in institutions cannot voice their opinion and cannot speak openly about what is happening behind the institution’s walls and beyond them.

Conclusions

There are thousands lost childhoods out there – unwanted and abandoned children from their own parents and families; moved from institution to institution as objects; used in political games as numbers; stigmatized, isolated and deprived from liberty by the society; unnecessarily detained in the social homes as a means of subsistence for local workers; subjects in the name of clearing a society’s guilty conscience during the holidays, when we all become better and more generous for a while; innocent children trapped in the bottomless gap between becoming victims of various crimes and committing various crimes because they know nothing else; and so on. Of course, there are people, involved in the child protection system, who are trying every day to do everything possible always in search of a best solution for the children at risk. In most cases their attempts failed against the background of the long term established childcare practices. From “the inside” the
reality discussed is much more complicated than it looks when simply applying the documental requirements. Fortunately, the HCDPCs are about to remain in history soon, but it will be hard to be forget them, especially from the tens of thousands of children who grew up in them. Someone will say that it is better for children to live in a family-type centre than in a large institution. This is not a solution to the problem – It is a multiplication of the problem into many small variations. The family-type centres are the next compromise in these child’s lives. Every child needs a real family, not compromises. No child deserves such a life. No child deserves lost childhood.

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The World of the Foster Child or How Do Lives of Children-at-Risk Change When Put in a Foster Family Environment?

Hristinka Basheva

Abstract: The topic of foster care is particularly relevant recently in Bulgaria. Since this topic was introduced in the country, the service has gradually been refined in one direction, but has not yet been fully accepted by the society as an idea and concept. Parallel controversial attitudes towards foster care are visible: from appreciation and improvement attempts, to frustration and rejection. This article intents to deal with such differentiating opinions on the basis of intensive fieldwork research conducted by the author in the last years in some Bulgarian regions. The method in the article is a comparative description and analysis of field materials from four cities and surrounding areas – Vratsa, Sofia, Plovdiv, Smolyan.

Keywords: Children at risk; Foster children; Foster parents; Childhood.

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The idea of the alternative care for children is to create conditions in which they can develop and grow in an environment similar to that of a loving biological family. In sense of the legal framework in Bulgaria, foster care is a measure of protection and social service. Through “foster care“, an attempt is made to prevent the consequences of related negative circumstances on the affected children. Families chosen to host foster children provide both individual care and a family pattern of attitude and behavior, as well as a sense of security built through a privileged relationship with a significant adult. However, the childhood of these children is filled with many turning points – it can be good and enjoyable, but it is
also problematic and demands a serious debate. At first glance, statistics are based on personal stories and do not differ from many other stories described for children in the care setting. But on the other, it assesses life events through representations of childhood tranquility, and are used to make sure that the children’s family is well integrated into the system, and peace and security are provided for the children.

There are a few reasons why I came to the idea of this subject, whose content I find socially important and especially vivid “in” and “for” the current Bulgarian society. The outputs of the text can be presented with the following arguments:

1) The future of the foster child is largely determined by the choice of the foster family appointed to take care of it;

2) Presenting the complex world of the foster child in the media with good and bad examples is a necessary point of reference;

3) The fate of the foster children, which is at the heart of the plot of many novels in the literature, still remains an untapped, though extremely valuable, source of reconstruction of their world – it is still unknown publically what happens when the children are sent to foster parents and how this affects their future.

The subject of this chapter are the children at risk, and the specific goal of the study is to mark major events that determine the development of foster care and, hence, the particular picture of the childhood of foster children. In other words, the idea of these lines is to show the world of foster children through the eyes of foster parents and society, as well as to highlight some turning points in the lives of children at risk when getting into foster families. The research interviews have been conducted in the spring and summer of 2017. For the purpose of the analysis, some ideas and thoughts taken from the literature are added to the material. Much of this is done with the assistance of social workers from other urban cities than the interviewed. Fewer meetings were organized by relatives and acquaintances. In order to become foster parents and to receive children for fostering, the candidates (both families or single people) should undergo lots of talks and read lots of materials – scientific and from the media, also fill plenty of documents. I consider my article a step forward to a thoroughpersonal investigation of the problem in some Bulgarian regions, where foster carers today look back to their initial problems, to the help they got from social media services, and share their memories and opinions. Based on the stories of foster families collected during personal field surveys (conducted by me and intended to be supported by my research guides on the subject) from the towns of Smolyan, Plovdiv, Vratsa and Sofia (about 20 interviews done), an attempt is made to illustrate the world of the foster children. This is a world modeled by the adults: biological parents and extended family, foster family, social workers and adopters.

Foster care enters Bulgaria in the mid-1990s as a pilot practice of individual organizations. The first training programs for foster-families-to-be have been adapted from other countries. Gradually, the national norms regulating foster care have been created also in Bulgaria – at present they include the Child Protection Act and its Implementing Regulations, the Ordinance on Criteria and Standards for Social Services, the Ordinance on the Conditions and Procedures for Application, Selection and Approval of the Foster Families and placement of children and Methodology for the conditions and the way of providing the social service “Foster care” (Nalbantova, Koicheva, 2016).
During the transition years in Bulgaria since 1989, all the major social factors that were susceptible to change, reflected also on the children: poverty; sharp increase in crime, drug addiction, and other deviations in the behavior in minors; increasing the number of children not attending and dropping out of school; prostitution, begging, disobedience; an increase in the number of abandoned children; increased violence against children, including murder (including by their parents); accelerated aggression among children; labor exploitation of children. All this calls for wide public scrutiny and the adoption of an updated modern Child Protection Act, in which the rights, principles and measures of child protection by the state authorities and the interaction among the institutions in carrying out this activity have to be written, as well as the participation of individuals and legal organizations (Spasov, 2011). Against the backdrop of many abandoned children (for various reasons), the theme of alternative care towards them becomes particularly relevant not only nationally, but also globally.

By conducting a specialized ethnological survey in the above-mentioned regions of Bulgaria, my personal observations show some difficulties in the field work: I will begin with the fact that the foster parents are hardly letting themselves contact people who wish to investigate their work, which I noticed myself during some interviews, especially when taken without a consent of a social worker. In one case, this is a service provider – the municipality and its respective services. Reaching to foster families was, by itself, related to a tough administrative and organizational work on admission to official state and non-governmental institutions and childcare authorities who had to authorize research, provide names and opportunities for meetings with foster parents, to inform themselves. No matter how delicate the questionnaires were prepared and meetings organized, the difficulty came from the essence of parental behavior: they are not allowed to export information about foster carers. Most of the meetings with foster parents were not only solved and organized by the social workers in the respective municipalities, but in many cases they also took place in their presence. Another part of the meetings with foster parents took place through acquaintances who helped to implement them. Quite normal and expected, the foster parents who shared thoughts without the presence of social workers, were more honest and relaxed – they talked about the pros and cons of the system as they saw them. While the other group was more restrained, talking of the love of the “foster parent” profession, obviously paying attention to the social workers and trying not to mention any details how the children were being placed with them, because any information about the children is protected, but speaking mostly about the procedure and the service as a whole.

All the foster parents I met during my fieldwork studies shared their concern about separation from the foster child in case of adoption. They all expressed the opinion that growing in a family environment cannot be achieved without affection between the sides, but especially if there is no attachment to the child. If such feeling is lacking, the foster parent simply becomes the next person in child’s life, who is obliged to cook, clean and wash his clothes; but affection is not there.

Below I provide some examples of how to adapt foster children to foster families and their lifestyle. I will start with examples from the town of Vratsa – a
city known for its high unemployment. Mass foster parents there prefer to look after older children, as opposed to the Smolyan region, where the preferences are to care for babies (of course, there are exceptions): Milena\(^1\) is a hairdresser from the town of Vratsa, a foster parent for one year by the time of our meeting, and says about her foster child, who was soon adopted:

No one believed that this was my foster child. The other day I spoke to a mother from the crib where I had registered the child, she saw me and asked where my baby was. I told her it was taken from me and she was very scared. Then I added that I was a foster parent, and she said it did not look like this at all.

Vanya is a salesperson by profession from the same city, and she recalls some childhood stories about her foster child:

When I took her, she was in a rather wretched form. She had a wound on her forehead, constantly talking about blood, about how the policeman would come and they would hide under the table with her brother, even in the kindergarten there were only just “blood talks”. She had obviously been taught also to steal, because the first time I took her to the store, she tried to steal.

This illustrates the model example of values, the birth parents taught their child, and outlines the world that the foster parent must change. In the present case, Vanya, having learned of the stealing of a chocolate bar by the foster child, went back to the store and explained the situation, emphasizing to the child that this was a wrong-doing.

Marina is a foster parent from Plovdiv, a teacher by profession. She tells about one of her foster children:

Yes, it was very difficult to teach him to walk on the street, there was obviously an underdevelopment in his motor skills, because they [the birth parents or the carers in the state care – H.B.] haven’t taken him for a walk, not even in the yard, he stayed all the time inside in the rooms. At every second step he stumbled and fell and I even told the psychologist of the Foundation that this child had no developed self-preservation. The other children, when they fall, put their hands in front and he falls head-on. Everyone catches up, I even thought it would happen in a few months, but it takes years and there is no guarantee that he will catch up.

Another one of the foster children witnessed the murder of his little brother and could for hours talk about cemeteries, funerals and human parts.

Kalina from Plovdiv is a foster parent since 2015-2016 and maintains a connection with the adoptive parents of her foster children:

Yes, I maintain the contact, and I even agreed to be a godmother of the child, they often call me, they tell me what the baby is doing. Before the child was taken, I had written 3-4 sheets with information for the adopters about what the baby was eating, what he loved, and all sorts of instructions. We have good relationships, but there may be also another situation, but especially I am open-hearted and whenever they ask me I’ll help.

\(^1\) In accordance with the Data Protection Regulation, the names of the individuals listed are only changed personal name.
Myra and Orlin are a foster family from the city of Sofia. They have been approved to foster two children. At the time of our meeting, they had already fostered a brother and a sister, also triplets, and now they have two children staying with them, who are not related. They believe brothers and sisters shouldn’t be separated, therefore they have chosen such a profile. My meeting with them was also attended by their foster children, two boys of age more than a year, who were not in a relationship. They do not have biological children, but later I learned from another informant from Sofia that they had adopted one of the boys. This family alters the fate of foster children because they care for children in a family relationship and so social workers are not forced to separate them.

Along with foster parents, social workers also change children’s childhood. Here’s what a social worker from the foster care team shared in Smolyan: “We had a child who was adopted in Italy. One year after we have placed the child in a foster family, he asked me to cuddle and thank me, and these are not single cases.” I wish to clarify that in the foster care process, social workers from the Child Protection Department are responsible and carefully watch the foster child at home, while the social workers from the District foster care team watch the foster parents.

A woman – foster mother from the town of Madan, district of Smolyan, says that she has a profile of 0-3 years, with the same profile being the other foster families from the city:

I was with this profile from the very beginning, at one time I thought to get a profile for older children, but I gave up. Because it is different, if I get a younger one. Older children have habits, and the other thing is that I find it very difficult to break up with the child when adopted. And I think that when you receive a bigger child, he will speak, he will know everything, will stay longer and I will get more attached because such children are not adopted here, they go for international adoption.

The motives of this foster mother are logical. But nevertheless, she says she still gets closely attached to the child, even knowing that the foster child has found her adoptive parents to embrace him with love.

The world of foster children is often presented in the media, where there are many articles and reports on foster care, all of which are of a different nature, and have a different focus and purpose: most of them describe personal stories of foster families, others comment on the legal issues, discuss the qualities and rights of foster parents; there are also such that enter into the psychological and economic problems of the program, etc., but the public speaking on the subject outweighs the negative examples, regardless of the specific subject of the material (Basheva, 2017).

Here are some examples. The first one is recorded in spring of 2018 in Vratsa:

Two families from Vratsa were deleted from the Register of foster parents in May, after proven violations during inspections of social workers. This was announced by the Director of the Regional Directorate “Social Assistance”.

The article also states the reasons for this:

One family is seriously wronged because the husband is caught driving drunk and is being convicted. This is a sufficient reason for the foster family to be removed from the register as it puts the life and health of the children in the family at risk.
In the other family, the problem is with care for the child there:

During their visits, colleagues from the regional foster care team have often found that the room in which the child is sleeping is unheated, and it sleeps with a hood on its head. In the comments made by the foster parents, they explained that the child was “quenched”. The other reason is that the funds allocated to child care are not used for his needs as it is found to have a scarce number of clothes that are mostly second or third hand and his personal wardrobe fit in 2 plastic bags.

The next example is the organization of an exhibition called “Childhood in Foster care”, which recreates emotional moments from everyday routine of foster families – both from the parents and children. The organizers of the exhibition are the National Association of Foster Care (NASG) and one of the mobile operators. “Behind every photograph the story of a child is hidden, also of a parent, but mostly a person. And these life stories interweave and change for the better. The smiles in the foster families are one of the most sincere emotion ever captured by my lens. These are stories that we must continue to tell”, says the photographer Radic Banev, who met with and photographed 20 families from 10 Bulgarian cities. “The exhibition is not only in honor of the kids. With it, we celebrate the love and care that foster parents give to their children every day. The foster parents are adopting parents – they take care of children who are in trouble, no matter whether they have emotional or health problems and what their ethnicity is,” said Mtel corporate communications director Iliyana Zaharieva. “We are grateful to the National Foster Care Association that we have been able to help foster families in Bulgaria for the fourth year,” she added. “We, foster parents, sometimes face serious challenges – from our misunderstanding of our work in society, to real problems in caring for abandoned children that we have accepted. I am happy that with this exhibition we show the happy face of the children at risk – most of them have come to their foster parents without talking, eating normally and without knowing how to love,” commented Maria Blagoeva, a member of the Board The National Foster Care Association, as well as a foster parent.

The difficult way of life for the children in the foster care system is the inspiration for many novelists and creators of children’s films. I will give an example with two novels. The first one is Vanessa Difenbo, the author of a novel about the life of a girl who, after her adulthood, comes out of the foster care system. Once out of the system, she has no place to go, like many other children with the same fate. Victoria, the heroine in the novel, spends nights in the park where she creates a secret garden. A local florist soon discovers her talent for arranging flowers and offers her a job (Difenbo, 2012). The next novel is Christina Baker Klein’s “The Orphan’s Train,” with the rights to translate the novel are sold to more than 28 countries. In general, the storyline revolves around an almost 18-year-old foster girl (Molly) and an elderly old woman (Vivian) who has also had a difficult childhood. After remaining an orphan, Molly was boarded on a train along with hundreds of orphaned and abandoned children. The train carried them from a state to state in search of foster families. During the voyage, Vivian is finding a friend – a shoe polishing boy Dachi and promises to meet again when they grow up. Before being adopted by a loving family, Vivian goes through several inappropriate
families. The common destiny brings them together, and Molly helps the old woman finding her relatives and answering questions that have tortured her throughout her life (Klein, 2015). This way both novels reveal the life of the foster children after they left the system and show how this period creates bad and good memories and affects their future.

The fate of children at risk depends and is determined by many factors and by many people in their life-paths, as well as by the foster care process itself. Deep in the original childhood impressions and memories of each particular young soul is a personal story, the child’s relationship with biological parents, and their actions or inactions to the child, which in some way place him in the “child-at-risk” category. Then in the child’s life come the social workers and people who have alarmed that a certain child lives in an environment that is domestically or emotionally inappropriate for him. In most cases, these are close people, neighbors, teachers and educators from children and school establishments. In order for social services to be able to relate to the fate of the child at risk, they need to be informed because often physical and mental harassment remains at home and is something that is not mentioned. By being informed, social workers choose the most appropriate way of intervening by not interrupting the parent-child relationship (wherever possible); however, this depends on the case. If the child is removed and placed in a foster family, then prospective adoptive parents and soon the approved adoptive parents appear in a more advanced stage of life. Foster care can be perceived as a complex system at the center of which the child is staged and in which all participants are linked together. This is a system that works in synchronized communication between all participants, which is very important for the successful practice of the service.

The data presented shows the world of the foster child through the eyes of the participants in it, i.e. the people included and related to the foster care process. Besides the already mentioned participants, other physical/legal persons are psychologists, pedagogical counselors, and pedagogues, and others who are indirectly present in the world of the foster child, such as donors of financial and other material means, so that many of the foster children have the opportunity for various excursions, camps, etc. This is the way to make the childhood of foster children not different from that of their peers.

V. Kotzeva writes in her study on foster care in the Smolyan region that often motives such as Christian and moral values and the noble desire to help create a sense of closeness and emotional attachment to contrast with the commercial stimuli of professional culture are used to become foster parents. It is not uncommon for foster children to be adopted by foster parents (Kotseva, 2014). At the same time, many (non-foster) parents express the opinion that the money that is given to foster parents should be redirected back to the biological parents. In this way, parents who have the desire, but no opportunity, could take better care of their children and that would be in favor for the children themselves. There are also thoughts and speculations about the disadvantaged position of foster children, that requires a special attitude towards them:

There is a very bad moment – this is the fact that these children grow up very spoilt: foster parents are not allowed to speak loud to them, no form of punishment can be applied – for example, if the child has been guilty for a wrongdoing, a birth
parent can eventually make him copy a page from the reader for punishment, but even that is not allowed. Then, social workers, resource teachers, school teachers are watching over them – these children should not be touched because they are foster. (Tzaneva, 2013).

On the one hand, a longer stay in a foster family leads to the inevitable attachment of the child to the foster family and vice versa (of course, when the foster child and the foster family have matched each other), but on the other, sometimes the frequent change of circumstances and people around the foster child leads to crises in child’s behavior and gives rise to a sense of abandonment by everyone he loves: For example, a foster family from Plovdiv says they prefer to look after foster children for a longer time because it is exhausting to repeat same tactics all the time, and they have no real opportunity to see the results:

Boris: “Because when you take a child and look after it for a long time, it will not be a problem to fit with a person, to do the upbringing. Then they take it and everything starts again from the beginning. In general, it is very frustrating to win the child because they come to your home as “savages”, and you give a lot of yourself to re-educate them and you have no one for them and you have no authority”; Magda: “It’s very nervous to build authority in the child’s eyes, it takes at least 3 months for things to get on the track. Another thing would be if the foster child is looked after all the way. There are foster families who have been taking care of the children for years, but ours have changed almost once a year” (Basheva, 2017b).

Foster care, in addition to the positive impact on the life and future of foster children, such as any socially evolving and socially responsible program, has its drawbacks. The dangers are mainly in the possibility of poor assessment of social workers about the motivations and parental capacity of the foster parents, the needs of the child, etc. That’s why foster care as a program gets approval and disapproval from my interlocutors, which makes the social importance of this topic very important, first requiring an opinion on the issue of whether or not the foster care of the child is good or bad. The truth is, I think, somewhere “in the middle”, and each case must be judged in its specificity. Each child is individual, with a different family history and therefore needs an individual approach, a precise selection of foster parents, high professionals in the social sphere of work, etc.

Ask one of the informants, you can adopt a parent who has been working in the UK in the social sphere with children for some time to receive care there: “They are very profiled as training. 0-3 and local child in another family; from 3-7 to another family that is English regulation.” And she set an example of foster care in Bulgaria with one of the first foster mothers:

We have long-term accommodation, here is our first foster mother Kina, who is from a village to Plovdiv. Over 20 children passed through her house. She takes grown-up children, pre-puberty. She has a foster son of 30, who has a son, that is, she has a foster grandson. She leaves her children with her after the service has expired. Because the system throws these young people on the street. And she helps these children find a job and a home, helps them and does it because she decided to. And half of the children she looked after in foster care became foster parents.
To summarize, if a biological family cannot take adequate care of the child, it is destabilized and put at risk. The so-called risky situation can be conditionally divided into temporary, prolonged or lasting, and in all three forms it can seriously affect the development of the child/children. In these situations, there is a need for the intervention of competent professionals and institutions, both in terms of helping the family and with particular care for the child/children.

The foster parents take everyday care of the foster children and, seen from aside, it does not appear that these children are not the children of the respective family/parent. Very often the foster parents take care of children who have experienced severe moments, witnessed violence, trained in thefts, etc. Traumas and injuries in childhood are extremely difficult to eradicate and need a lot of patience and continuous education. It can be said that foster care is changing the childhood for the better, bringing balance and security to it. Exceptions unfortunately exist and foster care as a social service is in continuous dynamic improvement to overcome them. My conclusion is that each case is different and depends, at least, on factors such as the age of the foster child, his or her experience before receiving foster care, the contact with biological parents and the parental capacity of foster parents and adopters, the level of professionalism of social workers, as well as a series of characteristic qualities and manifestations of all countries in foster care. A detailed and competent assessment of each situation and case I consider to be paramount to the success of the service.

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The Second Generation of Hybrid Eastern Immigrants – Children and Young Adults. 
Integration, Adaptation or Assimilation and Their Variants

Lilia Uslowa

Abstract: A central concern about immigration is the integration into everyday-life, education and the labour market, not only of the first generation, but also of subsequent generations, such as – second-generation foreigners. There is, however, a growing second generation whose prospects of adaptation cannot be gleaned from the experience of their parents. We present data on the contemporary second generation and review the challenges that it confronts in seeking adaptation to Eastern German society. The concept of integration, adaptation or assimilation is introduced to describe the diverse possible outcomes of these processes. Empirical case studies illustrate the theory and highlight consequences of the different contextual situations facing today’s second generation. The “immigrants” or post-socialist foreigners, who are living in East Germany, are perhaps not a very large population albeit with very different Eastern European and other non-native ethnic compositions. Today, the descendants of these “socialist” foreigners live and work in their parents’ destination country – former GDR, now East Germany. This paper presents and discusses comparative evidence (interviews, statistics etc.) on the performance of integration or assimilation of first- and second-generation foreigners or immigrants in East Germany in terms of education, earnings, hybridity, language, everyday-life, career opportunities, employment and home-country. The focus of the article, which cover topics on demographic characteristics, labour market integration and level of skills and qualifications, is to compare the different groups resulting from their post-socialist parents ant living conditions.

Keywords: Second generation, Integration, Assimilation, Homesickness, Language, Identity, Employment, Education, Eastern Germany

Biographical note: Lilia Uslowa, PhD, currently is an equal opportunities commissioner in the office of the Lord Mayor, lector and nonfiction book reviewer. She has participated in several research projects in East Germany, working among communities with different ethnic, hybrid and social affiliation in post-socialist countries. Her research interests are directed to investigations of hybrid identity dynamics, diaspora communities, family, homeland, education, employment, cultural/post-socialist heritage, social development after 1990s etc. The results of her work have been presented at numerous
Adult children of foreigners or immigrants, living and working in Eastern Germany matter greatly to the German political and economic future. This special issue, which includes a look back at the children of the First Generation socialist “foreigners as specialist staff” (scientists, doctors, artists etc., they came to GDR and remain after the German Unification), examines trends among the new Second Generation, models of assimilation, and methods for learning more about this dynamic group. It is very difficult to reach and to examine the “second generation”, because a lot of former Eastern foreigners have already German citizenship. The foreigners or immigrants, who are living in East Germany, are divided into three main “migration status” groups based on country of birth of the respondent and of their parents: “Native-born with native background”, “Second-generation immigrants” (bilateral – native-born population with at least one foreign-born parent) and as a comparative status “First-generation” (foreign-born population). For the migrant population (after the German Unification) there is a further split based on their “EU” or “non-EU origins”.

The second generation, children and young adults, in East Germany comes mainly from East European ethnic origins (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Russia, Poland etc. exception Vietnam, Mozambique, Cuba etc.). The significant goal of this study is to look at and to examine how this special generation growing up in a “majority minority” post-socialist region. It affected the experiences of young, second-generation adults in school and on the job, how they feel about their progress, and where they think they fit within German society. In short, Eastern Germany (Thuringia, Saxony, Brandenburg etc.) is not overwhelmingly a region of minorities and immigrants (Thuringia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg etc.). Unlike its main “rival”, Berlin (former East and West Berlin), where foreigners alone make up (25%) of the whole German immigrant population, Berlin (West Berlin) receives immigrants from all of the world’s sending regions — including Europe as well as Africans and Asians (Federal Republic and West Berlin, not former GDR). At the end of the year, a total of 10.6 million people of exclusively foreign nationality were registered in the Central Register of Foreigners – around 585,000 more than in 2016 (Beug, 2018; Zahl der Ausländer, 2018).

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1 The paper doesn’t focus on the largest group of contract workers, those from Vietnam, Mozambique, Cuba, Angola etc. and doesn’t examine the institutionalised foreignness of the GDR. In 1990, even before. Unification, most of them lost their employment and their hostel accommodation [LU].
The article explores also how hybrid natives, especially children and later young adults, with two ethnic identities growing up in and around big cities like Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Gera, Erfurt etc. It examines their experiences after the German Unification in school, family, “leisure time” and their career opportunities, how they feel about their “first and second country”, about social progress, and where they think they fit within the post-socialist German society. Given that they come largely from middle class families, we ask what it means to grow up in Eastern Germany as a bilingual, in or with two home countries and in ethnic minority. We compare their experiences with the living conditions of native German children after the German Unification in Eastern Germany.

The growth of voluntary immigrants to Germany since 2015 challenges the dichotomy which once explained different patterns of German inclusion and assimilation – the ethnic pattern of integration of post-socialist foreigners from East Europe and their children and the social pattern of exclusion of Germany’s non-natives. The new wave of immigrants (2015) includes people who are still defined “racially” in the German society\(^2\). The preference system of former GDR which “selected” for people with jobs and education, so called “mutual economic help”, has put them well on the higher level above their “non-educated” in the economy. Do the processes of integration and assimilation for post-socialist professionals and artists resemble the processes for earlier immigrants in the Federal Republic? Or do these foreigners and their children face very different choices and constraints because they are defined socially by other Germans? However, these feelings are not exclusively the foreigners’. German children are also in an ambivalent position when referring to education choice. In order to choose a technical training or a high school education, they face similar issues, but also the professional side has influenced the way they perceive later the job and their own identities when working in one business-sector or in another. Most children from foreigner families (Eastern Germany) seek better education, are ambitious and have a head start because of their multilingualism.

### Methodology

This just started large-scale study (2018)\(^3\) of the adult children of immigrants began as a private initiative in 1999\(^4\) – interviewing periodically families with children (Uslowa, 2018). Telephone interviews (2018) were conducted with random samples of 3,415 men and women aged 18 to 32 living in Eastern Germany (Thuringia, Brandenburg, Saxony etc.); in addition, about (10%) of respondents

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\(^2\) Almost two million refugees came to Germany and the immigrant-politics of the German Government was not really accepted in Eastern Germany [LU].

\(^3\) Data-base: Zweite Generation_2018-2020_Ost

\(^4\) Some children were interviewed together with their families and we asked these children 2018 again. The results are very interesting, because we could follow their development and integration in the German society [LU].
will be interviewed at greater length in person\(^5\). In the 2018 survey, a new register-based procedure was used for the first time in East Germany. Existing register data was used, supplemented and corrected with the results of our current surveys. In order to obtain information that could not be obtained from registers and to ensure the quality of the results, almost (10\%) of all native persons were surveyed on a resident-degree procedure, in which all persons living there were questioned.

Respondents’ parents can be divided into five groups: Bulgarian artists and specialist stuff (scientists, engineers, doctors etc.), artists and specialist stuff from the former Soviet Union; Vietnamese immigrants from the Asian diaspora; Romanian artists and specialist stuff, from Hungary etc. These groups composed (1.4 \%) of the hybrid second-generation population in the defined sample area (Eckert, 2017). Most children and young people (second generation) with a migration background (West and East) have German citizenship since birth (42 \%). At least one parent comes from abroad, is naturalized or late repatriate. Another (33 \%) came to Germany as late repatriates; the remaining (25 \%) are naturalized (Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit, 2017)\(^6\). These children are from very interesting multicultural groups. They test and explore the definition of citizenship and their cultural identity through the outlets provided by the Internet, social media, and local community support groups. The children were questioned together with their parents and with their friends (German children and foreigners). All these factors complicate the ideas of education, of family, of citizenship, and even of home. Indeed, the second generation is a global community and endeavours to make itself a home regardless of state.

For comparative purposes, Eastern German native-born children with native-born Eastern German parents were also interviewed (Uslowa 2018). About 2/3 (two-thirds) of hybrid second-generation respondents were born in Eastern Germany, mostly in Thuringia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Berlin (East) and Brandenburg, while 1/3 (one-third) were born abroad but arrived in GDR and East Germany by age 5 – 6 and had lived in the country for at least 10 years, except for those from the former Soviet Union, some of whom arrived past the age of 10-12.

In addition, the study “Hybride Osidentität” [Hybrid East Identity, the first generation] was and will be fielded at cities, cultural institutions and sites as a basic parent’s life-situation where second generation and native young people are likely to encounter each other, including diaspora communities, a large public service employees and community political organizations. Finally, a substantial number of those giving in-depth narrative interviews must be re-interviewed about the experiences during the recent years (We intend to complete it 2019 – 2020). Together, these data sources will provide the best picture yet available of the life situations of people with “two home countries” (assimilated or integrated),

\(^5\) We want to interview in greater length some respondents till the end of 2020. The telephone-interviews are already collected and evaluated. I know some of them till twenty years and could follow their development [LU].

\(^6\) Some children were interviewed twice – together with their families, in the school and together with their friends [LU].
a representative cross-section of the major national and ethnic groups in East Germany. A comparison with the second generation of native East Germans and their situation is also desired and intended. The presentation of the basic life-situation is focused on the comparison of the gap between natives and first- and second-generation foreigners from different source social groups. This is a good indication of how successful politics is at integrating foreigners and immigrants in the long run – the second generation will have had all of their schooling or education in the host country and will almost certainly speak the language fluently. Because there are parental influences on children’s outcomes, whether foreigners or native, one would not expect all gaps to be eliminated but one would expect them to be reduced.

Who Are the Second Generation in East Germany?

Compared to former Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and other “gateway” cities like Munich, Hamburg, Frankfurt am Main etc., the native-born children with foreign parents living in East Germany after the German Unification are less likely to be Turkish or Arabic (till 2015), though East Germany is still home to many second-generation post-socialist East-Europeans.

1.5 million couples live together in Germany, where one partner has German and the other a foreign nationality. Binational couples account for seven percent of all couples in Germany, according to the Federal Office in Wiesbaden [Statistisches Bundesamt]. Somewhat more frequently (8%) couples live together, both of whom are foreigners (1.7 million). By far the largest share is represented by (85%) (17.5 million) German-German couples. Only marriages or partnerships that are mixed-sexed and live together in a household were taken into account for the statistics. Individuals of dual citizenship have been designated as German.7

The Asian and non-East-European shares of its second generation resemble those of the nation as a whole, while East Germany, in difference to West Germany, also does not have a large, second-generation Asian population. The statistics shows that East Germany is home to many children of post-socialist East-European foreigners, unlike West Germany.

For unification-year 1990, what was then the GDR-Registry office (now reorganized within the Citizenship and Immigration Services [Ausländer- und Staatsangehörigkeitsamt] reported that the top 5 countries sending foreigners (artists and specialist stuff) to East Germany (a total about 12,000) were Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic and Slovakia), Romania, Hungary, Soviet Union. The flow of socialist East-Europeans and Hispanic immigrants (Chile, Cuba etc.) into East Germany has not strongly affected the traditional “minority” groups. In 1989/1990, the non-natives and their children constituted about (0, 2%) of the population in East Germany, I mean the former GDR (Ausländer in der DDR, 1990: 544).

In short, when East-Europeans and their children encounter Germans in East Germany, they do so along a continuum, not across a sharp boundary between East Europeans and native East Germans, as they do in other immigrant destinations, such as in West Germany. Stuck in the “middle” of all German natives, young second-generation non-natives or immigrants would seem the most likely to feel themselves native Germans. But Johannes S. Kunz finds it’s not that simple (2014). East-European teenagers in Germany (West and East) live sometimes in two worlds. A public one, in which their accents, attitudes and ambitions match those of German teenagers; and a more private sphere, in which they may speak another language and respect other values. The second home-country touches on the fault line between the two. The language used about it by politicians and the media can be a reminder to German-born East-Europeans of the prejudices still directed at people of their origin. Their first and natural instinct is to be better as natives – of course, people seeking a better public position should be given the chance that was sometimes offered their post-socialist parents. But, there is also a deep identification with united Germany, which can lead some to hold unexpectedly hard-headed views on their parents’ home-country and grandparents (Assman, 2018).

School and Education

Among the older hybrid respondents to the survey, the native East-Europeans, Jews, and Asians must have been significantly more likely to have completed a four-year college degree or to have attained a post-graduate education than the other groups (Uslowa, 2018); they must have been significantly less likely to have dropped out of high school, compare to West Germany. Considering that some young second-generation East-Europeans in Eastern Germany are recent college graduates moving to West Germany and big cities to begin their careers, these two second-generation groups are clearly performing on a par with native Germans. This pattern remained surprisingly strong after controlling for parents’ education, gender, and age, in part because the parents of East Europeans (Uslowa, 2018) had somewhat higher levels of education than parents of Vietnamese respondents. Also, the education levels among Vietnamese parents must be far lower than those

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8 Unfortunately, this trend lasts until today.
of native Eastern European parents, but the educational success of their children is far higher than those of Vietnamese parents. The Vietnamese second generation is well known as very ambitious and diligent. About (80%) have a high school diploma and continue to study at prestigious universities (Beuchling, 2003).

Since Russian parents have been well educated, the educational success of their children was sometimes hardly surprising. The new wave of immigrants after the German Unification includes people who are still defined “hardly educated” in Eastern Germany, but who migrate to the Federal Republic voluntarily and often under a social preference system which doesn’t select for people with jobs and education, but that puts them well above their “co-ethnics” in the economy. Do the processes of integration for non-natives resemble the educational level for their parents?

This article examines a small piece of this large thesis, namely considering the question of the development of an educated “ethnic identity” among the second generation of socialist and post-socialist “immigrants” (children and young adults) to the Eastern Germany from the former socialist countries. While there has been a substantial amount of interest in the identities and affiliations of foreigners from the former Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, there has been very little research on the identities of their children. Their children, if they remain to study and work in the new federal states, face a choice about whether they will identify as “professionals with migration background” or whether they will maintain an ethnic identity reflecting their parents’ national origins. First-generation socialist professionals and artists to the Eastern Germany have tended to distance themselves from other non-natives, especially after the German Unification, stressing their national origins and ethnic identities, but they also face overwhelming pressures to identify only as natives. In fact, they have been described as the “invisible generation” with German passports, because rather than being contrasted with other immigrants in West Germany (for example, contrasting how Turkish second generation are doing as compared with Eastern Europeans or Chinese), they have been compared to East German. These children, because they lack their parents’ distinctive accents, can choose to be even more invisible as ethnics than their parents. Second-generation Eastern Europeans in the new federal states will most often be seen by others as merely “Germans” – and must actively work to assert their ethnic identities, if they choose to do it. The types of ethnic identities adopted by a sample of second generation are shortly explored here, along with subjective understandings these youngsters have of being German, of being East German, and of their ethnic identities. After a short discussion of current theoretical approaches to understanding assimilation among the second generation, three types of identities adopted by members of the second generation are described and the different understandings and experiences of social or educational relations associated with these different identities are traced. Finally, we suggest some implications for some future patterns of identity dynamics (Kuhn, Weiss, Oswald, 2013: 124).

Refining this analysis, it will be also apparent that the quality of the colleges, high schools and universities attended by our respondents varied systematically. Thus, the quality as well as the quantity of the education varied greatly across the groups of respondents.
The study also must compare the occupation and industry profile of the respondents with those of their parents and East Germany as a whole. As one might expect, the parents of second-generation respondents were highly concentrated in cultural and scientific institutions and were not segmented by gender. But, a lot of the children are making their way upward in the professional career by fleeing these cultural niches in favour of the mainstream economy. While economic opportunity has pulled the second generation away from their parents’ jobs, they also have not distaste for stereotypical cultural occupations. The results for East Germany show that all groups of first-generation socialist foreigners have significantly better education than non-native West German immigrants. The difference is particularly pronounced for immigrants from West Germany’s traditional guest worker countries. First-generation immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe in West Germany are only slightly less educated than native men. The educational attainment of East German foreigners and West German immigrants improves substantially for the second generation. All groups of non-natives finish their full-time education at a younger age than their first-generation counterparts or parents with the biggest improvements relative to natives. First-generation non-native women in East Germany are slightly better educated than native women. For all groups with these of Central and Eastern Europe, educational attainment increases significantly from the first to the second generation although immigrant women in West Germany remain significantly less educated than non-native women in Eastern Germany. Overall, the results show a significant improvement in the educational attainment of second-generation post-socialist foreigners and immigrants for all groups except the already high-skilled groups from Central and Eastern Europe.9

Employment and Labour Market

There are a number of reasons why the integration and the success of socialist and post-socialist foreigners and their children matters. The more successful they are in the labour market, the higher will be their economic and financial contribution to the host economy. This in turn may be important for the attitudes of the native population to former “brothers and sisters” and “new” immigrants, therefore, impact on their social acceptance and integration. On the other hand, poor economic success may lead to their social and economic exclusion and their descendants, which in turn may lead to social unrest, with riots and terrorism as extreme reaction. However, there is rather little hard evidence in the statistics about extreme reactions like that of post-socialist foreigners in Eastern Germany and their descendants, in a manner that allows comparisons to be made. The experience of Eastern Germany that had not large-scale of former and post-socialist “immigration” in the last half of the twentieth century should be of importance for devising future integration and assimilation policies. In this paper, we aim to provide a comparative study of

9 We can find almost the same data-results in Sargsyan, V. (2018) Integration of migration in European countries: first and second generation. Praha : CERGE-EI.
a number of outcomes (education, earnings, and employment) of both first- and second-generation foreigners of native and non-native origins in the new federal states (Usłowa, 2018). What is the evidence on the social and economic integration of post-socialist foreigners and their descendants? Public authorities have long been reluctant to provide information on country of birth of parents in the main national surveys such as the Census or the Federal Statistics. According to the 1990 census, there were 455,294 foreign-born immigrants in the Federal Republic or (4.8%) of native-born children nationwide (Zensusdatenbank 2011).

The overall study was designed to explore the processes of second-generation adaptation and accommodation to the Federal Republic (exceptionally the new federal states), to trace generational changes in adaptation and identification, and to explore their reactions to German labour market relations. Interviews with natives and non-natives who interacted with the first and second generations were included in order to understand the dynamic and interactive processes of self- and other-identification and the development or assimilation of ethnic attitudes and stereotypes. The second-generation respondents and their German co-workers are drawn from two worksites – unskilled workers and middle-class high-school educated specialists. The results include two in-depth main thesis: the second generation is more assimilated as the first one and it is better skilled as the first one. This change in identity when working in their second home country seems to have no conflict with the identity of their parents. On the contrary, they seem to have added another identity to their existing one. They are not against each other, but it seems that each one of them has a particular purpose and aim. This is not always clear for all young people of the second generation. Another point of view expresses confusion when defining career opportunities for non-natives and natives. Moreover, the same career opportunities seem to have created a link between the better education and its meaning and purposes and sometimes it seems to be flowing between the personal and professional sides.

**Intergroup Contact and Conflict**

Because minority and second-generation East European young people dominate their age cohort, our second-generation respondents have a great deal of contact with one another but sometimes has little contact with Germans (integration, assimilation, discrimination or parallel world). Main thesis of this study: Recalling their experiences of discrimination in the multicultural societies in which they grew up, members of the second generation often find themselves at odds not with Germans but with other nearby groups. Respondents will be also asked whether parents had ever talked with them about discrimination against their group.

Finally, given that Germans, with German parents make up three/four in four/five Germans, many members of the second generation encountered other foreigner and minority-group members in ways that involve sometimes conflict, prejudice, and discrimination. They often react to this type of conflict with distancing behaviours, as when West immigrants try to distance themselves from East Europeans or Asians seek to distinguish themselves from them, or when
Vietnamese and Russians distance themselves from Turkish foreign workers and Yugoslavians of various backgrounds. This dynamic must have put East Europeans in the positive position of managing the social success of second-generation individuals in colleges, labour unions, and political groups while continuing to see themselves as outsiders to these power structures (Uslowa, 2018). Although community-based social communication entry points into institutions have to be initially meant for East Europeans, the second generation is well situated to take advantage of them. Each diaspora seems to have its purpose and it has been given meaning related to identity. This has encouraged the transformation and recreation of the individuals’ behaviour or linguistic repertoire and they seem to be able, at this point in their lives, to attach other diasporic minorities in a clearer manner (Hall, 2019: 129). The native group consists of non-naturalized citizens born in Germany. The first-generation post-socialist “foreigner” is defined as individuals born outside of Germany who have either only foreign citizenship or who obtained German citizenship through naturalization. The second-generation is defined as individuals born in Germany who hold either only foreign citizenship or German citizenship that they obtained through naturalization – this may even take on the extreme position of almost apparent complete rejection of diaspora and minorities. Or the detachment is such that it might seem to some that diaspora and the parents’ language serve them as a little protection. It is as if there was a real connection between first and second generation in terms of diaspora. This internal process has an impact on the non-native as a member of a minority. These “hal” non-natives once experienced the difficulties of integration and learning a second language, but now that second language has become their dominant one and the host country – their home country (Irudaya Rajan, 2019: 5). That means, they have experienced a detachment of their own ethnic identity and first language and are aware of it. Joining a new ethnic community has brought some changes in their living choice. They have appropriated a specific discourse as well as conventions and roles, but their identities remain a mixture of acceptance of and resistance to one socialization or the other according to their circumstances. What appears to give rise to the internal conflict in the writing process appears to be associated more with emotional or internal aspects of the individual rather than issues of knowledge about the conventions of writing.

Creating Hybrid Minority Cultures, the Term Homeland

Finally, we must discuss how respondents use the terms “German” and home-country. We suppose very often in two different ways. The first is to describe themselves as Germans compared to the culture, values, and behaviours of their parents and the country where they were born and live. For example, they understand their social existence as “German way of life”. They definitely thought Germany has had influenced them to approach the world differently than their parents. They are not inclined to return to their parents’ home countries, where they sometimes found conditions to be too foreign. They feel themselves as foreigners in the country of their parents (Meier-Broun, 2018; Hoesch, 2017). But, they also used the term
to distinguish themselves and their peers from the “Germans” they encountered at school, the office, in public places, and on television. They see those “Germans” as part of a different world that would never include them because of their parents’ ethnicity. Many respondents sidestep this ambivalence about being German by describing themselves as “Germans”. This hybrid identity was not open to their parents as post-socialist East Germans and it must embrace them as members of the second generation. A hybrid identity reflects the dynamic cultural creativity familiar to them, but not necessarily the larger German society. Hybridity of respondents can come from any East German, immigrant or minority group. Perhaps the individual changes necessary to become a “Germans” are sometimes not very great as those required to become a “German”. Results derived from the experiences of East German and Eastern European post-socialist foreigners and their children in the early twenty-first century predicted that the longer the time spent in Germany, the more exposure to German culture, the more likely second-generation youths were to adopt an “German identity” and to reduce ties to the homeland or ethnic identities and culture of their parents. This “straight line” assimilation model assumes that with each succeeding generation the groups become more similar to mainstream Germans and more economically successful. For instance, the study of the ethnic groups in Eastern Germany in the early 1980s describes the generational march of the ethnic groups from initial residential and occupational socialist equality and ideological integration of the versatile developed socialist personality. However, the situation faced by foreigners in East Germany in the 1990s, after the German Unification, differs in many of the background assumptions of the straight-line model in West Germany. The former socialist foreigners do not enter a society that assumes an undifferentiated monolithic ideological East German culture, but rather a consciously politically pluralistic society in which a variety of subcultures (West Germany) and ethnic identities coexist. In fact, if these post-socialist foreigners assimilate – they assimilate to being not just Germans but hybrid East-Germans. It is generally believed by them that it is higher social status to be a non-native East-German in East Germany than to be a German immigrant in West Germany. The common socialist past connects natives and non-natives in East Germany. Second, the economic opportunity structure is very different now than at the beginning of the early 1980s. Two important characteristics not consider in these comparisons of the hybrid minority culture and diaspora rates are age and education. As documented, the second-generation foreigners are typically much younger than the first generation and natives – this would tend to higher integration or assimilation. There are also differences in educational attainment. In general, the second-generation non-natives have higher levels of education than the first-generation – which in turn would tend to raise their integration in the host land of their parents.

**Conclusion**

As East European post-socialist “immigration” continues to transform Germany, may serve as a positive model of creative multiculturalism and inclusion of the second generation. While some sceptics might argue the second generation
of post-socialist East Europeans remains “down to earth”, is well integrated and not likely to be mistaken. We focus on the comparison of the gap between Germans and first- and second-generation immigrants from different German states. This is a good indication of how successful German policy is at integrating immigrants in the long run – the second generation will have had all of their schooling in the host German “part” and will almost certainly speak the language fluently. Because there are parental influences on children’s outcomes, whether immigrant or German, one would not expect all gaps to be eliminated but one would expect them to be reduced. These young people once experienced the difficulties of learning a second home-country, traditions and language, but now Germany and German, as a host country and second language, have become their dominant. Living in a new home country has brought some changes in their integration choice. They have appropriated a specific public discourse as well as conventions and social roles, but their identities remain a mixture of acceptance of and resistance to their second home land or the other according to their circumstances. What appears to give rise to the internal conflict in the living circumstances appears to be associated more with emotional or internal aspects of the individual rather than issues of knowledge about the conventions of assimilation. The interviews, a small selection, suggest that while there is a great deal of individual variation in the hybrid identities, perceptions and living opinions of the second generation, their new German and ethnic identities can be classified into three general types: identifying as native Germans, identifying as Germans, living in diaspora or ethnic Germans with some distancing from non-natives, or maintaining a new “united-German-immigrant” identity that does not reckon with German traditional ethnic categories. A German-East-European-identified identity characterized the responses of approximately (42%) of the first (83%) of the second-generation respondents interviewed. These youngsters and young adults identified with other Germans. They did not see their “ethnic” identities as important to their self-image. When their parents or friends criticized German identity or described what they perceived as fundamental differences between West-German-immigrants and East-German-non-natives, these youngsters disagreed. They tended to downplay an identity as East-Germans and described themselves as German. Another (30%) of the respondents adopted a very strong ethnic identity which involved a considerable amount of distancing from Germans. It was important for these respondents to stress their ethnic identities and for other people to recognize that they were not Germans. These respondents tended to agree with parental judgements that their Second-Generation East-Europeans were strong differences between Germans and Eastern Germans. This often involved a stance that West German-immigrants were superior to East-German post-socialist foreigners in their behaviours and attitudes. A final (28%) of respondents had more of an immigrant attitude towards their identities than either

the German-identified non-natives or the ethnic-identified non-natives. A number of factors influence the type of identity the second generation developed. These include the social class background and the educational level of the parents, the social networks, like diaspora, the parents were involved in, the type of school (private or common) the child attended, and the family structure (bilateral or monolingual). More educated parents with better income were able to provide better education/schools for their children (Schüller, 2012). All these factors affect the ability of parents and other family members to shield children from other groups that do not espouse hybrid traditional values. Finally, the family structure and the own experience have a profound effect on the degree of education and control parents have over their own children. The second generation East-Europeans in Eastern Germany are very successful when some “West-immigrants” are not. The second generation, children and young adults, have a strong sense of their own identities as very different from West-German-immigrants. Often both Germans (West and East) saw them as just non-natives and did not notice that they were ethnically different. The German-identified second-generation children or young people in the new German states differed in how little they stressed their foreigner or ethnic identities. They feel themselves German. The dominating identity symbols like language or family memories are not permanently sustainable – they change constantly. In some sense, one can see each of these identities as being an embrace of a particular identity, as well as an opposition to another identity. The German-identified East-Europeans are in fact assimilating to the united East-German subculture. It remains to be researched/seen how long the ethnic-identified second-generation will continue to identify with their parent’s ethnic backgrounds.

References:


Children of Mixed Descent in-between their Parents’ Cultures in Bulgaria (Language Acquisition and Religious Affiliation)

Desislava Pileva

Abstract: Each person has their own specific cultural markers intrinsic to and inseparable from their identity (see also Anderson, 1999: 16). In cases when families have different national, ethnic and religious configurations, the offspring of mixed descent is inevitably influenced by both of their parents’ cultural belonging. However, the children are/become more or less active, establishing their own perceptions regarding at least some of these cultural markers. The aim of the chapter is to present children’s attitudes towards two of these aspects – the acquisition of the non-local parent’s mother tongue and the affiliation towards both or any of the parental religions. Therefore, the personal stories of the offspring of three bilingual and bi-religious families – two Bulgarian-Syrian and one Bulgarian-Tunisian residing in Bulgaria, are considered in the text. The chapter addresses the reasons for and ways of acknowledging these markers within the context of the self-awareness of the children. At the same time, the research views these cultural aspects as objects of seeking one’s origins, constituting a part of the process of getting to know parental cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Children of mixed descent; Parent/children agency; Bilingualism; Religion affiliation.

Biographical note: Desislava Pileva is a Junior Researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – BAS, where, in 2018, she completed her Ph.D. The thesis considered the topic of dimensions of cultural interaction within families of Bulgarians and immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa, residing primarily in Bulgaria. It also dealt with markers of (self-) identification which the offspring with mixed descent acquire from their bicultural and bilingual backgrounds. Scholar interests: migration and mobility; socio-cultural integration; religious and ethnic minorities; mixed families.

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Introduction

Migration and permanent settlement in a foreign country advantage intercultural communication and the creation of bicultural families. Specific ethnocultural practices and manners of behaviour within them are shaped by partners’ own perceptions. The latter is a result of their lives before and the constant interactions within the couple. However, the focus here is placed on the children of such marital unions, more specifically on topics concerning their identity and cultural self-perception. In cases when families have different national, ethnic and religious configurations, the offspring of mixed descent is inevitably (more or less purposefully) influenced by both of their parents’ cultural belonging. Nevertheless, the children are active participants, (un)consciously engaging with both cultural models, out of which they make their own choices (Anderson, 1999: 14). Being able to observe ordinary family practices, as well as to be informed about such meticulously avoided helps the offspring to create a certain notion of acceptable and non-preferable behaviour. Therefore, later the children may or may not recreate some of these practices in their adult life. Among all, mixing of different cultures within a household distinguishes certain markers as intrinsic to and inseparable from person’s identity (see also ibid, 1999: 16). Hence, the offspring may or may not acknowledge some of them as a part of their own self-awareness.

In this respect, the chapter aims to present two important topics related to the children’s socialization within mixed families. The first deals with the language models within the families, particularly, with some aspects of the deliberate acquisition and usage of the non-Bulgarian language in different stages of the offspring’s life. The second is focused on some specifics of the children’s inner “journey” of getting to know their religious background.

At the beginning of the chapter, the research approach and methodology are defined. Afterwards, the language acquisition by the children of mixed descent and their religious affiliation are examined in the following two sections. At the end of the text, the research results are summarised.

Research Approach and Methodology

1. Approaching the language and religious affiliation in childhood

If people “experience the social world and engage with others” (Eicker, 2017: 46) through language, the children of bicultural families have the chance to do so using the mother tongues of both of their parents. During childhood, the process of ”choosing” their own linguistic model is somehow shaped by the preferred pattern within the nuclear family on a daily basis, established by the parental couple. However, the offspring gains more control over it during the teenage years and adulthood. On the other hand, religion is “perceived as a social mark signifying one’s belonging to a certain social group” (Troeva and Mancheva, 2011: 168). In this respect, people are believed to be a part of a particular religious community, based on the religious affiliation they were born with. However, this socio-cultural
definition is not always “credible” enough for everyone’s (self-)identification. Such discrepancies between social rules and personal perceptions could be found with the offspring of bi-religious families. As one of the mothers states, “The faith is not something you inherit […] I don’t understand the notion that if your father is a Muslim, you must be a Muslim; if your mother is a Jew, then you must be a Jew; or if you are baptized then you must be a Christian”. Hence, the parents of the described cases encourage their children to look and decide for themselves.

Both language and religion, on the one hand, are defined by one’s ethnocultural descent, but on the other, they are chosen to be adapted or rejected by each person. Hence, for the offspring, these two aspects are objects of seeking one’s origins and constitute a part of the process of getting to know the parental cultural backgrounds. Therefore, throughout their life, the mixed offspring acquires knowledge for the mother tongues and the religious affiliation of both parents, and at the “right time” and when find a suitable reason(s) the children make their own choices. At the same time, they are among the markers through which mixed families declare their origin before “others”, and are distinguished from both societies they belong to.

2. A brief literature review

The topic of multiple language acquisition by children in bilingual families is well-developed by scholars. Their research focuses mainly on different linguistic approaches adapted by the parental couple and their results on the children with bilingual background. The scholars consider parents’ linguistic behaviours having in mind certain family and social circumstances, manners of verbal communication between the partners, as well as the age of their heirs (Arnberg, 1987; Romaine, 1995, 1999; Barron-Hauwaert, 2000, 2004; Baker, 2001; Piller, 2002). The number of used parental languages, the level of their acquisition (verbal, in writing and reading) and the circumstances of their usage (passive, active) are also studied by many ethnologists and anthropologists researching mixed families. Mainly, they approach the problem within the context of cultural transmission to the next generation (Vinea, 2007; Bystydzienski, 2011; Matanova, 2016; Lopez, 2017) which could be determined by/ or defining for the self-identification of the offspring of mixed descent in and outside of the family environment (Thompson, 2006; Antova, 2007: 115).

The presence of religion(s) within mixed families’ lives, as well as the transition of the religious knowledge (as a part of the cultural one) to the next generation is included in some authors’ researches on mixed families (Vinea, 2007; Caballero, Edwards and Puthussery, 2008; Bystydzienski, 2011; Lopez, 2017). They pay special attention to the upbringing manners of the parents which (may) construct the religious self-perception of the children. Parental couples’ visions are sometimes defined based on mothers and fathers’ principles and points of view to the matter. In this respect, the research problem of the influence of family and social environment on the offspring’s religiosity acts as a marker of self-identification, and concerns other scholars’ work too (Ata, 2003, 2009; Arweck and Nesbitt, 2010, 2010a; Storm and Voas, 2012; Patacchini and Zenou, 2016).
3. Methodological notes

The topic of the current chapter was researched within a bigger study of cultural interactions within ethnically, linguistically and nationally mixed families between Bulgarians and migrants, who came to Bulgaria during the last five decades, from the Middle East and North Africa. The analysis is based on first-hand ethnographic data gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews, in particular with some of the adult children, and at least one of the parents. This allows scrutinizing different points of view about the same research problems. However, in this chapter I will emphasize on children’s perceptions, actions and attitudes towards their own cultural heritage. The cases of children from three bilingual and bi-religious families – two Bulgarian-Syrian and one Bulgarian-Tunisian, are chosen to be presented in the text. The mothers are of Bulgarian descent and the fathers came to the country in order to receive their higher education in the middle of the 1970s and during the 1980s. For the couples, Bulgaria is the country of permanent residence and the place where all children were born and raised. Therefore, throughout the text the notion “here” is used as synonymous for Bulgaria and “there” – for Syria and Tunisia (the fathers’ country of origin). These definitions were also used by my interlocutors during the conversations for geographically distinguishing both countries.

Each of the next two sections contains two of the three cases. For the better understanding of the chapter’s content, I should elaborate that one of the families is presented in both – in “language” it is the second example, and in “religion” it is the first.

Language

Since Bulgaria is the place where the children grew up and went to school, the first-learned, best-known, and most used language is Bulgarian. The proclamation is based on a statement by Finnish linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2007 [1984]: 18) considering the extent to which the offspring is being exposed to a certain spoken language(s) on a daily basis within the family and social environment. Although the diverse parental linguistic backgrounds might be a precondition for the children to acquire the mother tongue of the non-local parent, it does not necessarily mean that the mixed family environment is bilingually predisposing in general. The usage of Arabic within the household is a matter of personal preferences of the parents, therefore, their own choice influences and even may

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1 The topic of religious affiliation of the parents as well as their children was researched more detailed within the ongoing project “Religion and Festivity as Cultural Markers within Bi-religious Families (between Bulgarians and Foreigners)”. Therefore, this work was partially supported by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science under the National Research Programme “Young scientists and postdoctoral students” approved by DCM # 577 / 17.08.2018.
shape (at least initially) the perception of the children concerning both languages and their place within their life.

At the same time, the opportunity to conduct conversations and exchange text messages in a third language (e.g. English) with the father’s kin initially diminishes the offspring’s chances to learn Arabic within the extended family even on a passive level. Therefore, the non-Bulgarian language was not acquired simultaneously with and as well as Bulgarian, so, its mastering at a later age requires extra efforts on behalf of the mixed generation, and in some cases even their parents (see also Yamamoto, 2001: 1, 127; Fought, 2006; Jackson, 2009). In this respect, a possible approach towards the problem is the attendance of language courses, since none of the children in both cases studied Arabic in school. On the one hand, the courses could be a solution preferred by the children while growing up or as adults. On the other, their attendance could be initiated by the parents, some of them even consider the professional language learning to be the “right and most suitable” way for its acquisition. Focusing on that manner, I chose to present two stories which exemplify the deliberate acquisition of the father’s mother tongue at different ages and stages of the personal and professional development of the offspring.

The first case considers the only daughter (b. 1980) of a Bulgarian-Syrian family. The father came to Plovdiv in the middle of the 1970s by earning a university scholarship. In several years he met his future wife, who was also a student at that time. In 1980 they got married and settled down in her hometown (in South Bulgaria), where their child was born. From 1985 until 1989 the family, mostly the husband, moved temporarily to Syria in order to establish private medical practices. Hence, because of intensive back-and-forth travels, the partners divided their time between the two countries. The time spent “there” and the close friendship the couple had with a Syrian family who used to live in Plovdiv, facilitated the wife’s verbal acquisition of Arabic. As far as the daughter is concerned, she did not spend much time in the home country of her father, since she was attending school in Bulgaria at that time and mostly resided “here” with her mother and grandparents. The described living situation not only hindered the acquisition of Arabic, but also strengthened the position of Bulgarian as the only language within the household.

In this case, the parents did nothing to develop their child’s bilingualism while she was growing up. The father explained it with the language manners of communication within the nuclear and extended family and the predominant social environment the child was growing up. However, he also emphasized the failure of recognising Arabic as one of the native languages within the household, as well as the possible future advantage (e.g. for her professional development) of acquiring it while growing up.

I feel guilty of not teaching my daughter to my language. Later, as a student she felt that as a flaw. In her first year at the university, she started attending language courses in order to learn Arabic, well, just then I started helping her […] even now in Switzerland she continues attending language courses.

However, the woman’s interest towards Arabic as an adult was not provoked by her lineage itself – at least, it was not the main reason. The decision for mastering the language was due to the nature of her university education in International
Relations and the subsequent professional development among Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Switzerland. Even though Arabic did not become the language for communication with the Syrian kin, (the process of) its acquisition proved to be facilitating for the (re-)discovering of this part of the cultural/linguistic heritage, bringing her emotionally even closer to her father. This enabled them both to establish another (additional) way of “being together”.

The Syrian partner of the second family came to Sofia as a private student in the middle of the 1970s. Ten years later he got married to a local woman and they settled down in Bulgaria. Due to some administrative issues, the couple and their children were not able to travel to Syria for two almost consecutive ten-year-periods of time. This situation was not in favour of the wife and offspring’s Arabian language acquisition. However, despite the physical distance from their father’s native country and kin, the son and daughter were deliberately presented to his mother tongue at a relatively early age. While the decision for the attendance of language courses in the first case comes entirely from the person of mixed descent, here, both parents had a significant role in the initial stage of the process. After a consultation with a child speech therapist, they decided not to hold on to the one-language-one-parent approach at home, but to send the siblings to a language course in their early school years. Here is the daughter describing their experiences:

However, they [the courses] were often discontinued because of the other children who dropped out [...] and the new courses always stared from the first level, so we actually were not developing. Later on, while in the university, we started really learning it, renewing the attendance of language courses [...] we started practicing it, communicating in it [...] especially after 2007 when our regular visits to Syria began [...] Ever since the war started, however, I have frequently been exchanging messages with my cousins, trying to use as much Arabic as possible.

Although the courses did not lead to the desired result, they laid the foundation of the subsequent active language acquisition, developed during the last decade or so. This set of factors facilitated the recognition of Arabic as a part of their cultural heritage, along with finding the practical advantage of its mastering. In this case, unlike the first one, the intensification of the contacts (face-to-face and from distance) with the non-Bulgarian kin became the very specific reason for activating the usage of the language. However, neither the father, nor the children started communicating in Arabic within the nuclear family on a daily basis. Nevertheless, both parents perceived the existence of the two mother tongues within the lives of their heirs as an advantage, helpful for their further personal as well as professional development.

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2 The main theoretical frame of the approach was introduced by Maurice Grammont (“Observations on Children Languages”, 1902). According to him, in order for the children of bilingual families to acquire both languages easily and without much confusion, each parent should use only their mother tongue when communicating with the offspring (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004: 1–5, 192–197; Arnberg, 1987: 87–90; Romaine, 1995: 187–191; Barron-Hauwaert, 2000: 7; Piller, 2002: 257).
Several aspects of the linguistic situation that the children of mixed descent should deal with are obvious from the stated above. First, because of the intensive linguistic influence of the place of residence, the fathers have never tried to establish a bilingual pattern of communication within their households: in fact, they have not even considered it. Coming “here” as students, they received their higher education in Bulgarian, and for decades have been maintaining the language daily at work and within the social circle, which have made their command in it proficient. At the same time, the marital partners have been communicating exclusively in Bulgarian from the very beginning of their relationship, a habit that could hardly be changed, as Piller (2002: 137–142) argues. Therefore, the need of the non-Bulgarian mother tongue for independent and in-depth daily communication with the children has been completely eliminated. Second, by not linguistically pressuring their heirs, the parents (either consciously or subconsciously) try to avoid possible conflicts and the rejection of the active usage of Arabic (found in other cases of the research, not included in the chapter). Thus, the children are left alone to find their own way of coping with their linguistic heritage and to make a choice – to embrace/develop it, or not. In this respect, at a certain point of their lives the two girls and the boy have found their own purpose for mastering the “other” language in ways suitable for each of them.

In general, some factors facilitating the active acquisition and usage of Arabic (verbally, readable and in writing) were distinguished in the cases. A strong example is the professions some of the adult offspring (the daughter of the first family and the son of the second) have been practicing ever since university graduation. Their working environments require daily contacts with native speakers, as well as the regular reading of documents and local and national press from the region of the Middle East. As of the daughter of the second family, the reading of artistic literature in Arabic allegedly contributes to her language acquisition. Generally, in the second case, the better command of the non-Bulgarian mother tongue helps the offspring to “blend” easier into the “other” culture, giving it more opportunities for discovering and understanding some of the socio-cultural specifics (see also Baldassar, 2001; Ruting, 2012: 29–30) and processes (some of which of political origin) within their father’s homelands. Hence, the statement of Heller (1987, cited on Peirce 1995: 13) “it is through language that a person gains… or is denied access to – powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak” can find its place within this example. Despite the wide usage of a third language for intra-kin communication, the “new” linguistic skills bring the conversation to a new level. Therefore, the case of the two Bulgarian-Syrian siblings also proves the importance of an emotional motivation for the language acquisition.

Religion

The cases in the second section consider children of bi-religious families, meaning Christian Orthodox mothers and Muslim fathers. Although all of the partners recognise themselves as bearers of the religions they were “born with”, none of them have defined themselves and their spouse as religiously active,
concerning the strict observance of certain rituals and taboos, as well as regular and obligatory visits to religious sites. Both mothers grew up in non-practicing families during the socialist period in Bulgaria, when the religious behaviour was not “tolerated”. As of the fathers, religion has always had its place within their birth families, but in more of a discrete and non-mandatory way. In general, any presence of religious behaviour around the spouses in their childhood and while growing up have allegedly not been decisive for their self-awareness as adults. All partners have gained knowledge about their own and the “other” religion, too. While the migrants’ interest towards Christianity had started before the migration and regardless of it, the Bulgarian wives found the need to be (more) informed about Islam as a result of their relationship with a foreigner and the introduction to the “other” culture and country. Therefore, all of them attested their respect to both faiths somehow existing within their families’ bicultural boundaries.

The children, being highly influenced by the family environment they grew up and where their cultural understandings have been shaped, identify mostly with their parents’ points of view. Within the context of the two cases, this notion refers to their open-mindedness towards Christianity and Islam. However, allegedly most of the parents refuse to “take responsibility” for the religious self-awareness of their children, otherwise they would have been projecting their own perceptions and applying specific socio-cultural norms on the offspring.³ As stated above, according to the parents, one’s religious affiliation as well as the expression of it are a matter of personal choice rather than a predestined principle.

Even though the partners of the first family do not have religiously bound behaviour, they decided deliberately to introduce the Bible and the Quran to their children at an early age. Doing so, the parents aimed at providing the offspring with the opportunity to choose or not their own faith at “the right time” (c.f. Caballero, Edwards and Puthussery, 2008: 23–24, 34–35, 39–40; Arweck and Nesbitt, 2010: 45–46; Lopez, 2017: 53).

We [my brother and I] have always known the Bible and the Quran […] they [the parents] had made enough efforts for that […] we used to discuss [within the family] that one day when we come of age we can choose our religious affiliation for ourselves […] For me personally, it is hard to make a choice a side, I do not feel religious, lately I am feeling even more Atheistic.

In general, the religious “introduction” presented to the children by their parents, was facilitated by the evolving interest of all family members towards the essence of both religions and the function(s) of their respective religious sites. Over the years, the importance of Christianity and Islam as a part of the familial cultural heritage is enhanced due to the intensification of kin communication and the trips around Bulgaria and Syria (before 2010). These tours were mostly to Christian religious sites, but not exclusively, for instance, century old churches, monasteries, places of worship, and old graveyards. The parents, being the original initiators of

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³ Similar to it is a statement made by Song (2017: 57–59) referring to the parental perception of their mixed race children.
such educational “journeys”, allegedly gave their children the initial tool, but also space and time to develop their own spiritual self, if necessary.

The latter also refers to the three children\(^4\) of the second case. The parents, a Bulgarian mother and a Tunisian father, led more or less by their own lack of religiosity, have been making sporadic or not at all attempts to give the offspring any kind of information related to Christianity and Islam. Thus, their oldest daughter’s curiosity towards both of them appears somehow “naturally”, as a result of the observed cultural and religious interactions “here”, the predominantly Christian society, as well as “there”, the mostly Muslim social environment.

I do not relate to any religion, even much less my sister and brother […] dad never spoke to us [about Islam] when we were little, mom read us from the Bible, the children edition, for a while […] Now, as an adult I started to read about [both] religions.

The interlocutor (and later on her siblings) has spent all her life between “here” and “there”, visiting her father’s native country every summer for several weeks, ever since she was a toddler. During her stays, she and her family live with the whole kin, since the grandparents, the three uncles and the aunt along with their spouses and children dwell within one premises. This allowed her to witness both regular activities and religiously related ones (mostly indirect). For instance, the daily prayers of her grandfather, which however, are described as a very personal ritual not involving any other member of the family. Therefore, the offspring has been just an observer, but not an active participant. However, the presence of any religious rituals around the children provoked the oldest daughter’s curiosity towards Islam “more than Christianity”. Although she reads a lot about it and binds her life even more with the Tunisian culture, she does not consider herself a religious person, therefore she does not practice the religion.

The two life stories refer to the preferable interests towards one of the religions. The first family has two children of different genders, who were raised in a similar way and to whom was given an equal opportunity to religiously define themselves or not. At some point in their late teens and early twenties, each of the siblings felt more attached to one of their parents’ religions. The strong personal ties between the Christian mother and the daughter as well as the Muslim father and the son was stated as a reason. Taking this into consideration, and some additional information about this family, the son’s choice was also influenced by his work as an international journalist, which was closely related to the father’s home country and the Middle East in general.

This, however, somehow refers to the second example, too. The oldest daughter is more connected to the country of origin of her father in comparison to both her younger siblings. Although the three of them are interested in the countries’ history and culture, only she tries to bind her career development with Tunisia (having a master’s degree in political sciences and applying for some internships there). On the other hand, for the last several years, she has been having another more personal

reason for the enhanced relationship with the “other” homeland and culture – her own mixed marriage to a Tunisian man (2015). Although the husband, who came to the country in order to receive his higher education, allegedly does not descent from a religious family, their marriage intensifies her contacts with some cultural specificities, which bring her even closer to “there”.

In general, just like their parents, the children do not incorporate religious elements in their lifestyle daily (as fasting, prayers, weekly visiting of churches or mosques), even on the contrary. Some of them claim that (self-)literacy leads to a form of retreat from either or both faiths, giving them more questions than answers. Foremost however, the interest towards Christianity and Islam is perceived as an expression of their strife to explore the cultural backgrounds of both parents, which the offspring recognises as its own heritage. Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge about religions is more culturally defined than just religiously.

Some Conclusions

The chapter examined two topics which mark significantly the life(style) of the children of mixed descent. The acquisition of the non-local parent’s mother tongue and defining the own religious affiliation are a matter of multiple circumstances as well as life choices. Both are long-running processes which involve not only the children, but also their parents. Sometimes the parental point of view even turns out to be essential, at least at a specific period of the younger generation’s life. Although the parental perception may point at a certain direction, neither of the parties consider it decisive.

Allegedly, the parents do not push their children towards defining their religious affiliation in any way, including the deliberate introduction of both faiths in the family. Nonetheless, it is claimed that “the strength and consistency of the parents’ behaviour determines the extent to which… [cultural] values are transmitted to the next generation” (Storm and Voas, 2012: 132; Jennings, Stoker and Bowers, 2009: 783). Therefore, the children being able to witness different behavioural models within their households and the extended families, as well as to take part in variety of ethno-culturally defined activities, allows them to build their own self-perception regarding their mixed background.

The latter could also refer to the acquisition of the non-local language. Even though Arabic was not used within the household on a daily basis, it was more or less “around” the offspring (e.g. the Syrian kin, the social circle of their fathers/parents “here”). It could be argued that the fathers’ linguistic background has a (pre)determining role for binding the three children’s future with the command of Arabic. Although this claim would be an incomplete description of both the Arabic and English, it is often provoked by practical reasons, it marked the time when all three of them really started to recognise the language as a part of their own heritage.

5 In this respect, Storm and Voas (2012: 147) even make a strong claim stating that “there is a consistent loss in religiosity from one generation to the next”.

323
At the same time, there is a significant correlation between the acquisition of Arabic and the prevailing interest in one of the religions within the family, on the one hand, and the professional development of the adult offspring, on the other. In this respect, in some cases, the origin may have certain influence on the professional direction the children take. However, some goals for development at work as adults foster a peculiar reconnection with a familial relationship (like father-daughter) and cultural aspects.

The parents in all three families take a “pro-ethnic” position concerning the raising of their children by recognising their bicultural background as “rooted of their identity” (Edwards, Caballero and Puthussery, 2010: 956). Therefore, the mixed origin of the offspring is not questioned by the children, either, despite the quantity and quality of acquired ethno-cultural markers. Simultaneously, though parents’ preference the children to recognise both of their heritages, not all of the couples make purposeful efforts in this direction. However, both parties estimate the more “passive approach” as an advantage. This way the heirs are given an opportunity to decide for themselves which cultural aspects they would like to acknowledge as their own “at the right time” (see also Arweck, Nesbitt 2010: 45–46; Lopez 2017: 53). By recognising different cultural specificities inherent for both parents and having the freedom to choose their own affiliation to each of them, the parents-children relationship is accepted as cohesive by all parties.

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6 Following the second strand of Caballero’s pro-race concept of children upbringing (Caballero, 2005; Edwards and Caballero, 2008: 44; Edwards, Caballero and Puthussery, 2010: 951).


Another Conception of Brazilian Childhood under the Optics of Social Protagonism: Is It Possible?

Irandi Pereira, Claudio Oliveira Fernandes

Abstract: This reflection brings the thesis of protagonism of children and adolescents, understood as their active and creative participation. To this end, space-time must be guaranteed for the free expression of their opinions, feelings, and decision-making needs. Protagonism is already recognized as a right of children and adolescents in different societies and, therefore, it is a duty of families, the society, and the State to protect and support boys and girls, considering their peculiar condition of people in development. Assuming the possibility of building another conception of childhood from the perspective of social protagonism, the socio-cultural actions of the Bloco EURECA, created in 1991 and linked to the non-governmental organization Project Street Boys and Girls, is taken in this article as a case study. In order to increase the visibility and vocalization of children and youth protagonism around their rights, Bloco EURECA was inspired by one of the largest popular festivals in Brazil, Carnival, due to its historical vitality, capacity to aggregate large numbers of people, and representativeness of different expressions and cultural manifestations.

Keywords: Childhood, Conception, Youth, Protagonism, Bloco EURECA

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Presentation

This article is based on research carried out by the authors that emphasize the active and creative participation of children and adolescents under the thesis of social protagonism. In this sense, it is relevant for the research the socio-cultural actions promoted by civil society organizations (non-governmental organizations) that guarantee space-time and management of different methodologies that give boys and girls free expression of their ideas, feelings, desires, and needs in the face of given situations that affect their daily life.

Brazilian law defines children and adolescents as persons up to 18 years of incomplete age. They are constitutionally recognized as subjects of rights and to be the absolute priority of the attention of the family, society, and public power due to their peculiar condition of persons in development. In this sense, the protagonist thesis implies that these actors promote, protect, and defend the rights expressed in law so that boys and girls can enjoy a dignified, ethical and solidary personal, family and social life. Such indicatives favour the reflection and construction of another conception of childhood.

Child and youth protagonism is already recognized as a right in different societies; however, what is seen is a gap between what is expressed in law and its applicability in daily life. This right is still little encouraged when it comes to children and adolescents from impoverished families, who are denied access to basic social rights. Research on the thesis of social protagonism point to the Latin American context and the late 1970s as the basis of its construction, supported by the Liberation Theology and libertarian pedagogy.

The choice of the case study of the Carnival group called Bloco EURECA: Eu Reconheço o Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente _Eureca is the Portuguese-language acronym of _Eu Reconheço o Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente._ “I Recognize the Statute of the Child and Adolescent” is an effort to understand a know-how that prioritizes the involvement of girls and boys from impoverished families in the occupation of participatory spaces in the debate and the defense of their interests. Bloco EURECA was created in 1991 by the non-governmental organization Projeto Meninos e Meninas de Rua (Street Boys and Girls Project), PMMR, in São Bernardo do Campo, a municipality in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo, in the State of São Paulo. Since its founding in 1983, the PMMR has dealt with the recurrent practice of acts of violence against children and adolescents, especially those who are in the streets.

Carnival “blocks” _blocos carnavalescos_ are a popular manifestation in Brazil that have existed since the late nineteenth century. Its members, costumed or not, travel the streets, avenues and squares dancing and singing during the Carnival celebrations, which take place before the religious event of Lent. There are a variety of Carnival block types. Bloco EURECA approaches the format of the so-called _bloco de enredo_ (plot block), since it combines music (samba) and plot: the content (plot) with political and behavioural criticism expressed in humorous and playful tone and the rhythm – samba/music (Ferreira, 2018).

The acronym EURECA is a reference to the expression coined by Archimedes (287 BC-212 BC) “Eureka!”’, or “I found it, I found out”. It also relates to the
“grammar of rights” inscribed in the Statute of Children and Adolescents (1990), which had the democratic participation of broad sectors of Brazilian society, notably children and adolescents. In order to increase the visibility and vocalization of children’s rights, Bloco EURECA was inspired by one of Brazil’s largest popular festivity, Carnival, with its samba and block “schools”. This choice took into account the historical vitality, the ability to aggregate people, and the representativeness of different expressions and cultural manifestations presented in a playful, festive way (play, dance, music, costume, allegory, fun, leisure).

Since 1992, Bloco EURECA has been transforming revelry into a space for the exercise of the thesis of the protagonism of children and youth. Its socio-cultural action counts on the effective participation of non-governmental organizations in the cities of São Paulo, São Vicente, Rio Claro, Campinas, São Bernardo do Campo and Guarulhos. In the period 1992-2019, around 54 parades were held. The apotheosis, or apex, of the protagonist action happens every year at the PMMR headquarters, bringing together all the block members to occupy the streets in São Bernardo do Campo. Bloco EURECA has been spreading to other municipalities and other Brazilian States, promoting the debate and the consolidation of the protagonism thesis as a right of children and adolescents, as in the example below:

EURECA, EURECA is coming / To shake State structures
Not being visible makes us weak / Bloco EURECA, the Statute makes us strong
Pretend not to see / But I am here (chorus)
One more time with my block to shake about (BLOCO EURECA, Eureca 25 years: against the hurtful invisibility, for the empowering visibility, 2016).

**Bloc EURECA: Case Study on Child Protagonism**

Brazilian children and adolescents, in the last decades, have been finding and weaving spaces to better understand and intervene on their rights and needs, especially in contexts marked by social inequalities. The possibility of recognizing them as active subjects and protagonists indicates the need to think about social projects of an educational, emancipating nature. The contributions of libertarian education and social pedagogy greatly help the design of methodologies, strategies and approaches for looking at and dealing with this group. Educator Paulo Freire (1976) is one of the main references on this know-how of popular and social education. Researchers attentive to this movement have developed a series of studies on the role played by boys and girls as social actors and historical subjects capable of producing knowledge, expressing new ways of feeling, thinking, and acting when dealing with the complexity of situations they face. Protagonism is taken as a socio-cultural category because it is a human right—an expression of solidarity, regardless of age; a concept; a practical axis of organizational participation and exercise (Cussianovich, 2005). The studies locate the theme in the Latin American context in the late 1970s, referenced in the Liberation Theology, expressed by the ideals of social and human rights equality. Today, these ideals persist, broadened by the struggle over the rights to cultural production, to the effective implementation of public policies with quality, to the identity as an age and social group, styles and ways of life.
Brazilian social projects focused on the assumptions of the protagonist thesis emerged in the early 1980s as a contraposition to charity, coercive and punitive practices in the care of children in situations of risk and social vulnerability. In opposition to this way of looking at and dealing with children came a proposal of national capillarity called Projetos Alternativos de Atendimento a Meninos e Meninas em Situação/na Rua (Alternative Projects of Assistance to Boys and Girls in Situation of/in the Street), articulated by civil society with the support of international organizations and adopted by the public power. The PMMR, precursor of Bloco EURECA, was created in this time-space.

Bloco EURECA, by following the trails of education and social pedagogy, has been a support to boys and girls in the reconfiguration of another conception of childhood in the context of the ideas of social protagonism: active, creative, autonomous transformation of their lives and collectivises. The know-how developed by social educators starts from the need to understand the place that each of the boys and girls occupies in a variety of social spaces, notably the family and among peers. The design of the methodological bases is the result of an intense process of formation.

Most boys and girls that take part in Bloco EURECA are assisted by social projects developed by non-governmental organizations because they are in situations of vulnerability, risk and suffering (such as living in the street, subjected to child labour, sexual exploitation, family violence and abandonment of parents; some are adolescents subjected to socio-educational measures, others live in shelters, or are children of incarcerated parents, residents of outlying communities, invaded areas or illegal neighbourhoods). Some of them attend public school regularly and combine their school time with participation in socio-cultural activities; others do not even have this opportunity. The daily challenge of these organizations is to welcome this group in the face of different forms of violation of rights, subjected to family and institutional violence. They also care about healthy eating, hygiene, and the difficulties of mobility for boys and girls.

In all there are eight civil society organizations located in the State of São Paulo that make up Bloco EURECA: Projeto Meninos e Meninas de Rua (Street Boys and Girls Project), in São Bernardo do Campo; Projeto Camará (Camará Project), in São Vicente: Associação de Educadores e Educadoras Sociais do Estado de São Paulo (Association of Social Educators of the State of São Paulo), in Campinas; Centros de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos e da Criança e do Adolescente (Centres for the Defence of Human and Child Rights) in São Paulo, in the neighbourhoods of Sapopemba, São Mateus and Interlagos and in the city of Rio Claro; as well as the Circo Escola do Grajaú (Grajaú Circus School), also in São Paulo. They mobilize boys and girls, their families and partners to put the Bloco EURECA on the streets during the Carnival celebrations – generally in February, usually one week before the official opening of the event, at national level.

This trajectory of attention to boys and girls as protagonists still needs recognition: they feel excluded from the decision-making about their life projects by families, public authorities and even communities. This is explained by the very image built on childhood throughout history, the socio-centric and adult-centric
look that still persists today. The criminalization of families living in poverty is another factor for the non-acceptance and even exclusion of boys and girls from the spaces that build citizenship. In Brazil, even with a new legal status in favour of a rights-bearing, citizenship-directed childhood, the protagonism of children and youth is still a thesis, despite the efforts of organizations and social projects that are moving in this direction. Still, since the promulgation of the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (Statute of the Child and Adolescent) ECA, in 1990, it has been possible to rethink the need for a new understanding of the conception of childhood in Brazil. In Bloco EURECA, boys and girls are heard in full use of their right of expression in every way.

In the survey of social projects that work with the thesis of the protagonism of children and youth, Bloco EURECA was considered the most appropriate choice for the development of research by the authors of this article. The focus given to the possibility of building another conception of childhood from the vocalization of its subjects, mediated by social educators and supported by various sectors of society, was the differential for this choice. Moreover, the entities that comprise it are recognized as references of good practices in the care of boys and girls in situations of social vulnerability and risk.

As a case study, the research prioritized the understanding of the process of democratic-participatory methodological construction in the production of knowledge and practices and the diffusion, articulation and mobilization of society in defence of the guarantee of human and social rights of boys and girls. Looking exclusively at Bloco EURECA, they made it possible to understand the specificity and particularity of the methodology and the strategies used without losing the “multidimensional and historically situated” nuances of the wider social reality (André, 1984: 52). This look made it possible to pay attention “to its main components, to the details and to their interaction” with the various works developed in different territories where Bloco EURECA is present (Onofre, 2014: 104). In this sense, it can be said that Bloco EURECA is shaped as a socio-cultural protection network.

The research time, between 2014 and 2016, included the following activities: a) familiarization, observation and visit to the territories; b) participation in debates and training of social educators; c) conducting interviews; d) participation in the parades; f) presentation of research results.

In all, six visits were made to the research field for recognition and observation of the territories – São Bernardo do Campo, São Vicente and Campinas. In debates and training activities, the researchers participated in eight meetings. Six interviews were conducted with social educators in their area of operation. Visits and interviews were previously scheduled, as they depended on the researchers’ displacements. For the interviews, a script with open themes was elaborated highlighting the approach of the thesis of the protagonism of children and youth, the reasons for choosing Carnival as reference for the creation of Bloco EURECA and the strategies for the construction of another conception of childhood, in addition to data on the profile of social educators, institutions, and the theoretical references for the socio-cultural action developed, among others. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and
presented in the final research report according to the linguistic expression of the interviewees. Respondents received a copy of the final survey report. Search results were returned.

The bibliographical and technical references were multidisciplinary in nature, notably those that dialogue with human rights education, considering aspects related to ethnic-racial diversity, gender, age group, economic, social and cultural conditions, vulnerability, risk and suffering, social movements and territoriality, among others. National and international legal documents and the literature helped to understand the relation between the guarantee of rights and the perspective of building another conception of childhood and adolescence from the perspective of protagonism. Limits and possibilities for deepening the theme were found considering the context of contemporary Brazilian society.

Bloco EURECA’s sambas, built collectively by its participants – children, adolescents, young people, social educators, were also documentary references used because they contain elements that induce the exercise of social protagonism and the possibility of constructing another conception. We used 23 plot-sambas – *sambas-enredo* – produced by Bloco EURECA considering the time of the research.

According to PMMR’s Marco Antonio da Silva Sousa Markinhus, Bloco EURECA “is the largest mobilization with children and adolescents in Brazil today” and the exercise of protagonism and engagement is evident when “they choose the theme, the allegory and build the plot-samba”. The mobilization is permanent, because the underlying idea is to “open dialogue with society about children’s rights and provide their interaction with the ECA”. In the plot-sambas the thesis of protagonism is perceived in the irreverent, critical, creative and denouncing attitude of children and adolescents and stimulates the debate about their rights, interests and ways of building another conception of childhood, calling society to be part of this choir.

> With Art I will defeat violence / With art I’ll show my value
> With samba, dancing and beat / Showing in the avenue who I am
> I am a child and an adolescent / I am an organized community
> In this avenue I sing to peace, I sing to love
> I sing my joy and pain – Twice. (BLOCO EURECA, 10 Years, 2001)

It is noteworthy that the activities of Bloco EURECA receive no public resources because a series of requirements for their use – such as not working with issues that impact on the construction of another conception of childhood, such as gender, ethnicity, sexual diversity, rights – make this support unfeasible.

**Bloco EURECA in the Fabric of the Conception of Childhood from the Perspective of Social Protagonism**

Children between the ages of 6 and 7 were usually educated within the family and, from that age on, are sent to other social spaces of learning and coexistence. The *locus* of socialization is extended, from a private (family) dynamics to a somewhat
broader dynamics – friends, relatives, neighbours in the learning of certain trades – to the entrance to a more complex system (school), in which coexistence between peers becomes determinant. In this sense, Dos Santos (1996: 3) notes that “the notion of childhood is so linked to the status of student that some authors even say that it was the school that constructed the modern vision of childhood”, in which the rite of passage to youth and/or adult life was not focused only on the age, but rather on a series of social relations that were constructed in other spaces, notably that of school education.

The concept of adolescence as a period of intermediate life between childhood and youth refers to the existence of an extension of the child’s lifetime influenced by the socio-political and economic transformations in certain societies. The ages between 5 and 7 years were extended to 18 or 19 years and this marked the entrance into another phase of development of the person. This age extension has been considered a “waiting time” of the process of transformation from child to youth. However, this thought did not apply to all childhood; those from the popular classes worked from an early age to support families and/or even collaborated with adults.

This symbolic system of relations implied in the legitimacy of the idea of maintenance and reproduction of social structures around the vision and treatment of the infantile world and the adult world. The thesis of the “incapacity” of the child, and the adolescent, was the argument that prevailed and still prevails, causing losses to the development of a healthy and full life based on his/her autonomy, competence and participation in the destinies of personal and collective life. The contributions of Charlot (1986: 111) go in the direction that the child:

Performs only a marginal role in social relations: he/she is carefully removed from adult meetings, and, when occasionally tolerated, is not allowed to meddle in “grown-ups” business. He/she takes very little part in family, school and social decision-making, including those that concern him/her to a high degree; it is only for the sake of consultation (in the family), or as an extra (in school), or in simulations organized by adults, that we address him/her.

For Rizzini and Silva (2009:7), the idea of childhood and adolescence is “a phase of life marked by passivity and silence in relation to the adult world is a thing of the past”. However, they recognize that, in certain societies, this idea is maintained even with the scientific, technological and informational advance that has been changing the models of socialization. In Sarmento’s view, “children should be considered competent beings, albeit vulnerable and demanding adult protection”. In the context of contemporary society, protection should not be confused with the incapacity of minors as “incapable beings”, for “this incapacity does not arise from the infantile nature, but rather is a cultural construct of the adult-child relationship” (Sarmento, 2019: 17-18). Attributes such as innocence, weakness and evil are terms that “have no absolute meaning and refer to criteria of appreciation, to a reference standard”, since “these images of childhood and adolescence adopt the adult state as paradigm” (Dos Santos, 1996: 7).

According to Saraiva (2016: 37), the courts “did not know how to deal with children’s rights, given the objectification of children towards their parents and the child’s lack of legitimacy to appear as a victim in the courts”. There were no
special laws to cater for this age group and consequently no specific procedures that could guarantee the dignity of the child as a human rights holder. On the creation of the Tribunais de Menores (Children’s Courts) evaluates Barros (2014: no page) that:

At first, we can say that the motives and purposes of the Children’s Courts were not agreed upon. Although there might be a lack of harmony as to the competences, extent and scope of the Courts’ initiatives, there was indeed a strong convergence in defending the need for this judicial apparatus as a modern and modernizing tool in social and intervention policies directed at children.

Twentieth-century Brazil saw the enactment of three legislations on children and adolescents based on international technical and normative references. The first law, denominated Código de Menores (Code of Minors), was promulgated in 1927; the second, also known as the Código de Menores, in 1979; the third, of 1990, is the Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente, ECA, which is still in force, despite a number of reformulations. The first Tribunal de Menores (Juvenile Court) in Brazil was created in 1924, before the first code. The conception of children and adolescents, the “minors”, as the object of guardianship appears in the Codes of Minors as a counterpoint to the concept of them being subject of rights adopted in the ECA. The adoption of the paradigm of the doctrine of integral protection – a set of rights for all children and adolescents, without any discretionary trait – follows the principles of the United Nations’ International Convention on the Rights of the Child – UNCRC, 1989, in which “educating, mobilizing, administer and legislate” imply a revision or an updating of legal-instructional systems – laws and social practices – In favour of a new way of looking at (conceiving) and treating (practices) the child and youth population. Saraiva (2008: no page) clarifies that:

This normative set has revoked the old tutelary conception, bringing the child and the adolescent to a condition of subject of rights, of a protagonist of his/her own history, of a holder of rights and obligations proper to his/her peculiar condition of person in development, giving a new outline to the operation of the Justice of Childhood and Youth, abandoning the concept of minor as a subcategory of citizenship.

This slow process of construction and incorporation of another conception of childhood can be explained by the trajectory of understanding and adopting human rights, which, being indivisible, was constituted in a protected or regulated way, observing the legal systems that establish different ages so that the child-youth group acquires the status of full citizenship (Dos Santos, 1996). Likewise, the concept of full citizenship has also been gradually instituted in the light of the process of incorporation of civil rights (18th century), political rights (19th century) and social rights (20th century), according to the teachings of Marshall (1967), as examples of the recognition of children’s citizenship. On this historical process of construction of another conception of childhood and adolescence, Dos Santos (1996: 5) evaluates that:

The incorporation of the concept of citizenship into the modern conception of childhood and adolescence was a slow construction that began two centuries ago: it was brewing in the Middle Ages and gained consistency in modern times. Its
evolution was possible thanks to the constitution of the individual, the geographical fusion of local powers and the consequent constitution of the Nation-State.

In the case of Brazil, society is reluctant to deal with these changes because many of them are considered recent formulations and are still very little understood. Bloco EURECA has sought to change this context: the strategy of using Carnival and samba has contributed to the idea that a new conception of childhood and adolescence is possible – children and adolescents, in an irreverent, denunciatory, aggregating and creative attitude, taking protagonism in their stories, have taken to the streets of several cities of the State of São Paulo portraying the distance between law and reality in guaranteeing human and social rights. As they say: “When the first beat echoes, the “party” in favour of the human rights of the child and the adolescent begins” (Fernandes, 2016: 25; Pereira & Fernandes, 2018).

The construction of the vision of children and adolescents as “political subjects and creditors of rights” in Brazil is the result of a long process and was developed from a variety of experiences of social participation carried out between the 1970s and 1990s (scouting, religious and artistic-cultural children-adolescent groups, boys and girls in situation of/in the street, in child labour and in institutional shelters, student associations). The PMMR was one of the social actors of this social movement and, in this sense, the creation of Bloco EURECA, in 1991, can be considered the solemn representation of this struggle process around the possibility that another conception of childhood and adolescence can be built.

The contributions of Sarmento (2009: 16) help our reflection on the possibility of constructing another conception of childhood and adolescence in the light of the protagonist experience of Bloco EURECA: “Never children have been the theme as subjects of rights. But, likewise, never has the reality of children been so crossed by unequal opportunities for development, by conditions of life so extreme in their fundamental features and by forms of cultural expression so conveyed to the product industry”. The 28 years of the occupation of public spaces by Bloco EURECA echoing their rights represent that the reality lived by Brazilian boys and girls is still far from the discourses of laws, institutions, courts, and society.

The passage of Bloco EURECA through the streets has been a source of great euphoria and recognition of part of the population around the competence of social educators and boys and girls to expose rights and denounce the effective non-compliance of the laws by the Brazilian State. It should be noted that the strategy to privilege Carnival and the period of the public festivities of this cultural and playful manifestation was intentional, since they represent the most significant event of popular culture, art, aesthetics and politics for Brazilian society. According to Markinhus, “the challenge for us was: we have to take the Statute of the Child and the Adolescent to the streets; we have to make Brazilian society ‘dance’ to the rights of the children” and with that construct another conception of childhood and adolescence in the light of their own protagonism (Fernandes, 2016: 27).

Bloco EURECA waits for the Carnival celebrations not just to sing, dance, express, but to complain and contest. This ambience is perceived as a time-space of being, of living, of participating-acting when the turn and the voice of boys and girls are visible by occupying the public space with their plot-sambas, banners, posters, plays, singing for their rights and lamenting their absence for 28 years
uninterrupted. The bet is that the assumptions of social education and the recognition that social educators who develop it can change the way of thinking and working with boys and girls, because other designs and forms of social participation have been required in persistent contexts of vulnerability, risk and suffering, as evaluated by Fernandes and Pereira (2016-2017-2018).

I will move on, I will conquer
Come on, people, it’s time to change
Let’s go guys, fight / In the avenue it’s time to sing
I am a child, like a forest
To teach you must love / You must listen, I am a citizen.

Culture and art: the grandness of a nation (BLOCO EURECA, Education cannot be private, 2002)

References:
