

Text No. 1: Children's Day (Novinky.cz, 1.6.2023)

**Research title: A child as a small adult or an innocent being? Analysis of the view of childhood from the perspective of the Vietnamese community in Brno**

**Introduction:**

Should a child play with dolls or toy cars? And should it be played at all? The concept of a happy childhood may belong to a set of "self-evident truths" that are reproduced from generation to generation through the collective consciousness [Durkheim]. Anthropology shows us that everything we take for granted can be culturally relative. Children's responsibilities and rights can vary across societies, and from a social anthropologist's point of view, this is a core topic that is not just about what a child should or shouldn't play with. The theme of childhood reflects the entire cosmology of people - what is a person's place in the world and the universe, how did he get here and where should he go in life. Therefore, by researching childhood, we can reveal more about adulthood than meets the eye. The anthropology of childhood is a historically neglected discipline, but in recent years it is gaining more and more attention. This may be due to the fact that childhood research is ethically problematic due to the complexity of obtaining informed consent to conduct research. As part of the research, I will rely on the Eurocentric concept of the right to a happy childhood, which I will analyze through the specific answers of parents from the Vietnamese community in Brno.

**Research question:**

For my research, I set the following research questions: What is specific about the perception of childhood in the Vietnamese community? How does the perception of childhood by the Brno Vietnamese community differ from the Czech perspective?

**Theoretical framework:**

The theoretical framework of the work is based on the established research question. To create a theoretical framework, I choose texts dealing with the anthropology of childhood, globalization and religion. Such texts include, for example, the work *Cherubs and chattelings* dealing with a Eurocentric view of childhood and its comparison with non-European cultures. In connection with kinship, I would be inspired by K. Hastrup's text and her division of social life phases in connection with physicality. Hastrup states that across societies, womanhood is often divided based on the physiological ability to have children. It divides womanhood into three stages: virgin, mother and old woman. For this research, the concept of adulthood is interesting precisely on the basis of acquired status (in Hastrup's case attributed to menstruation). At the same time, Hastrup states that it is more difficult for men across cultures, because they do not have such strongly biologically determined transitions between life phases. Therefore, these transitions are most often captured by a set of initiation rituals, when a boy becomes an adult, often through various types of endurance of suffering (e.g. cutting ornaments into the face). As part of the research, I will try to uncover possible modern Vietnamese initiation rituals [Turner; Van Gennep], whose revelation will help define the current Vietnamese idea of childhood. Next, I will expand the theory with existing research on the Vietnamese community and kinship. I am also inspired by Berger and Luckmann's work, *The Social Construction of Reality*, in which the authors discuss how it is possible that we all share the same idea of the world. I will expand this theory with the help of texts related to the anthropology of religion, since in order to understand the meaning of childhood, I need to holistically reveal the connections with the perception of a person's role in the world. For the analysis, however, I am

inspired by a phenomenological approach - I am not so interested in the objective truth, but the subjective interpretations of the respondents are important to me.

In relation to childhood, some authors come up with an interesting observation that in European and American society, children are required to be playful, creative and wild in their childhood, but then these qualities are suppressed in them in the school system. At the same time, it is possible that currently the respondents' values will be very similar to those of the Czech Republic, due to globalization/influence by Western popular culture. For a possible analysis of this phenomenon, I choose the theory of Global cultural flow [Appadurai], which discusses the mixing and spreading of cultures (on five levels, from macro to micro level) due to globalization. In connection with this phenomenon, diffusionist theories would also help me for the analysis [e.g. Boas], which draw attention to the mixing of characters across cultures. I will focus on the Vietnamese community due to its high representation in the Czech Republic, and the research will try to reveal the specifics of the perception of childhood within the Brno Vietnamese community.

### **Methodology:**

The research tool for investigating the stated research question will be a semi-structured interview [Kauffman – understanding interview]. The interview will be captured in a focus group format, where one (or more) researchers ask questions to a group of respondents and stimulate a debate between them. Due to the need for a subsequent transcript, the interview must be recorded, which the respondents will be informed about in advance and on the spot, and their written informed consent will be required. Respondents have the option not to give consent and not participate in the research, and they also have the option to withdraw their participation for any reason.

A semi-structured interview is based on a set battery of questions, which is in the course of the conversation expanded based on respondents' answers. As part of the research, new topics can arise related to childhood that the researcher can immediately inquire about. Questions in semi-structured the interview needs to be pilot tested so that they are not suggestive. Therefore, the questions should not be direct of a nature such as "What is your view of childhood?" but should map specific areas of childhood throughout concrete tangible examples and thematic areas, such as school and work/industriousness children, or the required moderation and orderliness or wildness and playfulness of children. For that reason it would help analyze respondents' answers based on their perception of binary oppositions [LéviStrauss; Mary Douglas - Purity and Danger]. It might help define childhood through its negation— an example in an interview could be the questions "what should childhood look like?". As part of the conversation, he can also be used a graphic method, which consists in talking about the topic with the support of images that a person can describe. This can help in the introduction to loosen the atmosphere and talk to the respondents. The analysis will be approached in the form of a qualitative content analysis of the text. Inductive will be used a method inspired by the grounded theory method [Glaser; Strauss; Charmaz]. This method usually it uses when working with a larger amount and type of data, but its principle lies in the construction of theory and conclusions based on the data obtained. It is therefore interpretive and reduces the risk of "fitting data to theory", in contrast to e.g. deductive approaches, where the risk may be greater. Inductive method therefore it provides more space for data interpretation and the result of the research will be the creation of a new specific theory linked directly to the data.

The length of the research is based on its nature. The research is divided into three phases. In the first phase, the design will take place and testing the battery of questions on a test sample to provide feedback on whether the questions are clear and unsuggestive. This phase will last two weeks even with time to spare. In the second phase, data will be collected using interviews. This phase will last

approximately three months due to the complexity of organizing the meeting within the focus group. Three months are also set aside due to the possible expansion of the number of groups on the basis data saturation needs. During the third phase, the answers obtained will be analyzed in the form of a transcript. This phase will last approximately two months. The result of the analysis will be a final report in the form interpretive study. In total, approximately 5 group interviews will be conducted<sup>2</sup> with respondents over the age of 18 who they have children (they are parents), they are of Vietnamese origin and they are from Brno. It is not necessary to limit the age further, it is only necessary that it is an adult person - a parent - and that the respondent is fluent in the Czech language (interviews will take place without a translator). Ideally, it will be in one group chat similar proportional representation of men and women<sup>3</sup>. I assume that the talks will be held around five to six in the afternoon (by agreement), which should be an acceptable time from the point of view of work and family life. This interference with working hours will be compensated with a symbolic financial reward. Due to the possible closure of the community, it is good to have a so-called gatekeeper for research, i.e. an intermediary who is part of the community and who will help to reach the respondents. Interviews will be held at a pre-provided address in a separate room in order to maintained confidentiality and anonymity that can help respondents answer openly. How was it mentioned, will be recorded for the purpose of creating a transcript. The interview will last approximately one hour hour and half. Respondents will be provided with refreshments in the form of sandwiches and water. It comes from that and financial research plan. Respondents will be rewarded for their participation with the financial sum of CZK 400, o of which they will be informed in advance. The financial remuneration of the respondents needs to be included in the costs, possible room rent and catering (bread, water). The recording technician will be the researcher secured.

#### **Research ethics and reflection:**

As part of qualitative ethnographic research, it is necessary to be ethical and reflective in your approach your decisions. From an ethical point of view, it is necessary to have informed consent from all respondents to interview and use their answers. At the same time, respondents will be informed about their anonymization answers. In case they share sensitive information and/or information they don't want it to be used, this information will not be used and will be deleted. Answers will be confidential and will not be shared have access by no one other than the researcher and the person securing the transcript; this person will be obliged non-disclosure agreement. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account that Vietnamese respondents may have a tendency to present their ideas about childhood in such a way that they do not differ too much from the Czech idea of childhood - due to the striving for an assimilated and integrated self-presentation. But the research focuses on the respondents' subjective perception of childhood, and not the objective truth. If the respondents' ideas they present in a certain way, this too can be a stimulating research finding. The aim of the research is do not harm the respondents and map their idea of childhood, which will then be analyzed through framework theory. This research can then serve as a stimulus for further comparative analysis.

## **Text No. 2 Stripping to bare feet, packing "balls" and quarantine. The first day in prison will ground even the hardened.**

### **Research topic**

Going to prison cannot be an easy matter for anyone. Even repeat convicts, who have experienced the process of going to prison several times in their life, cannot enjoy it. How does such an entry into prison take place? A person who will never be sentenced to serve a sentence will probably never try or experience such a process. There may be public opinion in society that convicts are only murderers, or criminals of serious crimes. However, the text points out just the opposite. It is clear from the text of the newspaper article that people can go to prison for all kinds of misdemeanors or crimes, such as petty theft, non-payment of taxes or other tax breaks, so it is not necessarily murder. Conviction to serve a sentence can happen to any people from different levels of society, it does not necessarily have to be only people from lower levels, such as the poor with minimal education. How does such an assimilation of convicts who come from different lives "out there" take place to prison life and other prisoners, who are all conceptually equal, so-called "in sweatpants"?

### **Theory**

Entering prison is a lengthy process that reminds me of a rite of passage. Rituals of passage were addressed by A. Van Gennep, who determined that every rite of passage has a three-dimensional dimension, namely: Separation, the liminal phase and the integration process. Detachment is the process of detaching from our present life, being. It aims to cleanse us of everything we know, who we are, and prepare us for the next phase of transition, the so-called boundary phase, or liminality. Often such a process can literally mean stripping out of old clothes, washing, or even burning some of the things I own. The next phase, liminality, already mentioned, is the phase of the process when the novice - the person who is the actor of the ritual - finds himself in the place "between". Between my old self and my new self. The liminal phase was described by Victor Turner as a continuation and extension of Van Gennep's theory of transition rituals. He also refers to this process as Structure – antistructure – structure. The liminality/boundary phase is very specific for novices. Turner came up with the term *communitas*, which refers to the community that is in the liminal phase, and it has no structure, all novices are equal and it works non-hierarchically and unstructured society. All novices have gone through the phase of the first transition, in which they could experience humiliation, ridicule, and a sense of embarrassment. In *communitas*, it doesn't matter who you were before in a former life, here you are all equal, no one has the upper hand, (as evidenced by the same prescribed dress code in prison, for example). In *Communitas* you feel cohesive with others and have a sense of belonging, no one understands you as much as others because they are in the same situation and going through the same process and feelings. *Communitas* should not last too long, because it is dangerous for society. Company he has no way to grab her. It does not mean that after the end of the liminal phase I will not know and have fun with others who were part of the *communitas*, or on the contrary you will be inseparable, but one thing is certain - you will never forget. However, nowadays we can also consider *communitas* to be people who refuse to integrate into a structured society with fixed rules and norms, and therefore live outside it, on the fringes, such as squatters, beatniks. The last stage should therefore be subsequent integration back into society, but already with a new "position". The transition process should make us stronger, more resilient.

This completes the transition process. A. Van Gennep and V. Turner deal with transition rituals in the books: *Ritual processes* and the *Rites of Passage*

After presenting the theory, I will be interested in the research whether new prisoners attach importance to co-inmates and perceive them as future partners with whom they will share the time

they spend serving their sentence. Or they perceive them as one of many, so after the onboarding process they will be the same people as those who have been there longer. And last but not least, I will be interested in what meanings they attached to the process of "integration", the process of starting to serve the sentence. What feelings did they feel? Were they playing heroes, tough guys? Do they realize the seriousness of the situation? I perceive the entire process of serving the sentence in such a way that the entry process can be considered a liminal phase - verification of documents, filling out documentation, several rounds of searches, or the entire execution of the sentence, when the last stage of integration, initiation, will be the release from prison. However, in my research proposal, the liminal phase will be the process of onset.

### **Research question**

- How do new prisoners perceive the transition process – from the free world to the guarded closed world?
- What importance do they give to other co-boarding prisoners?

### **Method**

As a method to do research, I choose a qualitative method, which will be semi-structured interviews, inspired by the understanding interview introduced by Kauffmann. An understanding interview is an interview where I, as the interviewer, together with my interviewee/respondent, introduce the topic and the goal of the conversation, and should resemble a so-called "coffee chat". There should be no pressure or any stress on the interviewee. It is about creating a friendly atmosphere so that both parties feel comfortable and want to share ideas. A semi-structured interview means that I will have a set of questions prepared, however, I can change their order or wording during the interview. At the same time, it opens up space for reacting in the present space and time to the individual answers that the interviewee gave me. We can expand our thoughts, run off here and there, but it is important not to run too far, we should still stick to the prescribed line, which should be the topic and goal of the research, that's why the conversation takes place. I think the interviewee will appreciate this approach, as he will feel that he is really being listened to and is heard. He must feel respect from us questioners that his knowledge is very important to our knowledge and valuable. Without them, we wouldn't have gained anything, and therefore we wouldn't have discovered anything. It is also important to perceive the context when conducting the interview. You can't just focus on individual answers, but also perceive body language, attitude, whether he's sweating - is he sweating because he's nervous, or is the room warm? Write notes in the text.

I would record the entire interview for easier subsequent work with the data - such as transcription, coding and interpretation.

I would select a sample by choosing a designated prison and, through the prison director or their staff, I would request access to newly admitted prisoners, with whom I could conduct an interview, for example, during visiting hours.

### **Ethics**

The ethics of research is of course connected to the ethical tenets, which I will use as a researcher. The first point is the self-evident informed consent of all interviewees to provide an interview

and the information contained therein. Each respondent should give the interview after his own voluntary decision. Furthermore, anonymization is clear. In my output, I will change all the names, so that no one could identify with the given results. I will also slightly change the age for anonymization. What I would leave would be the gender, if it was necessary for the subsequent analysis. Another point is the realization of some reciprocity and solidarity. The respondent provides us with valuable information for our purposes, what can I, as the interviewer/researcher, give him in return? Of course, I can present the research as purposeful, the results of which can help e.g. future new prisoners, who would at least prepare a little for such a life change, or at least try to do so. After all, Sami knows how difficult the beginnings were. Secondly, I can provide some things, goods that he does not have access to, such as cigarettes, food or magazines. The prisoner would certainly appreciate that, but everything would be in accordance with the regulations on what can and cannot be brought to visiting prisoners. Another point is to be sensitive, in the sense that that it is not an easy topic, so I have to take into account the respondent's feelings and respect the law for not answering the question. Last but not least, my reflexivity as a researcher is important. I'm watching on things right? Am I interpreting the findings correctly? I have to take into account my important role and responsibility both to the scientific community, sponsors, respondents and other researchers. I have to be aware of the limits of the work that may arise in the process, such as the respondent does not always have to tell the truth, he may remain silent.

