SOCIETY REGISTER

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With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

SOCIETY REGISTER 2022 / VOL. 6, NO. 2

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CONTENTS

Tackling sensitive and controversial topics in social research—sensitivity of the field

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ABSTRACT: The article discusses issues concerning sensitive topics in diverse social research, primarily connected with sensitive field research. The authors first analyse issues concerning sensitive topics and then move on to discuss examples of socially sensitive research in difficult research-related situations and areas. They also focus on the complex situation of a social researcher conducting research in sensitive, socially, culturally and politically diverse contexts, including the context of education.
KEYWORDS: sensitive topics, sensitive social research, sensitivity of the field, education

AROUND SENSITIVE AND CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

Contemporary societies are (over)loaded with topics that are sensitive or controversial (Hilário & Augusto 2020); they have become inherent to the social world. These topics include many areas related to both the past and present, and affecting the future lives of modern generations. Some have left their mark on hundreds of thousands of lives, or, as in the case of colonisation and racism in social research (Markowska-Manista 2018), Islamophobia (Górak-Sosnowska 2014), gender (Odrowąż-Coates 2015a), also national identity, human rights, or basic income, they indicate today's difficult dimensions and areas of people's lives (Baranowski 2021). Some of them are heated on social media and fiercely discussed online; others get more physical and turn into social movements and other social actions aimed at showing discontent

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or resistance. There are also those which turn political or violent and lead to severe consequences. Many other sensitive topics remain unspoken in the fragile context (Isaqzadeh, Gulzar, & Shapiro 2020), yet they are still valid and might pop up someday in the future. Others are conditioned by processes that are gaining momentum, such as humanitarian crises, migration crises and related value crises (Bhabha 2018).

Tackling a controversial or sensitive topic remains a challenge (Ndemanu & Davis 2019), especially if both (or more) sides are actively engaged in the dispute or conflict. Worldview conflicts and social polarization have become dominant features of many contemporary societies. There is probably no society in the world today in which there would not be disputes about the superiority of one truth over another that would attempt to increase or give rights to one group and decrease or take them away from another. The dividing lines that polarize societies and social groups run through political views, beliefs, loyalty to traditional values, ideals, and conspiracy theories that for some are true and justified while for others are at odds with scientific, realistic thinking about the world. Many of these misunderstandings, antagonisms, and conflicts are caused by a socially, politically, or culturally sensitive topic, issue, or phenomenon.

By sensitive, we mean a broader term than 'controversial', which refers to the probability of provoking public discussion or arguments. 'Sensitive' is an emotion-loaded term that is significant for an individual or a group for personal, political, or social reasons and—if raised—has the potential to cause negative feelings or provoke a conflict. In other words, 'sensitive' is, for us, a slightly broader term than 'controversial' as it also includes the individual level.

Depending on the context and historical issues (Nichol 2017), some sensitive and controversial topics will be strictly connected with taboos. A taboo is a cultural phenomenon encompassing everything that is socially, culturally and sometimes legally (state legislation, customary law) banned. A taboo refers thus to undiscussable topics (it is improper to talk about them) and unacceptable behaviour. Sometimes a taboo prohibits a particular cultural or social group from speaking, writing about and noticing matters contained within this taboo, hence researchers' role to gain insight into it based on scholarly exploration and ethical approach (Luce 2019).

SENSITIVE TOPICS, SENSITIVE RESEARCH AND DIFFICULT RESEARCH-RELATED SITUATIONS AND AREAS

Sensitive and controversial topics describe situations that may be encountered while conducting research in culturally, socially, and politically diverse contexts of respondents' lives and accompanying phenomena. It is research-oriented towards learning about the (real and virtual) world through interaction with other people relating to their social, educational, and upbringing environments. These are also topics accompanying practices in the process of education and upbringing in globalizing, differentiating and polarising societies. They are often a challenge for educators, teachers and academic teachers responsible for transferring knowledge, shaping skills and competencies of new generations. These issues also concern researchers.

Sensitive topics include aspects related to time, space, places, and processes they

are directly or indirectly connected with. Sensitive topics also mean the field where the educator or researcher falls into a peculiar system of manipulation or internal games, often beyond their will and consciousness (Kuźma 2013). These may be places, events and situations related to various kinds of taboos, conflicts, tensions and world-view differences.

These may be situations connected with everyday interactions of school and university teaching on sensitive issues in difficult community contexts or the actions of minority groups that are discriminated against, marginalised, or economically exploited in a chain of global economic and political relationships.

All of these bring about theoretical, methodological and ethical dilemmas. They include dilemmas concerning *how to study (in social sciences) and how to present such topics (in education)?* These are also dilemmas concerning the search for answers to the questions: how to define the boundaries when researching and discussing sensitive topics in order to preserve a sense of safety for oneself and the participants of the research or educational process? Finally, how to reformulate and operationalise key definitions related to the understanding of many contemporary social and cultural phenomena and how to decolonise knowledge that will facilitate the understanding of sensitive topics in the contemporary world?

Implementing sensitive topics in education, discussing and analysing them in diverse societies and settings can be challenging and fraught with many ethical dilemmas and social, political or cultural complications (Evans et al. 2000). At the same time, researchers who work in education and childhood studies have the opportunity to articulate important socially sensitive and controversial topics that affect the youngest citizens of the global village—diverse groups of children and adolescents.

Usually, researchers, particularly social scientists, remain hidden to their readers; they do not often confess their difficult experiences encountered in the course of doing research. One may get the impression that exhibitionism aimed at showing difficult research situations and problems experienced by the researcher is inappropriate in some disciplines.

The sensitive topics that social researchers study are increasingly intertwined with their own sensitive experiences in the research process. This applies, for example, to research in refugee centres, in detention or prison isolation, research with children who have experienced sexual abuse, genocide survivors and persecuted or marginalised ethnic minority groups. Often, behind the veil of silence and the pages of academic descriptions, hidden are the dilemmas of the researchers, their difficult experiences, unexpected research situations (the outbreak of conflict, physical assault, being a 'confidant' of difficult experiences told by research participants in armed conflict zones, being a witness to violence), traumas that affected their further professional paths and, to a large extent, their personal lives as well (Markowska-Manista 2017). Rarely does reading books and texts (as opposed to diaries and field diaries) by social scientists, including field researchers, makes us reflect on the cost of what they experience in the field. It is not just about illness, anxiety and physical risks, e.g. when research is conducted in conflict zones, humanitarian crisis areas or war zones. It is also rare that we read about the cost of research on the part of the researched. What we mean is the

veil of silence shrouding for example the infamous practices of researchers' involvement in collaboration with the military/ intelligence (Tomforde 2011), which should be seen as unethical and therefore abusive towards research participants in the field of social research (Kowalski 2015).

Looking at examples of social research from the last decade, it is important to note that there is widespread acceptance that engaging 'vulnerable groups' in research and researching 'vulnerable groups' is important for understanding their situation, lives, development, experiences or implementations proposed from the perspective of majority societies and Western (privileged) researchers. This sensitivity is closely linked to the contexts of the lives and experiences of vulnerable groups, minorities, communities (Powell et al. 2018). However, considerable caution needs to be exercised (it relates to the safety of the researcher and respondents) when initiating and participating in social research on 'sensitive' and controversial issues. This requires that researchers follow ethical standards and become familiar with the socio-cultural context, and at the same time apply an approach that allows for a multi-faceted understanding of what a sensitive or controversial topic is (for both the researcher and respondents). Such an approach to understanding sensitivity allows the researcher to mitigate or avoid potential problems in the research process and to conduct ethical research with sensitive groups (Cronin-Furman & Lake 2018). Sensitive topic research does not close the list of issues related to social research in difficult contexts. Such research is usually socially sensitive and has multiple definitions in the sciences. One fairly general classical definition indicates that it involves "studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research" (Sieber & Stanley 1988: 49). All socially sensitive research in the field has some risks and usually has some consequences for the researcher, the respondents, the environment. We will notice these aspects, for example, in the research of cultural and social anthropologists, cross-cultural and clinical psychologists, educators and sociologists working on critical studies of childhood and children's rights (Liebel 2020) or historians working on genocide studies, the Holocaust and difficult memory.

SENSITIVITY OF THE FIELD

Let us now look at the category of the field, which is often a sensitive research context. Social research conducted in an unfamiliar field may positively or negatively influence the researcher and contribute to the verification of his/her understanding of a sensitive topic. The field (new place, space) is associated with a number of difficulties, problems and burdens that usually accompany social research away from the desk. For example, research in a place that is alien to the researcher (a city district, an island, a refugee camp, slums, a correctional institution) brings with it the awareness that we also unintentionally change the experience of the researched, that we collect, analyse and describe situations and experiences of the researched which may turn out to be psychologically very demanding and sometimes change our perception and behaviour.

Not every social researcher is likely to have psychological support during or after

carrying out research in so-called sensitive contexts. Not everyone is also aware of the burden resulting from long-term work with a sensitive topic (humans and massacres, humans and death, incurable diseases, hospice care, humans and psychological and physical violence including sexual abuse, humans and violation of their rights, etc.).

Exploring sensitive topics in the social sciences in the field means operating in a different dimension of everyday experiences than those we know. As Hastrup wrote "field research means living in another world and learning about this world in a process of (second) enculturation, i.e. a process of unconscious incorporation of local knowledge based on experience" (Hastrup 1998: 6). This is nothing else than constant participant observation, taking note of the surrounding reality, constructing a familiar-foreign social reality and asymmetrically balancing between the known and the unknown, the normative and the taboo. Staying and working in the field sharpens perception and predisposes to a thorough observation of the construction by researchers of images and identities of people treated in the categories of 'Others', 'Aliens', sometimes still 'Exotic'.

The experience of the field allows us to pose new questions about the ethics of sensitive research in a sensitive area in the context of using images of children and adults who are often unaware of the fact that they are used to 'embellish' European academic sources (Markowska-Manista 2019). Another aspect related to ethics concerns research on intimate behaviours that are culturally tabooed, disparaging or incriminating to people (Renzetti & Raymond 1993).

Patric Declerck carried out such research for 15 years in the tabooed world of Parisians in a crisis of homelessness. In a long-term research process, the researcher found a suitable narrative to talk about the research and a method through which he respectfully described the investigated 'lunatics of exclusion'. In his publication, he defined his attitude as "the ridiculous relativism of the conservative attitude of the intervening observer" (Declerck 2004: 532).

Sensitive research in a sensitive context was conducted by children's rights activist and academic researcher Judith Ennew. She postulated that ethics in research with a vulnerable group such as children is paramount, and that the planning of research activities should take place around ethics (Morrow 2014). In carrying out research in South-East Asia, the scholar emphasized the right to be properly researched that children from any vulnerable group are entitled to, i.e. children living on the streets, children experiencing physical and emotional abuse, children experiencing armed conflict. She advocated that social researchers in their research and through their research should protect children, not harm children, should not put children at risk, should not use their position to persuade a child to participate in research (Ennew, Beazley, Bessell & Waterson 2009).

Other noteworthy research is an ethnographic study by Ethel V. Kosmiński (2020) on the life of Japanese and Japanese Brazilian Migrants. The author analyses the trajectories of migration processes, paying particular attention to the lives of this population as migrants, lives as returning migrants and their lives as Brasilian and Japanese citizens. The scholar collected stories of the migration of families of Japanese workers to Brazil and their adaptation to new conditions, describing both the positive aspects of

the lives of several generations of migrants, and the difficulties they experienced, such as victimisation. Kosmiński carried out a study of the everyday life of a vulnerable group - migrants with their difficult experiences (Brazilian nationalism in the 1930s, persecution of ethnic communities in 1930-1940s Brazil) and described the formation of the socio-cultural and geographical identity of this group.

A sensitive topic and a sensitive context accompanied Anna Odrowąż-Coates' two-year research conducted in Saudi Arabia. As a female researcher, the author had the possibility to penetrate the socio-cultural spaces of Saudi women (Odrowąż-Coates 2015b). Hence, her research (embedded in the ethnographic stream) focused on the situation of women, revealing the world of social, family and personal/intimate life of Saudi women—a world which is extremely complex and often tabooed in the Western world. The author disenchants the stereotypically perceived categories of the gendered socio-cultural structure by drawing attention to the following sensitive topics: the female body and its associated rituals and customs, the control of sexuality, emotions and erotic impulses, and gender apartheid.

Being a social researcher investigating sensitive topics in a sensitive field is also walking an untrodden path. Not all social researchers have sufficient experience, support, resources that they could use effectively in conducting sensitive research. This is often related to the difficult research and non-research situations they experience. These include, for example, incomplete knowledge of topography and context, uncertainty about moving into unfamiliar territory, clashes with the difficult reality in which the researcher operates and the problematic situations in which the research subjects exist, crossing boundaries in experiencing difficulties, reading the reality of the research site from multiple perspectives, and the inability to predict the course of events. Another difficulty may be confronting stereotypes about the subjects and the problems of their places of life, the clash of colonial and postcolonial discourses in research practice, and the experience of unequal power relations and gender. Importantly, in some fieldwork sites, the researcher becomes categorised, pigeonholed, inscribed into local categories of thinking and perceiving strangers even before arrival. They may become a symbol of a better world, they may resemble colonial oppressors, they may be associated with superiority, power, hierarchy and social inequality.

SENSITIVE TOPICS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY CHILDHOOD STUDIES AND EDUCATION

This collection of articles dealing primarily with sensitive and controversial topics, and topics that may be both controversial and sensitive depending on context as well as social and political reception, provides a special space for scholarly exploration in the fields of social research focusing on childhood studies (Powell et al. 2018), interdisciplinary research concerning children's rights (Budde & Markowska-Manista 2020) and education (Darvin 2015). Through the prism of their diverse experiences and research interests, the authors take different approaches to present research on sensitive and controversial topics from a qualitative perspective. At the same time, the authors turn our attention to new topics and conditions of research in the field

of contemporary interdisciplinary social studies, in which the study of childhood and children's rights, as well as educational studies, are crucial for the development and civic preparation of young generations for life in polarised societies of the 21st century.

In this special issue, we present case studies at the local, national and international level that focus on a sensitive or controversial topic connected with childhood and education and show how, in a given society, educational setting or field of social research, relevant stakeholders have dealt with it—i.e., what lessons they have learned. The authors critically engage with children's and young people's issues in school and out-of-school settings. Most of them are empirical studies that use qualitative and discursive methodologies in diverse social, political and cultural contexts.

The first article brings us to the more troubled and difficult dimension of contemporary childhood studies. Korinna McRoberts tackles a problematic topic, a taboo—childhood sexual abuse (CSA). She analyses how CSA is framed and perceived in the mainstream society by triangulating CSA as taboo, stigma, a result and the impact on childhood within the Western (primarily Anglo-Saxon) context.

In the second article, "The Procedural and Constructivist Concept of Good Citizenship and Civic Identity in the Czech Educational Framework", Jan Květina directs the readers' attention to the issues of the Czech educational system after 1989. The author analyses its main shortcomings, dilemmas and challenges related to the concept of civic education and teaching democracy. He draws attention to the need to find a pluralistic, constructivist and procedural approach that would enrich the traditional concepts of social science education in the Czech Republic.

The author of the next article, Elo Süld, critically engages with multicultural learning strategies in Estonian education while addressing Islam and tackling Islamophobia. Considering the secular character of Estonian society, she concludes that religion in general, and Islam in particular, occupy only a marginal position.

The last two articles analyse children's rights issues and are connected with sensitive childhoods issues. Rajaa Sabbagh discusses how democratic movements impact children's understanding of their rights. Taking the case of Lebanon, she implies that democratic movements are a significant factor that supports children's understanding of their rights, especially such rights as freedom of expression, equality or social security.

The last article in this issue covers the complex topic of death and how it is presented in the literature for children focusing on diverse childhood discourses. Sandra Kwaśniewska-Paszta analysed several pieces of children's literature to find the dominant patterns and narratives of death. In her opinion, children can better deal with this challenging topic if their subjectivity is respected and their voices heard.

In all of the articles briefly presented above and their respective research areas, it is not only the topic that is 'sensitive' or 'controversial', but also the way in which it is understood and confronted by the researcher through the lens of the reader's experience of being part of his or her own social, educational, political, and cultural context. The themes raised by the researchers have great transformative potential for changing thinking and rethinking about research in the field of childhood and children's rights studies and the importance of decolonization of sensitive and controversial topics in

school education practice and theories.

Our Special Issue also includes a book review on the situation of children with developmental dysfunctions written by Beata Rajter—another sensitive topic in many societies.

An ongoing project, *Sensiclass: Tackling Sensitive Topics in a Classroom* (Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education, project number 2019-1-EE01-KA203-051690), has inspired the Special Issue. The project is led by the University of Tartu (Estonia) with partners from the Central European University (Hungary/Austria), University of Hradec Králové (Czech Republic), and SGH Warsaw School of Economics (Poland)—four higher education institutions located in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The project aims to prepare educational materials and strategies for teaching sensitive topics in the CEE context. The Special Issue includes articles written by the team members and authors from other institutions and countries in response to a call for papers. It only indicates that tackling and researching sensitive topics is a globally important issue.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Urszula Markowska-Manista, PhD − is field researcher in education in culturally diversified environments and indigenous childhoods and youth studies concerning children's rights. She was the director (FU Berlin 2016) and co-director (2017-2021 FH Potsdam) of the MA Childhood Studies and Children's Rights (MACR) international programme, and is an assistant professor at the University of Warsaw (Faculty of Education). She has conducted extensive field research in Central Africa, Horn of Africa, the South Caucasus and Central Europe, and recently conducted research within an international project PARTICIPA EU.

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Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA): moving past the taboo and into the postcolonial

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ABSTRACT: This paper defines the practice of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) specifically, explaining the choice of words and giving accepted definitions, as well as offering a definition of its own, i.e. that CSA is the disempowering and overpowering of children through sexual means. The paper aims to give an overview of the societal factors contributing to how CSA is framed and received in mainstream society. Throughout this piece of writing the concept of a *taboo* is used as an analytical category. The paper aims at presenting a wide-ranging view of the practice of CSA, using the writer's main societal reference point, that of the Anglo world, specifically calling on examples from the United Kingdom (UK) to contextualise the argument. The discussion frames CSA as a taboo, illustrating this through historical inquiry, with a focus on the evolution of morality surrounding the sexuality of children and the nature of acceptable sexual relations during the period of childhood. A (CSA) survivor perspective is offered in the form of personal biographical confession, as well as survivor narratives that are explored more broadly, pointing to those that society deems acceptable, or not. A triangulation between the *taboo* nature of the practice, the *stigma* it generates and the effect it has on *childhood* is drawn up. The impending effects of shame in processing CSA are explored in respect to disclosure and rehabilitation for those disclosing, but also for those being disclosed to, and society at large. Finally, a nuanced postcolonial approach is proposed, whereby CSA is framed as an invasion or overpowering of a body in much the same way one nation-state invades, land-grabs or takes legislative and governmental control over another landmass during the process of colonisation.
KEYWORDS: childhood sexual abuse (CSA), taboo, childhood studies, history of childhood, postcolonial theory, othering, stigma

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a theoretical analysis of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) as a practice in society. It outlines, defines and contextualises CSA within a contemporary intellectual discourse. It considers but takes a step away from the psychological categorisation of the phenomenon and frames it multi-disciplinarily, through the disciplines of sociology, (human) geography and childhood studies. A historical context and background on its perception is offered, narrowed down through an Anglo-British context. This is thus not presenting a universal or even plural perception of CSA, but is using the cultural geographical space of the Anglo sphere as a compass to try to understand the dominant morals and values present in the discourse surrounding CSA.

This piece of writing explores the taboo nature of CSA, exploring why this topic is controversial and sensitive, by shedding light on the post-Enlightenment conceptualisation of *childhood* as we have come to know it today. The text is written with children's rights in mind, specifically guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), without focusing on the advocacy for rights in this context. The aim is to give an overview of the factors at play, drawing up a web of interconnectedness, rather than investigating each contributing factor in detail. A suggestion at reframing CSA from the perspective of the survivor is proposed, introducing a nuanced interpretation of postcolonial theory, as an invitation at further study of CSA through the lens of social science.

The foundation of my theoretical analysis is the idea that the practice of *childhood sexual abuse* (CSA) (Sanderson 2015; Cunnington 2019) is a social *taboo*. In the context of this paper, I wish to define CSA as the overpowering and disempowering of a child through sexual means. This can range from activity clearly defined as sexual contact, for example penetrative, manual or oral sex, to non-contact activity, for example producing pornographic imagery, and using derogatory or explicit sexual language. Such abuse can be perpetrated by adults or other children. It can be obvious or subtle. Its aim is to exercise power over another individual, overstepping their physical, mental or emotional boundaries, belittling and silencing them. It can be a one-off incident or something that reoccurs over a long period of time, with lead-up and grooming, intertwined within a wider relationship and context (Jud 2014; Andresen 2018).

In the English-speaking realm the two most widely used terms for this practice are *child sexual abuse* and *child sexual exploitation*, sometimes written together: *CSA/E* (UNICEF 2020), while the term *sexual violence* against children also exists (Our Voices 2021). When it comes to abuse in connection to (monetary) compensation CSE can be the most appropriate choice, as it nods to the financial exploitation of the child. Moreover, the term *trafficking* is widely applied, with its connection to child prostitution (Montgomery 2011), but also has other non-sexual meanings and connections, for example trafficking children for labour or organs (United Nations 2002). The choice of the word *childhood*, as opposed to child, in this piece of writing, is one of preference and also a reference to the wider discipline of *childhood studies*, putting the focus on abuse during the phase of childhood rather than against an individual child. This puts the practice into a sociological context, rather than an individual one, and makes it

accessible to adults, who all also had a childhood, even though they no longer identify as being children. Furthermore, the wide spectrum that the word *abuse* gives, as opposed to violence, communicates the nuanced nature of many different forms of overpowering and disempowering of others that the word violence does not encapsulate. Violence suggests that abuse is obvious and painful, easy to identify, which is not always the case with CSA. Unless coupled with physical abuse, CSA is best described as a *violation*, rather than violence (Cunnington 2021).

CSA AS TABOO

A dictionary definition of the word *taboo* is: "a prohibition imposed by social custom or as a protective measure" or "something that is not acceptable to say, mention, or do" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2021). This applies to CSA, as it is socially unacceptable, as well as illegal, thus making it very difficult to research, as it is almost impossible to observe and because participants may find it difficult to disclose and discuss, on account of its transgressive nature (Montgomery 2008). The nature of the practice as a taboo, and thus a practice that must take place in secret, contributes to the silence surrounding it and subsequently its maintenance.

Sexuality and sexual relations can be intimate, make someone feel vulnerable, and when coupled with abuse, can be accompanied by shame, embarrassment and inhibition to discuss it with others (Andresen 2018). Prudishness, politeness, and even religiousness may inhibit talking openly about sexual experience, whether consensual or not. Any sexual relations break through people's natural space boundaries and barriers, whether physical and mental (Russel 2013). Sexual abuse can be likened to trespassing or breaking and entering (McRobert 2009). One needs to feel safe enough to disclose such information. However, evidence shows that many children do disclose abuse but are not met with a helpful response from the adults who are meant to help them (Andresen, Pohling, & Schaumann 2021). Such negative reactions are also directly linked to CSA being a taboo, with society having no appropriate language surrounding the issue, leading to a hurdle when receiving information about abuse, as well as processing the practice at large.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

A simplified timeline, outlining legislation in the UK, can shed some light on the moral and social values that developed over time, regarding children being sexually active. At the end of the 19th century the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the Salvation Army spread awareness and concerns surrounding the prostitution of young working-class girls. This led to the age of consent being raised from 13 to 16. Public debate resurfaced in the early 20th century leading to the 1908 Punishment of Incest Act. This only included those who were biologically related, i.e. stepparents were exempt (Woodiwiss 2014). Once these prohibitions and laws were enforced, CSA became less socially acceptable and even though CSA was still very much a widespread practice, it was just better hidden (Kitzinger 2004). The fem-

inist movement of the 1970s and 80s led to a short-lived more nuanced position and approach to CSA, claiming that it is a social problem that needs a political solution or social change, and is not only about male power, but also women and children's resistance (Kelly 1988; Woodiwiss 2014). This approach never really gained momentum and by the late 21st century, society's approach towards CSA, specifically towards the victims/survivors of it, was the psychological approach or therapeutic culture (Woodiwiss 2009) which encourages one to examine themselves and look for individual causes to their problems in order to them find solutions, all from looking inward, giving external and environmental factors little to no significance (Woodiwiss 2014). This leads to the pathologicalisation of trauma experienced through external factors, indirectly giving the victim/survivor the responsibility or blame for their problems.

However, society's approach and perspective on CSA is affected by social change, especially that change produced through social movements, for example the 2017 #MeToo movement (Mangan 2021) which gave the survivor's voice a credibility it did not have before. This approach can be said to be more in line with the feminist nuanced approach proposed in the 1970s and 80s. The #MeToo movement led to the legal system in the USA taking action in high-profile cases like Jeffrey Epstein (Bryant 2020) and Harvey Weinstein (Mangan 2021), but also for employers, agents, entire social groups, to believe allegations and distance themselves from those accused of sexual harassment and abuse, as in the case of Kevin Spacey (Krishna 2021), leading to the so-called 'cancel culture'. This is a relatively new and divisive term, that is already in the dictionary, defined as: 'the practice or tendency of engaging in mass canceling as a way of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure' (Mirriam-Webster 2021). The survivors who spoke up during the #MeToo movement were not all survivors of CSA, but of sexual assault and abuse also in their adult years. However, it was the movement itself that led to changes in legislation and society taking survivors' voices more seriously, which enabled the successful prosecution of Jeffrey Epstein, as the abuser and trafficker of teenage girls (Bryant 2020). Penalties differ when it comes to the prostitution of adults or children. In order to contextualise these legislative changes, I wish to look at the establishment of the concept of childhood in the next section.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILDHOOD

The early changes to legislation in the UK coincide with the country's imperial heyday. This was a time of economic development, expansion and change for Great Britain. The child and thus the phase of childhood only became a philosophical concept in the 18th century, at the same time that race became a category of biological diversity and difference (Ashcroft 2001). Before the Europeans could go out of their home countries and conquer other lands, they needed to have some entity in their own countries to overpower, labelling as inferior, incapable and uncivilized. Thus, the concept of 'the child' was integral to imperialism, as Europe needed to invent the concept of a weaker, inferior being in its *own* society, in order to contextualize what it would then be doing to peoples in the so-called *new world* (Wallace 1994). The idea that growing, young,

'immature' people were fundamentally different from fully-grown, older, 'mature' people created two distinct categories: adulthood and *childhood.*

With territorial exploration and discovery came the concept of *primitivism*. This is defined as "simple and unsophisticated", showing "instinctive and unreasoning behaviour" (Oxford Dictionaries 2017). Characterised like the child, the 'savage' was seen as a being in desperate need to be helped and shown the way, by the Europeans. It was the cross-pollination of childhood and primitivism that came together as a strong legitimisation and defence of imperialism. If a group of people is *lacking* in some way then they are in *need*. The clear connection between infantility and primitivism created the need for growth, development and refining (Ashcroft 2001).

Simultaneously, the advancements from the invention of the printing press, the spreading of books and publications, created a higher demand for literacy, as well as separation between the literate and illiterate: the literate, educated adults and the illiterate, not yet educated children. This gap could only be filled with systematic education. Childhood became characterised by *learning* (Ariès 1962). Adulthood as a response became characterised by teaching. The adults put themselves in the position to educate and prepare children to be versed in their tools of communication. It must be noted that, there would have also been a high number of illiterate/uneducated adults who would have been perceived as/like children, inferior and uneducated. This can be illustrated through mainstream media, with films like *My Fair Lady* (Cukor 1964) where a working-class woman, presented as close to a hysterical child or a wild animal as possible, is transformed into a so-called *Lady* by an upper-class phonetics professor, who is also an expert in Indian dialects – a subtle imperial reference. Once the beast was tamed the professor fell in love with her, which is the moral of the story. The idea of transforming one's life and oneself from poor to rich, going from rags to riches, is an idea that took off in a former British colony, now known as the United States of America. It has been coined the *American dream* (Adams 1931), the concept of upward social mobility being at the heart of this dream.

The depiction of the colonised people as historically occupying a lower rung on the ladder leading to the higher, European civilisation, showed remarkable parallels with theories of child development that were emerging at the same time in Europe. (Nieuwenhuys 2013: 4-5).

Like they would have done to their own children, the colonisers also needed to enlighten and inform the colonised about what was acceptable and what was not, thus exercising and establishing their superiority, disseminating their values and dichotomising the adult (colonising) groups from the child (colonised) groups (Ashcroft 2001). This propagated the colonisers' culture and suppressed the colonised culture. The legitimisation of such actions stemmed from the belief that the colonised people were primitive and thus not fully formed, just like children as seen as 'becomings' and not 'beings' (Nieuwenhuys 2013).

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

There were two prominent ideas about children and childhood that gained traction in the 18th century in Europe. One of the concepts was developed by English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704). He believed that children were born as blank slates; empty and clean. The perception that there is an entity that is void, that is ready to be written on, printed on, links back to the connection to the printing press and education. This suggests that children are influenced by those around them and filled with knowledge through their environment. He used the Latin term *tabula rasa* (Locke 1689). This can be translated into the *Terra Nullius* idea, that land can be neutral and devoid of ownership and culture. The body of the sexually abused child can be framed as a virgin landscape for the adult to do with what they wish. The second main discourse was that of French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). He believed children to be innocent and good, not neutral, blank and vacant but inherently pure of heart. This angelic heart could be corrupted and defiled by the outside world, however, and must be saved (Rousseau 1762).

Rousseau's idea may have been the more influential, as it is the one behind the predominant framing of children and childhood today. The main true belief surrounding children is that they are inherently *innocent* (Kehily & Montgomery 2003; McRobert 2019). This absolves children, at least under a certain age, of any social responsibility, be it criminal responsibility, the ability to consent to sexual activity and the ability to make any legal decision affecting their lives. Children are thus members of society with a lower status, fewer rights and less agency over their own lives, needing to depend on adults to not only thrive but to survive at all (Cook 2009). Rousseau's idea led to the establishment of a public discourse which has further led to the dominant public image of the child as weak, vulnerable, innocent and thus non-sexual (Piper 2000; McRobert 2020). This image served to advocate for social policies that protected or over-protected children, as the case may be.

The power imbalance that this creates is huge (Ennew 1986; McRobert 2019) and puts the child in a particularly problematic position in relation to the adults in their lives. The sexual abuse of adults thus differs vastly from the sexual abuse of children (by adults), not in the kinds of acts reported, but in the power dynamics between the perpetrator and the abused. The child has no legal status, even though it is globally recognised that children have rights, as seen by the widespread signing and ratification of the CRC (United Nations 1989). Even though the CRC does state that children should be treated based on their 'evolving capacities' (Article 5), legal systems often clump everyone under a certain age together in one legal space. They need a proxy, another adult, a middle man, someone to fight for them, or protect them. Those most vulnerable are those who have no adult supporting them to exercise their rights (Hallett 2016), as they are yet to become fully-fledged members of society.

INNOCENCE AND CHILDHOOD SEXUALITY

In the early 1900s, the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) stated that children have an innate sexuality and that it was part of a natural developmental

process, characterized by different phases, namely the oral stage, the anal stage, the phallic stage, followed by the latent stage and ending with the genital stage at puberty (Freud 1905/1962). However, Freud can be criticized for not considering children's intention when it comes to sexual activity in childhood (Kehily & Montgomery 2003). Even if children know that touching their genitalia gives them the sensation of pleasure, they may still be unaware of the act being 'sexual'. The adult meanings attributed to sexual activity may not be there, thus their ignorance would keep them innocent (ibid.). If innocence is based on ignorance then the protection endured by children is necessary for its maintenance (McRobert 2020).

This practice establishes a power imbalance between the informed and the uninformed, giving the adult perspective, or the *adult gaze*, an authority over the child's, leaving them as 'objects of concern' (Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers 1992: 168) and vulnerability (McRobert 2020). The adult gaze on the sexuality of the child, a form of sexuality that is seen and established as both innocent and illicit, can lead to fetishization (Schroeder 2008; Faulkner 2011; McRobert 2020). This is defined as an object that is full of contradictions, symbolising both strength and weakness, control and exoneration, eroticism and infantilism (Schroeder 2008). It is the purity of the children, socially constructed to protect them, that in turn eroticises them (Kincaid 1995), as it frames them as the *forbidden fruit,* charging their sexuality with a special allure.

A SURVIVOR PERSPECTIVE

As a survivor of CSA and an academic dealing with the theme in my writing and research, I feel it necessary to disclose my unique perspective and further elaborate on how exactly *I* understand the nature of CSA. As academics and researchers aiming at creating scientific knowledge and being as objective as possible, I believe it is also important to state the limitations of our own humanness, with our own feelings and core beliefs around the issues, as this can inform the way we are read and interpreted by others, or can shed a special light on what we wish to say. Our own biographical backgrounds and identities inform our work (Spyrou 2018), whether consciously or unconsciously.

I am a children's rights advocate who supports approaches that recognise children's own abilities to think for themselves, act in their own best interests, have original and profound thoughts about the world and have much greater capabilities than the majority of the adult population gives them credit for. I am thus not entirely convinced by the concept of *innocence* that has become synonymous with *childhood.* The risk associated with the innocence label is that children are generally framed as devoid of agency and responsibility over their actions, decisions and lives as a whole. This leads to a society perceiving children as less capable, stripping them of a sense of self-efficacy, opportunities to participate, and spaces in which they can develop their voice and be heard. Another possibility is that there has been a misunderstanding stemming from terms best used in the context of law enforcement. In strict legal terms, there is a person who is innocent (a crime victim) and a person who is guilty (a criminal/a

perpetrator). This terminology is based on the law, based on a guilty/innocent binary. The use of the words then bleeds over into the vernacular.

In this context, the colloquial victim with its largely derogatory connotation has been confused with the strictly legal distinction of the term victim (i.e. a crime victim as opposed to a criminal). (Reid 2018: 14)

A term aiming at exonerating a child of a burden in a legal sense has burdened them in a social sense. Ignorance and incapability go hand in hand with being framed as innocent, which can only harm the dignity of the child. So, what is it about the practice of CSA that makes it morally and ethically problematic, if we/I do not believe in the doctrine of childhood innocence/ignorance/inferiority and the concept of the forever damaged victim after abuse (Woodiwiss 2014)?

For me, a child's perceived innocence or lack thereof is in fact irrelevant to my interpretation of CSA and its negative effects on children. I see CSA as the dehumanisation of a child who was overpowered, humiliated, silenced or petrified into submission, whether through coercion or manipulation. I interpret it as the taking away of one's dignity. Through disrespecting them so deeply that they are left traumatised, either in the short or long-term. This trauma can lead to diverse and individual reactions, coping mechanisms and adaptations, with the traumatic memory primarily stored in the visceral body of the person (Van der Kolk 2014). This is irrespective of how one reacts to abuse. It is irrespective of how capable, smart or resilient the abused child is, the act of someone overpowering a child through sexual means violates all personal and bodily boundaries to the point where it is considered a crime. This can be perpetrated by an adult, an older child or a peer. The levels of power imbalance vary depending on the age gap (Maywald 2015) but sexual abuse also occurs amongst adults and thus the power imbalance is not the crux of why CSA is problematic. It is up to the survivor to identify as one, stating that what they experienced was abusive and a threat to their personal safety and dignity.

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL NARRATIVES

When considering contemporary notions of childhood, I would like to take a leap and link Rousseau's idea of innocence to the contemporary idea of vulnerability. If one takes the concept of vulnerability as an analytical category applied to childhood studies then one can identify which aspects of society make childhood especially vulnerable (Andresen 2014). In our contemporary conceptualisation of childhood, the phase is characterised by ideas surrounding development, learning, protection and (children's) rights (United Nations 1989). The fact that special rights are drawn up for children, once there were human rights already established (Cantwell 1992) indicates that these childhood privileges are indeed under threat and somehow endangered, needing added protection (Andresen 2014).

When talking about children's rights I would like to use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as my main tool. The CRC in itself is a non-legally binding but legally structured tool, aiming at being universal and thus inclusive to everyone under the age of 18 (United Nations 1989). It has been signed and ratified by

all countries, except the USA. The aim of ratification is to incorporate the articles into the States' constitution, thus making them legally binding. Each State has the right to have reservations regarding certain articles, that they are allowed to not assimilate into their legal systems. This treaty puts the child in the position of rights-holder, with the state and the adults involved in their lives as duty-bearers towards them. In other words, adults are held responsible for the conservation of children's rights. The contemporary so-called *rights-based approach* has come to replace the earlier charity-based model, or the so-called *needs-based approach* (see Boesen & Martin, 2007). Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including Save the Children, have been spreading awareness about this approach in the last decades (see Save the Children 2005). Rights-based approaches frame action as required and not optional. People have inalienable and automatic rights, just by being alive, and so are entitled to receive help when necessary. They are no longer seen as *deserving* the help as in the philanthropic model, but instead are *entitled* the help on account of their rights. Moreover, people are no longer framed as inactive benefactors, but instead as actively participating members of the cause (see McRobert 2020).

When it comes to CSA survivors telling their stories or identifying as someone whose rights to protection from (sexual) abuse, as stated by the CRC in Articles 19 & 34, were not afforded to them, we have to consider the overall context of this disclosure. When telling our stories, we draw on an already established narrative groundwork and connect ourselves to communal narratives, that are defined by the surrounding culture and time in history (Woodiwiss 2009; Spyrou 2018).

> Child victims of CSA are also confronted with a framework within which to make sense of their experiences that not only directs them to see themselves as helpless, passive and sexually innocent in order to avoid the risk of being held, or holding themselves, responsible for their abuse, but also tells them of ruined childhoods and lost innocence. (Woodiwiss 2014: 144)

The basic assertion of the contemporary CSA narrative is that childhood is a time of vulnerability, passivity, social impotence and sexual innocence (Woodiwiss 2014; Andresen 2014) that has been threatened or destroyed by the abuse. Thus, any child not identifying as innocent, passive, weak or damaged will be excluded from this (legitimate) CSA narrative. Survivors can be said to straddle the domain of innocence, in the sense of non-guilt, with the domain of agency and resilience. The correct ratio needs to exist between the two and once 'out' as a survivor, the experience is part of one's identity, in whatever way society chooses fit. This can have long-term consequences. The 'defilement' of the child's innocence at the time of abuse can create a permanent mark. Even after wounds heal, scars may remain. With taboo comes stigma.

STIGMA

I like to think about the long-term effects of CSA as a triangular dynamic, generated by the taboo nature of the practice. The taboo leads to those involved as stigmatised, which in turn leads to the children abused being perceived as children without a child-

hood, or 'out-of-place' (Conolly & Ennew 1996; Invernizzi 2017) in society. Stigmatisation can lead to the outsiders treating survivors badly or being completely disengaged from them, as the stigma evokes fear and anxiety (Reid 2018), which in turn isolates the survivor, not actively silencing them but instead ignoring them into invisibility. By avoiding the subject of CSA, society also *others* and dehumanises survivors of CSA, making them an *abject* of society (Kristeva 1982; Hodgetts & Ottilie 2014). Needless to say, this can have a negative effect on the survivor's coping and recovery, but also everyday life in general.

Going one step back, one can question why CSA is so hard to talk about for survivors, even confidentially. This could be, as already mentioned when discussing the intimate side of CSA, its connection to deep shame (Andresen 2018; Cunnington 2019). This means to describe the feeling beyond embarrassment and awkwardness surrounding a conversation topic. It is the crippling sense of shame surrounding the traumatic occurrence that happened to one, and what one did or did not do to stop it (Van der Kolk 2014). Shame can impede any recovery, and is the largest obstacle to getting help and recovering. Trauma therapies like eye movement desensitization reprocessing (EMDR) can have less of an impact on those who carry shame around their trauma and is less effective on those whose trauma was experienced in childhood, as opposed to in adulthood (ibid.) When one speaks of obstacles in getting help, one is not only referring to the survivors disclosing the abuse. Unfortunately, this is not the main issue, as research has found that children often disclose, but are met with disbelief, silence and insensitivity (Andresen et al. 2021).

REFRAMING CSA

Sexual abuse is inflicted upon bodies, but little is known about the effects of those traumas and modes of survival on the body itself. While scholarship on the effects of sexual abuse (Pasura et al. 2012; Sanderson 2010) has grown significantly in the past two decades and increasingly includes the voices of survivor experience (Montgomery 2001; Rubenson, Höjer, & Johansson 2005; Andresen et al. 2021), little scholarship exists on the embodiment of sexual abuse and thus the body as an archive of memory, as well as the body as a map, trailing tracks of sexual abuse. My proposed study through my PhD, furthers research into the geography and landscape of the body itself, as a landscape in its own right. Using the postcolonial theory (Said 1978/2003; Fanon 1952/2008) in my approach to this research, I draw a parallel between the colonised and the sexually abused, as well as the coloniser and the abuser, as the oppressed and overpowered parties. The culture, heritage, land and landscape of the colonised is exploited in the context of colonisation. Thus, I wish to put forth that in the process of sexual abuse, one's body, like the colonised person's land, is also invaded and transformed.

Looking specifically at my former definition of CSA as 'overpowering and disempowering of a child through sexual means', this can then apply to the overpowering and disempowering of a colonised land (macro level) or a colonial subject (micro level). Through the takeover of governance, the implementation of rules and the ex-

ploitation of the country's resources for their own gain, one can see a parallel between the exploitation of a child's body for the satisfaction or pleasure of the abuser with the exploitation of the colonised land at the profit of the coloniser. Exploitation can be likened to the act of penetrative sex, with for example, drilling the earth for oil or gas, or mining for precious materials. Non-contact activity can include the mobilisation and exploitation of people as workforce and as taxpayers, as well as the oppressing or even censoring of languages and cultures of the colonised subjects, forcing the spreading of the colonisers' language and culture instead. The influence of colonisation can be long-term and usually involves a certain cultural proliferation, with the colonial subject emulating what the colonising power expects from them (see Fanon 1952/2008). CSA can also be a formative experience, having long-term effects (Sanderson 2015), playing a role in forming one's perception of themselves, whether negatively or positively or both.

The process of colonisation has been compared to the sexual acts of penetration and insemination by Said (1978/2003). The body of the abused is akin to the colonised landmass/nation. The abuser, and then later the rescuer, are the colonisers. The abuser and the saviour occupy the same space in relation to the colonised, as they are those with the power, the expertise, the knowledge, the status. The abused is the one to be feared or reformed, the *other*, seemingly damaged, lacking, unreliable and unpredictable; not capable of 'self-government' as it were (Said 1978/2003: 228). These labels unfortunately also apply to victims/survivors of CSA, who are generally perceived as forever damaged and unbalanced (Woodiwiss 2014), and thus not capable of being fully responsible for themselves.

My suggestion would be to research the bodies of survivors, with the survivors, through a metaphor. The metaphorical idea is to frame the body as a place. The participants will be asked to draw a map of their body as place/space, while also being invited to orally engage in an interview. When framing the body as a place or a space, with a landscape of destinations, the taboo of CSA can be explored without the direct confrontation of talking about ones sexual body parts or their abuse experience, but of their corporeality as a canvas, from which to abstractly explore their everyday experience of themselves. This would assumingly be less intimate and thus less laden with shame (Andresen 2018), which would hopefully bypass any barriers that would subconsciously be there about discussing one's experience of their body. Approaching the body in terms of how one may approach a city map may be an enlightening exercise. In any city there are areas one wishes to explore, to see, to experience, to share with others, but also areas inhabited by others, or memories in corners that are dark, dangerous, taboo. By identifying the safe and unsafe areas, for example, some general characteristics of the post-abused, post-colonial body may emerge, giving us an idea of what tracks and traces abuse can leave on the body, saved in its corporeal memory.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A concluding thought could be that we do not yet know enough about CSA, in sociological and anthropological terms, to understand its nature and prevalence fully (An-

dresen 2018). Thus, we would need to find ways as a society to understand the practice of CSA, to create a language surrounding it, before we can even talk about preventing it. My approach is to take the survivor perspective, in order to understand the long-term effects of this experience in childhood, and how it affects adulthood. This can be done through the *processing* of experiences of CSA, on a personal and societal level (One In Four 2015), creating a safe space for people's stories to be heard, acknowledged and believed. This could be done through creative expression, or oral history, much like I am suggesting through my PhD research. The processing state is one that proceeds the colonial or colonised state, and is thus post-colonial.

> Processing requires clarification, documentation and (historical) analysis. It aims to identify structural, cultural and social causes of injustice and violence. As a procedure, a process of coming to terms with the past depends on clear responsibility and institutional independence. (Andresen 2018: 55)

This frames CSA as a 'public concern' (Hickle & Hallett 2016: 308) and aims at contextualising it within a wider intersection of social factors, all coming together and contributing to the effect of CSA on the individual. Thus, it is not only about the trauma of CSA but a 'cumulative/complex trauma' (ibid.) encompassing every knock-on effect or reaction, one's surrounding circumstances and personal attributes, as well as opportunity to seek or receive help.

Furthermore, framing CSA as an invasion of a body in much the same way one nation-state invades and/or land-grabs another landmass, may start the discussion around what this practice means, for all those involved but also for society as a whole, as it is a symbol of how people, relate to each other power-wise, on micro and macro levels. My research aims to understand how CSA is carried by those who experienced it through(out) adulthood and how that can impact wider sociological dynamics. This may be a simpler starting point, with the aim of understanding deeply complex power relations and constellations more fully.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Enhancement of constructivist and procedural concepts of good citizenship and civic identity in the Czech educational framework

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ABSTRACT: This paper identifies the main flaws, dilemmas and challenges concerning the concept of civic education and teaching democracy in the Czech schooling system after 1989. Special focus is placed on the urgent need for the application of more pluralist, constructivist and procedural approaches that would enhance the traditional concepts of social science education based on facts and typologies. In this regard, methods and trends promoting the principle of civic education as a multidimensional and everyday phenomenon are applied, since such understanding of civic identity has become even more urgent in recent two years with the reflection of issues concerning the SARS-CoV-2 situation. To suggest and analyse possible means to this end, the study outlines two dominant causes of the low prestige and effectivity of civic education in the Czech Republic: first, the implicitly ideological and universalist character of the current national curriculum, which is not able to accept social values as a permanently flowing and contextually based discourse; second, the prevalence of ethnic attributes in the process of national identification which impede any relevant efforts to treat collective identity and citizenship in an open pluralist way. Nonetheless, the main focus of the paper lies in its empirical part where the fundamental pillars and particular activities from the current EU project—realised at several Czech universities and grammar schools in recent three years—are both presented and analysed. On the basis of this project analysis, the paper aims to demonstrate that together with the implementation of procedural, interpretative and constructivist understanding of social reality, even more radical questions—linked to postmodern democratic theory—such as the notion of agonist democracy, the impact of social networks, the reflection of instrumental manipulative behaviour as well as more unbiased interpretations of human liberty should be addressed in the Czech current educational discourse as well.
KEYWORDS: civic education, Czech schooling system, ethnic nationalism, constructivism, procedural concept of democracy, agonist democracy, concept of liberty

POST-COMMUNIST CURRICULUM: TEACHING ABOUT DEMOCRACY OR TEACHING DEMOCRACY?

Urgent questions related to the socio-political issues in educational curricula and schooling processes emerged in the first decades after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 in Czechoslovakia and the establishment of the Czech Republic in 1993. The events and changes that took place were in some ways typical of East-Central European post-communist countries and in some ways unique during this period as these nations were undergoing far-reaching social, economic and cultural changes within a short period of time (Wiatr 2020; Evans & Whitefield 1998). The social sciences were understandably considered by the majority of society at that time—including a relevant amount of teachers—either as "messianic" way to replace the distorted communist interpretation of society with the "right" image of the world, or rather as a redundant subject carrying an essence inherited from the times of Marxist-Leninist interpretation of civic education which had just taken on a new façade conforming to a democratic regime. In this regard, education concerning social sciences such as civics was frequently treated as inherently biased, ideological and thus also dangerous for securing the non-political character of post-communist school system. The popular belief remained that there was no space for an objective and neutral concept of social and political education, i.e. the active and formative potential of the social sciences was to be eschewed. Needless to say, such an understanding has contributed to frequent appeals that social science should give priority in education to "more important" subjects such as biology, chemistry and maths which have been assessed as independent of an ideological perspective. This argument based on pragmatism has not vanished in the Czech Republic (and elsewhere) even in the 21st century (Halík 2008; Krámský 2007).

Hence, the introduction of political science into the educational processes both in elementary as well as in grammar schools has frequently faced one of two dominant reactions. The first is that political education itself is obsolete, as any curriculum must be ideologically motivated, and thus inimical to the traditional image of schooling as inherently apolitical dimension (Knowles & Castro 2019). The second and more mitigated view is that subjects dealing with politics can be taught in schools, but the material presented must be strictly reduced to teaching typologies and *facts* that contemporary political science uses for descriptions of politics as such. In this case, students are to acquire more or less precise knowledge of various definitions such as the typology of political parties, electoral systems, classifications of ideologies, etc. In this paradigm, learners political subjects and topics are relegated to that which can theoretically be memorized and repeated more or less verbatim (e.g. on tests and examinations). What is missing in the classroom is the communication of politics as something to be experienced as *real*, i.e. as sets and series of concrete activities, functions and positions in our everyday lives that should constantly be investigated, assessed and critiqued.

Obviously, teaching about politics solely in a *scientific* way without accounting for the value and participatory aspects seriously affects not only the level of civic knowl-

edge and education, but the form of political culture as well (Weinberg & Flinders 2018). This is especially true when the perception of *liberal democracy* is taken into consideration. According to the official concept of Czech state educational programme (RVP) as well as the dominant concepts of democracy in Czech textbooks for students, Czech students are expected to know and understand the basic definitions of democracy as theoretical concepts and not as empirical and significantly practical phenomena. The interpretation and hands-on application of these phenomena would require strong patterns of civil society as currently presupposed in the current trends in civic education (Cogan & Derricott 2000). However, this account should not be regarded as a rejection of need for theoretical understanding, since if a teacher manages to present democracy as a very complicated and polysemous political term fundamentally dependent on historical, cultural as well as ideological contexts, the concept would come to be assessed as a beneficial contribution to the development of student's critical thought and awareness, e.g. that social science terms cannot be used in the same way as biological taxonomies or mathematical languages are used.

Nevertheless, the goal this paper is to demonstrate that besides this theoretical and traditional Czech concept of *teaching about democracy*, the parallel process of *teaching democracy* should take place in the postmodern (and in the East-Central European space also post-communist) educational process. Active support of democratically participatory citizenship has been recently identified as one of the most expected educational outcomes in a Czech analytical survey of teachers on the challenges of current civic education (Dvořáková & Pajpachová 2019). This concept of teaching *something* instead of teaching *about something* should be focused more on experiencing specific situations and internalising attitudes that can be identified with the attributes of democratic political and civic culture in the 21st century as a desirable tool for all young citizens in terms of a basic orientation in central dilemmatic questions. An example of these pressing issues would be the tension between the individual's own particular idea of individual happiness and political power that determines as well as limits these ideas: Why one should defend democratic principles? Why are we supposed to care not only about our own interests and values but about the concept of civil society as well? What does it mean exactly that besides the numerous other roles and identities young people are expected to take on—friend, student, employee, athlete, artist, etc.—we are expected to be *good citizens*? How does it come that the SARS-CoV-2 situation helped to form new identities as well as cleavages and how the civic society is expected to treat them?

THE PROCEDURAL CONCEPT OF CIVIC EDUCATION AND *GOOD CITIZENSHIP*: A POSSIBLE PATH?

It might seem obvious that addressing questions such as what it means to be a *good citizen* requires the very definitional and theoretical approaches that we are recommending to substitute for with a more constructivist and procedural understanding of educational processes (Henderson 1996). After all, how can we recognize which authority in the contemporary postmodern society should determine desirable pat-

terns of citizenship? How should we distinguish between acceptable and inappropriate forms of political participation? In fact, if one faces the fundamental dilemma between the variability of possible meanings of political terms on the one hand, and the required patterns of political behaviour that students are expected to follow on the other, the escape into the world of universal, straightforward, unambiguous and seemingly neutral world of definitions might be assessed as a safe solution.

Still, any insistence on unequivocal definitions ignores today's social reality as well as the floating essence of value concepts, which have undergone through serious evolution and modifications over the past few centuries. Although "ordinary" issues are referred to in our everyday lives such as honour, morality, the common good, citizenship, liberty and democracy, what is usually neglected is the fact that these words have been passed down from ancient times without taking into consideration the contextual embeddedness of these terms in historical languages and social structures (Bevir 2000; MacIntyre 2013). If the meanings of the terms *democracy* and *citizenship* are derived from the perspectives of the "golden age" of Athenian concept of politics, the understanding of such concepts and meanings in our current age might be seriously flawed. Such identification of meanings of values and social science terms with historical paragons is in fact frequently based on distorted and embellished narratives of the past. The Athenian world, for instance, is generally not treated in terms of historical analysis, but as a mythical dimension of artificial heroes whose virtues are expected to be simply transposed into our modern times. Moreover, this mythologization of the past concerning the interpretations of desirable public life and democracy is obviously strongly linked to the question of national narratives which may reflect on recent history as well: what else is for instance the Czech obsession with the concept of the so-called Masaryk's humanist democracy of the First Czechoslovak Republic, often reflected in an image of Czechhood as a service to the truth and humanity opposed to all totalitarian and authoritarian menaces?

Nevertheless, this revelation and deconstruction of the mythological character of most seemingly scientific interpretations of political values and word meanings should not be considered as a relativist appeal which would recommend to disregard all narratives based on idealist historical examples and national evaluations of collective identity. If a more pluralist and critical perspective is applied into the schooling process – demonstrating for instance the fact the both Athenian and Czechoslovakian historical concepts of political culture and citizenship were complicated and complex phenomena replete with characteristics which from the modern perspective cannot be accepted as bearable pillars of civic education – this should not be considered as an appeal to "empty the national pantheon" through attempts to free the national narrative of any hero who may (potentially) be interpreted controversially. Quite the contrary, as one might be moved in reading *Pericles' Funeral Oration* by Thucydides or recalling Masaryk's courage in public life, one should also note the relevant relations that make the understanding of particular decisions and historical contexts clearer, i.e. one should not forget to "mind the gap" that distinguishes the dimension of our own thoughts and deeds from those of our ancient ancestors.

The exploration of such gaps is, however, a fundamental starting point for the ap-

plication of *procedural* teaching about democracy and civic culture (Davies & Gregory & Riley 1999; Weinberg & Flinders 2018). The goal is to present and understand *citizenship* not as a limited sum of eternal values and personal attributes, but more as a contextual set of behaviours that emerge and remain fully dependent on various political contents. Although the same or a similar understanding of togetherness and collective responsibility can be contemplated, we must leave the artificial and black-and-white interpretation of national (civil) heroes aside. A *good citizen* is no longer the representative of a cult of historical (mis)interpretation of flawless "robots," but anyone who respects the basic Aristotelian concept of *polis*, i.e. a community in which all members are mutually responsible not only for each other, but for the collective as a whole. It is precisely the community that determines the individual's liberty and equal rights as well as fosters a common mentality and identity. Preserving the rights and privileges of the individual versus ensuring that the duties and responsibilities to society are carried out is a conflict as old as civilization itself. Yet these two goals are not only not mutually exclusive, but wholly interdependent on each other.

Hence, there is no space for connecting the concept of *good citizenship* in the educational process with any kind of particular ideological, religious or moral motives. Civic education is not (or no longer) about presenting these kinds of meanings and definitions, but about understanding ongoing processes, e.g. with regard to an *overlapping consensus* that is created and maintained deliberatively (Rawls 1987). The question of who is or is not a *good citizen* thus should not be presented to students with one ultimate answer, as the assessment is based on never-ending sets of negotiations, theoretical reflections and adjusted public behaviours. As Ernst Renan famously identified the preservation of national identity with collective willingness and an imaginary *everyday plebiscite* (Renan 1939) which enables national togetherness to be permanently and regularly contested, the same can be said for the concept of *good citizenship*.

Moreover, another advantage of the *procedural* model of teaching democracy is that it fosters an ability to avoid anachronist and ideological interpretations of both historical cases as well as contemporary social issues such as the definition of the nation or preferred foreign policies. The essence of *good citizenship* is thus identified not with ideal content and the worldviews of the particular received historical and current *heroes*, but with the question of legitimate civic attitudes and behaviour as well as with willingness to consider the collective impact of one's individual deeds. By following this line of reasoning, we can avoid situations in which cases of exaggerated collectivism, radical nationalism, xenophobic intolerance or irrational fanaticism could be labelled by students as affirmative examples of desirable civic courage from earlier times.

In addition to all of this, the *procedural* and constructivist understanding of teaching democracy provides also another advantage regarding the enhancement of *soft skills* in the educational process. Contrary to social science education as merely memorising and repeating "phone lists" and taxonomical schemes, the constructivist treatment of civic education enables the teaching of *something* even under circumstances in which the *subject of education* cannot be precisely defined since its essence lies in the per-

manently pluralist and changing character of particular connotations. Furthermore, if there is a lasting public distrust towards civic education as something obsolete or even ideologically dangerous, the interpretation of democratic schooling as the cultivation of skills instead of the mere presentation of ideas and pieces of information might be a feasible way to systematically reject the idea of social science teaching as a "Nuremberg Funnel" process. In this way, the belief can be promulgated that civic education need not be limited to the scope of specialized subjects such as humanities, but should be extended to all subjects as a matter of globalist teaching strategies. In this regard, it is reasonable to accept the idea of social science education as a game with *gross concepts* (Shapiro 2005) instead of universal meanings, as its significant aim does not reside in the linguistic purism that the teacher is expected to provide. Hence, the *procedural* concept of teaching democracy should be considered more as an allegory of a journey through a tortuous maze, not a straightforward walk down a path. Only on the condition that both the educator and the citizen-student are able to work with ever-changing concepts on the fly can *good citizenship* emerge as a living idea, not a mere textbook definition to be learned by rote.

THE POST-COMMUNIST CZECH SPECTRE OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM: A MENACE FOR CIVIC EDUCATION?

The above-mentioned embeddedness of Czech educational schemes in the positivist and substantial understanding of learning processes is, however, not the only challenge the procedural model of civic education endeavours to face. Although the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia was assessed as a part of broader European triumph of universalism (Fukuyama 2006), events and political culture in Central European region in the 21st century clearly indicate that the question of collective self-identification, heterostereotypes, populism, xenophobia and illiberalism represent a very serious political and social quandary (Ágh 2015; Zakaria 1997) that both civic society as well as educational dimension should not neglect. A significant inclination of certain groups of people towards traditional ethnic concepts of national identity thus revive the older analyses made by Carl Schmitt (2000) or Harvey Mansfeld (2000), both of whom independently suggested that the harmonious cohabitation of universal liberal principles with the concept of national democracy is unsustainable on a long term basis. Whereas liberalism stands for equal individual rights for everyone irrespective of identity, the idea of democratic decision-making depends on more or less homogenous patterns of community based not only on shared interests, but on intuition of togetherness, emotional bonds and common mentality that is – in the post-communist space of Central European countries – still dominated by the concept of ethnic nationalism (Pirro 2015; Bauerová 2018). Any effort to promote the ideal of effective and reasonable liberal democracy therefore requires the abandonment of the neoliberal doctrine (Davies & Bansel 2007), which became widely accepted in Central European countries after 1989 and has faced only several challenges in the Czech context so far (Černý & Sedláčková & Tuček 2004; Rupnik 2018; Hvížďala & Přibáň 2018; Hlaváček 2019). A more holistic, pluralist and constructivist concepts of collective

self-identification should therefore be introduced into the structure of civic education according to postmodern educational trends (Kaščák & Pupala 2011; Richardson 1997; Aronowitz & Giroux 2003; Beck & Kosnik 2006; Kritt 2018).

Hence, the civic education curriculum prefigures collective identification as an indispensable part of current social, political and cultural life (Ashmore & Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe 2004) on the one hand, but it also needs to promote critical reflection on this idea based on the assumption that national identification can be read in dissimilar ways without treating ethnic categories as a priori and universally given phenomena (Kamusella 2012). Although such an approach is not a revolutionary one, since it presupposes the application of older fruitful constructivist notions about nationalism (Anderson 1983; Ram 1994; Hroch 2007; Wodak et al. 2009) as well as non-ethnic concepts of national identity in the educational process, such an application becomes difficult in the traditional post-communist Czech social discourse, which, as indicated above, has been evaluated as highly conservative, monistic and based on the ethno-nationalist belief in the cultural supremacy of "Czechhood" (Heimann 2009). Although this prevalence of ethno-nationalism is not limited only to the Czech environment and concerns the whole area of Central Europe, the fact is that such patterns of ethnic mentality had already been introduced into the narrative of Czech identity in the 19th century. The intellectual and political elite of the then Bohemian Kingdom in the framework of Austrian empire based the idea of a sovereign Czechhood on the image of the cultural clash between aggressive German and peaceful Slavonic forces, a conflict that later become a reality of an ethnically divided society (King 2018).

Such concept of Czech identity constructing the vision of national community as a "purified" homogenous society and distinguishing itself from non-Czechs on the basis of their language and ethnic bonds of presupposed affinity was assessed as victorious especially after 1945 and the expulsion of Germans. Already at that time the well-known philosopher István Bibó was criticizing such a concept as well as the homogenization of ethnic identity, pointing at the fatal loss of the Central European ability to adjust in an atmosphere of otherness (Bibó 2015). This warning can be seen as a kind of tragic prophecy, since even more than seventy years after the end of WW2, there remains a very serious problem in the Czech society with the rise of intolerance, chauvinism and dominant patterns of ethnic self-identification (Hvížďala & Přibáň 2018; Rupnik 2018; Hlaváček 2019) as well as with the lack of pluralist respect towards other nations and minorities along with the inability to treat one's own identity in an openly civic way (Hejnal 2012; Burjanek 2001). Hence, although the old occidentalist interpretation of Eastern Europe as merely a space of dangerous, backward, zealous and obsolete forms of collective identification has been modified (Jaskulowski 2010), it is obvious that the prevalence of the closed concept of identity (Popper 2020) requires not only the reformulation of fundamental social values and the re-understanding of one's individual identity, but also a "paradigm shift," including reflection on the relationship between language and social reality in the process of civic education.

A CONSTRUCTIVIST AND PROCEDURAL MODEL OF *GOOD CITIZENSHIP* AND *CIVIC NATIONAL IDENTITY* IN CZECH EDUCATION: AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT BASED ON THE *AGONIST* CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

If there is an urgent need for the pluralist promotion of social values and collective affiliations in the Czech environment due to the still prevalent impact of the traditional narrative of ethnic nationalism, it is the right time to indicate possible ways of employing the above-mentioned desirable trends in practice. Hence, this part of the paper will introduce and analyse a specific part of the current educational project that has been evolved at the University of Hradec Králové since 2018 (Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2018)[1] and which elucidates possible desirable trends in the formation of the student's understanding of democratic values as well as the relation to collective identity and concepts of postmodern virtuous citizenship according to the standards of the so-called *agonist* understanding of democracy, i.e. a paradigm that purports that stable and effective democracy should not mask or even suppress political conflicts but should help to reveal, express and manage them (Wenman 2013; Mouffe 2005).

The analysed project that was realised within the cooperation of three Czech universities (Masaryk University in Brno, Palacký University in Olomouc and University of Hradec Králové) from June 2018 till November 2021 and was co-funded by the European Union as the programme no. CZ.02.3.68/0.0/0.0/16_032/0008154 (Operační program Výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání 2018)[2] aimed primarily to promote the principles of active citizenship and involvement of students in the life in democratic society by creating 12 educational programmes for teachers and students. The project worked with several particular dimensions of active citizenship such as general knowledge of civic competencies, political participation in public life, prevention of extremism, respect towards cultural differences, democratic values or media literacy and was developed by the specialized teams of Czech experts including didacticians, political scientists, historians, media scientists and lectors. Furthermore, all the materials and project outputs were permanently consulted with the involved Czech grammar school teachers who applied and critically assessed the innovative concepts and methods in the various environments of the Czech schooling process; hence, the below analysed activities have already been tested and reformulated on the basis of three independent empirical applications to the grammar school education. Even though the project started to be realised before the social and educational impacts of the SARS-CoV-2 crisis occurred, the project teams commenced to reflect new challenges during the progress of the educational programme and thus the final educational concept treats not only with the "traditional" challenges of the Czech civic education after 1989, but endeavours to face the current social dimensions of the pandemic threat as well.

However, regarding the aforementioned problems and quandaries linked to the *sta-*

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[1] The author of this study was a member of the project team at the University of Hradec Králové. For the detailed insight into the main aims, strategies and materials of the project see https://www.obcansky-prukaz.eu/#vzdelavaci-programy

[2] See https://opvvv.msmt.cz/download/file2300.pdf

tus quo of contemporary Czech civic education, the analysis of this particular educational project endeavours to demonstrate that any systematic application of more holistic and constructivist methods into the national educational process should begin with a definition of both the flexible and procedural delimitation of the principles of good citizenship as well as to identify the appraised outcomes as well as threats to be avoided. On the basis of such an approach, the following attributes may be put forward as the main desired outcomes of the analysed project:

— *Good citizenship* should not be treated as a sum of particular universal values but as the procedural ability of an individual human being to consider one's own life as a *communicating vessel* that is inherently linked to the life of a community bounding individuals by the principles of a social contract with the aim to achieve not only convergent but collective goods (Taylor 2003).

— The concept of *good citizenship* is not about knowledge to be tested and evaluated, but about experience and attitudes that may be trained and reflected via the simulation of the situations from the everyday public life.

— Educational training in *good citizenship* demands mechanisms of checks and balances preventing any of the actors from identifying the question of civic principles with intentionally or unwittingly promoted particular worldviews or ideological beliefs.

— The concept of *good citizenship* should therefore reflect the actor's own embeddedness in liberal discourse and a constructivist paradigm, since only on this condition one the preferred ideal of neutrality and impartiality can be accepted, not as the absence of preferences and interests or even a naïve belief in the existence of platonic values independent of social ideas and expressions about human life, but as an intentional declaration of the actor's own attitudes and behaviours that the actor is willing to change through a dialogue with competing visions.

— Civic education is also assumed to forestall any kind of relativist indications, an idea which would suggest that the acceptance of the pluralism of meanings and their dependence on particular social contexts is expected to support the *anything goes* principle instead of treating rational public debate as the optimal tool to enforce particular sets of beliefs in a more just and fair way than a mere reliance on traditional authoritarian and tautological techniques such as the universalist language of an assumed "normality".

— A postmodern understanding of *good citizenship* should therefore also endeavour to replace the traditional conception of language as a universal depiction of social reality and a sum of absolutes with a discursive understanding of terms as merely floating signifiers (Mehlman 1972) which must be permanently discussed and re-interpreted (Foucault 2002; Hanan 2015; Burtonwood 2006).

Keeping all these expected outcomes and challenges in mind, the presented educational programme is designed as a coherent complex of three specific blocks which reflect the main civic skills that the programme endeavours to enforce, i.e., Cooperation – Conflict – Compromise. The first part of the project (Cooperation) contains activities and methods which support the idea that students as members of the public community should be able to think about the limitation of individual selfish interests in favour of a discursively constructed and negotiated "common good". Hence, this part is assumed to open and reflect especially questions such as: What does a civic society stand for? What shall I do when I cannot tolerate something that concerns not just me, but whole society? How can I promote my own ideas and opinions if my social group is just a minority and political elites continue to neglect my voice?

In contrast to this part, the second block (*Conflict*) presents the existence of dissentious situations as an irremovable part of human life, a supposition that students are supposed to accept and know how to manage. This is why especially questions of the contextual determination of human values, ideological reinterpretations and the historical background of collective memory and identity are treated here. In this case, mainly these questions are relevant: Why do people disagree with me even if I am "right"? Why people keep arguing and fighting and in some case can never agree and reconcile? Why should I defend someone who I do not agree with?

The last part of the project is then focused on the optimal methods of compromise-solution training as an indispensable skill of democratic reasoning in a pluralist society. It therefore contains specific role-playing games and simulations that facilitate the adoption of the desirable civic behaviour of the student in the roles of both citizen and politician.

Besides the above described meta-principles of *good citizenship* that the project attempts to evolve and form, individual activities also aim at the reformulation and re-conceptualization of the Czech national educational curriculum (RVP 2007), which has been criticized for its obsoleteness, incoherent interpretation of values and unclarified concept of ideological embeddedness (Havlíček 2018; Květina 2016). On the basis on such an effort, the project also suggests to replace the current version of *key competencies* (KK 2008) regarding the civic education with several new expected formative outcomes that would boost the constructivist and pluralist attitudes of students in their understanding of civic reality. Such a development of civic attitudes presupposes structural support for these competencies as expected outcomes of the educational process concerning student attitudes:

— The student is able to perceive that social values and terms like "nation", "democracy" and "freedom" are always historically, culturally or politically determined and thus need to be permanently discussed and defined.

— The student treats discussion as the optimal platform for the fabrication of social values and attitudes; the fact that the art of argumentation requires long-term training as well as ability and empathy to perceive the world through pluralist perspectives should be kept in mind.

— The student accepts pluralism as an inherent essence of social reality; therefore conflict is accepted as a natural part of human life that should not be eradicated, but managed and cultivated through rational public discussion.

— The student is aware of student's own collective identities and is willing to think about co-responsibility for their preservation; moreover, the student also reflects upon the fact that sustainable concepts of democracy and citizenship require thought about understandings of human and society which represent alternate challenges for possessive individualism and egoism (MacPherson 2010; Thayer-Bacon 2006).

— The student understands the student's own position in society and is well versed in the rights, options, expectations and obligations towards community that one takes part in (The student is able to suggest solutions in the case of urgent need to deal with public institutions and is aware of relations to the political system, laws and public administration).

With these aims in mind, this analysis points particularly at three materials from the above introduced project that should be considered in the enhancement of a constructivist application of socially and culturally determined understanding of values with a theoretical and philosophical justification of their conceptual framing.

ACTIVITY NO. 1: SIMULATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS AND POLITICAL COMPETITION

The first educational activity to be presented is focused on the development of student's awareness that the character of the public debate in the 21st century is considerably influenced by the existence of social networks as well as by the flexible nature of language meanings that competing public agents can adjust according to their particular current needs. Following the aforementioned aim to promote an alternate *agonist* concepts of democracy as a way out of the contemporary crisis of liberal democracy, the activity called "Historybook" (www.historybook.cz) also endeavours to present both political and civic conflicts over the interpretations of values as well as social interests as the non-negligible essence of the democratic public space that must be maintained, though also at the same time cultivated and criticized.

This online activity is based on innovative educational software which enables a specific application (Historybook) offering teachers an opportunity of setting up their own online classroom where student groups under the auspice of their teacher can create accounts of real historical characters, i.e. famous people from both the Czech and the world's past such as Winston Churchill, Maria Theresa, Napoleon Bonaparte, Franz Joseph I, Catherine the Great and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The task of these student groups is then to play the role of professional image makers and to administer the assigned account for the particular historical character on this fictional social network. This means that all members of such teams are assumed to look for the essential personal pieces of information that they could use in the online "political campaign"

and on their basis, they can present and share all the "news" from the characters' private lives, post photos or pictures that they can make on their own, or even write statuses and comment on the posts of other historical personalities administered by the competing teams. With this procedure, the online classroom of various political characters can represent quite vivid and original examples of fictional historical speech, portrayals and statements that students can further analyse, interpret and comment upon with their teacher.

Furthermore, as the part of the above-presented online platform, it is also possible to organize an activity called "The Greatest Hero of All Time," that is inspired by popular TV competitive shows in which the citizens of countries were allowed to vote for the most iconic historical person in their history. However, contrary to the serious character of such TV show concepts, this educational activity tries to demonstrate the necessity of a pluralist understanding of social values as well as an interpretation of historical characters in a discursively-based as well as amusing way. This scheme thus presupposes that all student groups will create a promotional video summing up all possible arguments as to why the particular historical hero should be awarded the title of the greatest hero of all time. Later on during a face-to-face lesson each team presents its video clip, and after which all the other teams are invited to ask questions or make objections against the particular personality whose deeds have just been advocated and promoted. Of course, the team assigned to the currently criticized historical hero is expected to defend their choice of hero with all possible rhetorical means, i.e. to prepare as many relevant counter-arguments that might come in handy. This procedure is repeated according to the final number of the "candidates" so that each team is able to present, criticize, comment, ask about and advocate individual candidates in a fair and sophisticated competition. Both presentations as well as subsequent debates are therefore supposed to demonstrate that the concept of *good citizenship* and *historical heroism* is strongly dependent on variable interpretations formed by historical contexts, diverse worldviews and political purposes.

The set of "candidates" for such competition can be understandably adjusted according to individual intentions and needs, but since the activity as a whole is constructed according to the principles of a safe environment in which students can identify themselves with real but already deceased people whose possible controversies are historical rather than currently problematic, the possible employment of well-known ancient past or even mythological characters is recommended. In the project, the example of the competition "The Greatest Hero of the Trojan War" is presented, one which enables students to choose from 4 different characters (Odysseus, Achilles, Agamemnon, Hector) and equips them with several paragons of both supporting arguments as well as counter-arguments (for instance: Was it moral when Odysseus pretended he had gone insane for not to go to war? Or to deceive his fellow-soldiers by jumping on his shield instead of Trojan soil and later trick the Trojans with the horse? Was Achilles a hero when rejected to fight due to his love disputes and thus allowed the Trojans to kill his friend Patroclus? Should the willingness of Agamemnon to sacrifice his own daughter for the sake of Greek victory be praised? Was it right when Hector killed dozens of Greeks and protect his brother although he was the one who

in fact betrayed the Greeks?)

When the teams defend their historical hero and later present their team strategies, the students are able to get deep into the main principles and techniques of ideological promotion as well as to understand the difference between the effort to capture the national past through the objectivist paradigm of science and the attempt to adjust the interpretation of particular historical narratives to specific political purposes. In this regard, the above-mentioned activity might be divided into two different stages: in the first, meant to be mostly inspiring and stimulating, students should be intrigued by the process of searching for the relevant information, having fun, and experiencing the flow phenomenon (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000) by creating the most fitting and convincing profile of the assigned character. In the second stage, when the teams have already become familiar with the basic information and style of their "hero of the past," a more sophisticated aim is to be achieved, since they are supposed to put themselves in their character's place and identify both with his or her language as well as with the corresponding way of thinking. During both stages, however, the teacher is expected to be appropriately perceptive concerning the level of controversy and working with the fictional identification with real historical characters. Hence, students must accept that they are assumed to play the roles they want to since the activity effectively presupposes that the teams of "image makers" will not rebel against their own characters. Obviously, the whole activity as such is based on a very light-hearted concept of learning and any efforts of students to implement irony, sarcasm or even revolt should be didactically reflected in a relaxed way and atmosphere.

After both the presentation of particular social network profiles and the competition between "historical heroes," the analysis of all the differences between the selected characters and intentional misinterpretations is recommended. Such analysis is designed to identify how the usage of particular historical events and people characters can be adjusted according to the intentional misinterpretations and purpose-built motivations, and thus also to demonstrate that the understanding of past events cannot be fully universal since it first requires the identification of particular worldviews, narratives and political or, rather, pragmatic intentions. Keeping a constructivist approach in mind, the whole of this activity is able to combine three distinctive dimensions of teaching about social values and identity: first, it clearly shows how these phenomena are culturally and historically formed and thus dependent on variable contexts; secondly, it demonstrates the pros and cons of promoting public behaviour on social networks in a safe fictional environment of characters from the past, one in which the danger of the politicisation of current ideological clashes between real political agents is minimised; and thirdly, it uses amusing and relaxed approaches towards knowledge with a focus on finding and sorting out relevant information.

ACTIVITY NO. 2: HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO "TRAIN" MANIPULATION AS AN INHERENT PART OF CITIZENSHIP?

The second activity has the goal to present manipulative behaviour as an essential at-

tribute of so-called instrumental rationality (Spracklen 2009), which is part of every-day social life and public sphere based on individualist concept of society. Contrary to the image of manipulation as something inherently evil, the activity tries to suggest that behaviour adjusting strategies according to one's goals and needs and persuading others with regard to mutual benefits should be considered as an important trait of social interaction that every human being is capable of and needs to understand. Similarly to the first activity analysed above, this concept works with the pluralist character of social reality as well as the need for a critical and contextual understanding of human behaviour, since there is no universal definition of acceptable (i.e. non-manipulative) and unacceptable (i.e. manipulative) social behaviour possible, as any such delimitation requires the knowledge of the particular context in which the given behaviour is applied.

For this purpose, students are expected to watch five different passages from various well-known movies (both Czech and non-Czech) without being aware what the assumed common point of all these excerpts they will observe and analyse is. Nonetheless, as has been suggested, all the passages are focused on the more or less typical social situations in which instrumental rationality and manipulative techniques in the social communication and negotiation are used. The activity therefore includes these passages:

1. "The roof scene" from the movie *The Shawshank Redemption* (Darabont 1994) in which the main character Andy Dufresne manages to persuade the chief warder to carry out a mutually beneficial though illegal transaction;

2. "The removal of the chancellor scene" from the first episode of *Star Wars* (Lucas 1999), in which Queen Amidala initiates the process of removing the current chancellor and thus unwittingly brings the dark side to power;

3. "The restarting of the reactor scene" from the series *Chernobyl* (Renck 2019) in which the shift manager blackmails his subordinates;

4) "The trial scene" from the movie *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Yates 2007) in which Albus Dumbledore convinces the wizard jury not to sentence Harry for his law-breaking;

5. "The meeting of the board scene" from the Czech comedy *My Sweet Little Village* (Menzel 1985) in which the chief of the collective farm pleads for the transfer of the mentally challenged employee to another company.

The main task of the students during the watching process is to identify and distinguish the positive and negative characters in the presented storylines according to their own perceptions, feelings and opinions; however, they are supposed to support and defend their decisions with the help of rational argumentation. Furthermore, they are also asked to find any possible common issue which is typical of all the movie excerpts and which concerns the question of human behaviour. After the successful presentation of all passages, the students debate the possible moral and immoral

behaviour in each scene and try to persuade their classmates about their interpretation; the situation is intentionally complicated by various depths of each individual student's knowledge of each movie, which raises the significant question of whether of one should be allowed (or is even able) to assess particular human behaviour and character without knowing the broader context and the whole storyline of the character's social life. Hence, this analytical and interpretative part of the activity aims mainly at an effort to demonstrate that:

— it is not possible to draw a clear cut line between absolutely "good" and absolutely "evil" situations without taking various human motivations into account and without applying the perspective of different social agents involved in the situations

— the contextual understanding of each situation requires knowing not only the situation itself, but also the more global image of the issue including its past (causes) as well as long-term impacts and social evaluation

— the assessment of a certain behaviour depends on different worldviews, cultural backgrounds and personal interests

— manipulative techniques which can be identified in all the presented excerpts are not related only to the characters evaluated as generally bad, since an effort to use the opportunity to persuade the others about one's own values, beliefs and interests cannot be ignored in real social life and thus should be treated as reflected kind of behaviour the permissibility or quite the contrary inadmissibility of which depends on different factors than on the manipulative character of the negotiation itself.

To conclude and depict the main goal of this activity in general, it is set to enhance a desirable understanding of social values and deeds as factors which cannot be judged once and for all and which also requires the taking of historical, cultural as well as minority points of view into account.

ACTIVITY NO. 3: LIBERTY IN A CIVIC DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

The last activity analysed in this study deals with the concept of freedom as one of the cornerstones of both civic education and the public arena in general. The exercise attempts to demonstrate possible answers to questions such as: "What are acceptable, desirable or even necessary limits to individual freedom?"; "What does it mean to be free in our everyday lives?" and "In what ways can freedom and supporting the principle of strong social authority be reconciled?"

Since the value of freedom may be identified as one of the most frequently mentioned attributes of liberal democratic society, this activity tries to present *being free* not as a dogmatic and uncritical truth only to be passively accepted without reasoning and deliberation, but as a very complicated and often even controversial concept, the validity and relevance of which must be perpetually contested and evaluated accord-

ing to varying circumstances and perspectives of the use of the term. In this activity, students should consider this most cherished value in terms of various contexts. Learners should be also able to explore their ability to express and exemplify ways in which individual rights can be considered as a cornerstone of postmodern pluralist and tolerant societies.

Although the design of this project had already begun before the measures instituted by governments in last two years in response to SARS-CoV-2, it must be added that the conceptual understanding of freedom might be very useful for an educational interpretation of the institutional responses to the crisis. Many serious tensions and cleavages have occurred or have been deepened since measures were first instituted, following which guidelines were routinely changed and extended. In this regard, the student's ability to distinguish between various interpretations of freedom should facilitate a deeper understanding of both the measures instituted as well as the foundations of the authority of the bodies and individuals who are making these decisions. In dealing with complicated arguments as to the best possible solutions to foster public health, it is only on the condition that students are aware of various definitions and perspectives with regard to measures taken that they can participate in the relevant conversations necessary in free societies. In understanding how to describe one's own state as *being free* as well as how to apply diverse understandings of freedom to real everyday situations, students are also empowered to more readily avoid yielding to short-sighted narrow ideological perspectives. In the case of governmental and other institutional responses to SARS-CoV-2, conflicts in interpretation are often framed in terms of the binary of "rational democrats" attempting to preserve human freedom against "foolish authoritarians" attempting to use the situation to seize totalitarian power.

Is any government allowed to order the obligatory vaccination for all citizens? And if so, can such government still be assessed as a liberal democratic one? Should the mandates on wearing face masks in public and some private spaces be seen as an expression of collective communitarianism, or rather a depersonalising limitation of freedom? Which arguments can be deployed in debates with regard to compulsion, compliance and freedom? What is the role of empirical scientific evidence and debate, and how should these expert discussions, often contentious, be presented to the public? These are precisely the kind of questions that teachers are recommended to pose as a part of the ice-breaking and motivation process before a given activity is begun.

Obviously these kinds of issues extend beyond SARS-CoV-2, but the responses to this putative crisis can prove a useful example. Multivalent interpretations of the notion of liberty concern questions of human nature, specific historical issues and, most relevant today, technology, along with how all of these discourses intersect. The teacher thus can raise questions such as: "Would I be freer, if my society allowed me to steal and to kill others—for instance as is often the case during war? How could the Jacobins in revolutionary France present arguments based on *liberté, égalité, fraternité* as they massacred masses of people who did not agree with them? Would I be still free, if I decided to merge my body and mind with a computer, e.g. as a part of a global cloud hive mind" (Matwyshyn 2019)?

To bring such questions into a constructivist schooling process, it is necessary to abandon the traditional concept of freedom as universal value of all individual human beings independent of particular time periods and cultural understandings (Cruz 2021). Contrary to more or less traditionalist concepts like these, the activities exemplified here endeavour to explore liberty as multi-layered value that should not be interpreted merely within an over-individualist framework as a right to do anything one wants, but as a historically determined balance between total arbitrariness and oppression. As suggested in the example above of the SARS-CoV-2 discussion, the project aims among other goals at exploring ways to introduce and discuss acute dilemmas, e.g. how to teach about freedom of speech and the behaviour of each individual as indispensable human values without delimiting freedom in terms of its dependence on specific social and cultural backgrounds in dialogue with the actor's own perspective.

These activities themselves are therefore composed of simulations of a number of social situations (both potentially real as well as hypothetical ones), each of which represents an elementary quandary of one particular human being whose individual decision-making and behaviour might be challenged at a given moment. Students are then expected to debate and decide on whether they would assess particular situations which support or limit freedom. Following such reasoning and assessments, learners are also invited to realize that instead of a typical understanding of freedom as "my right to do or not do something," the additional consideration of "what defines freedom, for whom and under which circumstances" should always be taken into account.

For this reason, the exercises are based mostly on the conceptual scheme of Berlin's dichotomy between the negative and positive notions of liberty (Berlin 1969). Although this model has been criticized and might be thus assessed as already outmoded in current political theory (Skinner 1998; Pettit 1999), the research team has based the activities on this easy-to-understand binary of positive and negative freedom. In this way, students may be introduced to ways of thinking about freedom as something undebatable and unproblematic, leading to constructivist and procedural discussions about liberal values.

Groups of students are gradually confronted with several dilemmas in a worksheet, with these predicaments described in written form, symbolically depicted in pictures and labelled as A–H. A variety of cases are presented from various historical periods and cultural backgrounds to demonstrate that although the question of liberty is omnipresent and crosses through times and places, interpretations are dependent on a precise particular context. The teams of students then analyse all the situations and formulate their own arguments as to whether the particular people in the given situations (A–H) should be considered as free agents or not:

A. What if a slave got permission from his slave master to do whatever they wanted for one day – would such a slave be free?

B. What if I am a drug addict and decide to take another dose – am I free?

C. Am I still free if a policeman forces me to pay a fine for speeding?

D. What if parents do not let their child to go to a party – is the child free?

E. Am I free if my employer makes me redundant?

F. What if the government ordered a minority population to leave their homes – would these people be free? (Jews during the Nazi Regime can be used as an example.)

G. What if a girl left her university studies to take care of her married lover's needs – would she have decided freely?

H. What if I were to be executed for reading a banned book – would I die as a free person? (a political text, pornography)

I. If I am a woman suffering from the violence of my husband / partner and still do not want to leave him – am I free?

Initial indications show that the empirical application of the worksheet in the Czech educational process has proved the anticipated goals to be achievable. Based on the experiences of the research team with this methodology up to now, several significant differences in interpretations of liberty might occur in the case of each presented simulated moment. As has been suggested, the teaching material enables the framing of all presented answers within the framework of Berlin's dichotomy, although it should recognized that the message of this activity is not a demonstration of the theory of negative and positive freedom as such. The main goal is the development of the ability of students to think about the most frequently used social values in an interpretative way. From this perspective, the situation of the slave (A) is often read as being both free and unfree at the same time, because the slave is able to do anything one wants for one day, but this possibility is contingent on the will of the slave master. The students are therefore able to deduce a significant conclusion from this finding: that the question of freedom might be strongly dependent on the socio-political system, since if slavery was now legal again, can even slaves be considered to behave freely when they are out of their master's control? Another observation was made by students in the case of the drug addict (B) who is not forced to take a dose and in that respect remains free, but many students were troubled by the idea that it is not "the real him," but it is his physical addiction that "decides" as the controlling factor.

The fact that an individual level of freedom must be always framed within a social context that in several ways determines which social behaviour is assessed as legitimate or completely unacceptable becomes more complicated in the case of the punished driver (C) and the controlled child (D). Both of these examples refer to a situation in which a concept of liberty that at first glance might seem universal must be defined politically via the traditional and current social consensus, thus students are incentivized to consider the relation between one's freedom and social expectations (i.e. what is the divisive border between non-acceptable forms of the suppression of one's individuality, and on other hand putatively desirable violent collective attitudes and behaviours necessary to maintain the stability of a social community?).

In the situations F and H featuring the example of a discriminated minority and a

reader who was put to death for reading forbidden books, these cases raise the question of the coherence between (more or less) democratic decision-making processes based on the idea of popular majoritarian (i.e. conformist) will as opposed to the values of liberal individualism. In in both cases students should discuss whether the application of the will of the majority can be compatible with keeping all people free. Berlin's concept of positive and negative liberty as a fundamental theoretical framework is a straight-forward way of introducing this activity. It is exactly cases like those represented in F and H which could lead to a debate over more holistic, collectivist and (in Berlin's scheme also) positive forms of freedom. In evaluating a situation in which the actor is allowed to take part in decision-making and is aware of the consequences of a certain behaviour, students frequently come to the conclusion that any final decision – no matter how cruel – can be assessed as democratic and free, especially when it is related to Rousseau's famous concept of democracy as "forced freedom" (Rousseau 1999: 58).

Besides this collective and political dimension of liberty, the worksheet also features other cases that take the question of the actor's mental capacities and thus the principle of rational agency into consideration. Such reasoning about the dependence of freedom on individual rationality with regard to the limits of rational behaviour is featured in the case of drug addict (B), as the physiological dependence on a drug is generally evaluated as an argument against the possibility to evaluating such a human being as completely free. Similar cases of this inherent tension in the interpretation of freedom can be thus found in the case of examples G and I, i.e., cases of women in an abusive or detrimental relationship. Both these women can be in fact assessed as fully free agents who completely control their decision-making processes, since there is neither an external nor internal violent obstacle preventing them from taking responsibility for their decisions and that could thus be described as a symptom of "enslavement." Nevertheless, even in these cases the fact that the decisions of such agents (to leave university studies or not to leave a violent partner) can be considered as risky or at least with the possibility of pernicious consequences. Thus a conclusion that neither of these women are actually free might be supportable, since they both could be perceived as victims of the dominant symbols and cultural interpretations that historically assigns received kinds of behaviour to certain genders.

We hope that such a wide range of the cases to be analysed and interpreted would ensure the pluralist character of the expected reasoning and subsequent debate. It is precisely these methods of critical thinking and the ability of the application of theoretical knowledge to social situations which contributes to the reinterpretation of social values as not stemming exclusively from universal categories, but can also be framed in terms of discourse-based phenomena that can, and in fact must be continuously discussed and deliberated.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the reflection of significant contemporary challenges regarding the process of civic education in the framework of the Czech schooling system, several

quandaries have been identified. The systematic analyses of and procedural resolutions regarding these issues should be facilitated to acclimate the current form of Czech civic education to the standards of pluralist and postmodern discourse in the 21ˢᵗ century.

As the main dilemmas representing the above mentioned challenges, the most significant issues to be introduced and analysed are the following:

— the orientation of the educational process as centred on a factual-based and substantial understanding of social science terms in the national curriculum which anticipates either theoretical or encyclopaedic knowledge and treats political science merely as a field of universally defined categories

— the poor public image of the importance of social sciences and civic education caused mainly by the presupposed explicitly ideological and undiscerning character of their application in the schooling process

— the dominant ethnic understanding of national identity (as well as other kinds of collective phenomena) both in educational and broader public discourse as stemming from the complicated interpretations and complexes of the past of the Central European region as well as on traditional historical patterns of Czech national narrative

In the second part of the study, this paper endeavours to suggest possible ways to face the aforementioned challenges and dilemmas by presenting and analysing a quite recent – and in the framework of Czech national education, quite unique – schooling programme that has been created as the outcome of an EU project with the cooperation of didacticians, elementary and grammar schools teachers, as well as academicians from the University of Hradec Králové. This programme has been analysed both theoretically and empirically. First, the meta-cognitive background and educational ambitions regarding the philosophical dimension of civic education were identified, with several concrete examples of its educational activities presented in the next part of this section. Concerning the educational goals, it has been highlighted that the programme manages to work within a more pluralist and constructivist dimension of teaching civic education, as it is strongly focused on a reflected, embedded and systematic concept of *good citizenship*, a deliberative and interpretative understanding of language, critical reasoning and argumentation, a conflictual and *agonist* concept of democratic culture, discourse-based meanings of collective identities as well as the procedural treatment of both the democratic process and civic education. Regarding the particular educational content of this programme, the study clearly demonstrates how the project tackles very crucial as well as delicate issues such as manipulative behaviour, the impact of social networks along with historical narratives in the public space as well as elementary tensions between individual and collective forms of freedom which are both analysed separately and framed by the concept of *good citizenship* in terms of irremovable dilemmas of civic life in the 21ˢᵗ century.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Multicultural education in Estonia: why is it powerless in responding to islamophobia?

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ABSTRACT: The article aims to outline the differences between three different multicultural education projects and how their initiatives explore and integrate the topic of religious differences and the topic of Islam. Methodologically, the article uses thematic context analysis to compare all three multicultural education projects. Thematic content analysis facilitates the possibility to study what is being discussed in the multicultural context and how it is being interpreted through different ideas and concepts. These education projects aim to create a common language environment and a new (integrated) national identity. Based on the Estonian super-secular society (less than 19% of Estonians considered themselves part of some congregation or religion), the peculiarities of religious orientation are not so much considered in these multicultural learning strategies and Islam occurs in connection with radicalism.
KEYWORDS: multiculturality, Islamophobia, religion, secularity, radicalism

BACKGROUND

The face of Islam in Estonia was the face of Tatar Muslims. According to 2011 census records, there were 1.508 Muslims, of which 604 were Tatar, 299 Azeri, 148 Estonian and 107 were Russian (Census 2011). Religion is imperative among the Tatars in understanding their nationality and themselves. "Estonian Tatars see religion as something confined to the home, an attitude inherited from the Soviet period. They continue some practices, mostly in the case of the older generation, but they doubt their true character as Muslims or their 'Muslimness" (Lepa 2020: 76). The membership structure of the Estonian Islamic Congregation reflects the Tatar understanding of membership in a religious institution: religion is part of a cultural identity and thus one can become a member of the Estonian Islamic Congregation only through membership in an ethnic minority cultural society (Statue of EIC 2015). The goal of

the charter change was to affirm that ethnic groups remain at the forefront of power and to retain ethnic and cultural consistency and control over the congregation. The charter change is also indicative of the internal understanding of the congregation that something has changed inside as well as outside the congregation. It is a defence mechanism to ensure the cultural and ethnic identity of the congregation in the face of varying external identities. Thus, the Muslim community in Estonia is made up of Muslims with a Tatar cultural and ethnic background rather than Muslims with a migratory and Middle Eastern background.

According to the Human Rights in Estonia 2020 report, human rights, in comparison to the rest of the world, have been an equally large pain point in Estonia. Similar to the rest of Europe, far-right populism has spread across Estonia and right-wing politics, especially populist parties, are finding increasingly more success. Consequently, the rise of these parties has brought various questions around migration back into the limelight. However, the latter has largely occurred in a negative light, questioning all that has been achieved on the matter thus far (Estonian Institute of Human Rights 2020).

The 2019 study of the adaptation of newly arrived migrants in Estonia indicated a negative attitude and exclusion based on religious and racial characteristics, which has increased significantly in recent years. The results of the study highlight a persistent need to contribute towards lessening unfounded fears surrounding migrants among Estonians. This contribution must be systematic, based on facts, and raising public consciousness around this subject should include the help of the education system (Kaldur, Kivistik, Pohla, Veliste, Pertsjonok, Käger, & Roots 2019).

Based on the above, it is understandable that the assessment of the Migrant Integration Policy Index of 2020 for Estonia posits that "the legal protections and support for victims of discrimination in Estonia are weaker than in any other EU country, which can undermine awareness, reporting, and trust among potential victims" (Solano and Huddleston 2020:17).

Fear of Islam is rising in the context of immigration. According to the Islamophobia in Estonia Report, in 2019 there were "two examples of physical attacks that could be considered Islamophobic, although it is difficult to make the distinction between anti-migrant bias and specifically Islamophobic bias. Verbal attacks were more common according to refugee organisations, but these were usually not reported to the police. The attacks reflect a hostile attitude towards refugees and migrants, promoted by rightwing politicians" (Rünne & Laanpere 2019: 250). The Runnymede Trust Report (1997) defined the concept of Islamophobia as anti-Muslim prejudice and describes such a closed view through the following perspectives: "1. Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static, and unresponsive to change. 2. Islam is seen as separate and "other." 3. Islam is seen as inferior to the West and is seen as barbaric, irrational, primitive, and sexist. 4. Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, and supportive of terrorism 5. Islam is seen as a political ideology and is used for political or military advantage. 6. Criticisms made of the West by Islam are rejected out of hand. 7. Hostility toward Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices toward Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society. 8. Hostility to Muslims is seen as natural or normal"

(The Runnymede Trust Report 1997:1; Tiliouine & Estes 2016: 626).

However, Estonian society is characterized not only by fear for newly arrived migrants in Estonia, but also by indifference and misunderstanding of religion. A new study on Estonian religiosity and religious life in 2020 noted how the importance of religion had grown year on year, where a growth of 37% in 2015 had increased to 41% in 2020. However, relatively speaking, the growth had been rather small. On average, religion has been more important among women, non-Estonians, and people with lower incomes (Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ 2020). The religious identity of Estonians was most aptly described as "spiritual, but not religious"—this was the opinion of 28% of the study's participants, while 26% considered themselves non-religious, 22% were apathetic towards religion and 19% of participants considered themselves as religious. Familiarity was most felt with Christianity, Native Religion and atheism. 37% believed in the existence of God. Belonging to a Christian congregation was more prevalent among non-Estonians, making up 26% as opposed to around 20% among Estonians. However, attending church service was just around 5% (Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ 2020).

In conclusion, the situation of religiosity in Estonia underlines the need for discourse surrounding the inclination towards religion rather than the supposed and constant non-religiousity and lack of belonging to a specific congregation. These religious inclinations become apparent not only among questions surrounding identity, but also in common undecidedness (common occurrence of "ratherism") (Remmel & Uibu 2015).

In light of this, the question to be asked is how are Estonian integration development plans, education strategies and programmes prepared to face the growing migration situation (especially concerning the Afghan crisis) and the nationalist, cultural and religious questions represented by religious immigrants? The Estonian school curricula for both middle and high schools list the following general competencies: cultural and value competencies as well as social and civic competencies. Cultural and value competencies include, but are not limited to, the ability to perceive and value the connection between one's own cultural heritage and (cultural) diversity as well as those of other nations and peoples, recognise one's own value structures and take such structures into consideration in decision-making and in being tolerant (Riigi Teataja 2012).

In the Estonian context, a distinction is made between religious education and *confessional religious* education (Religious education 2021). The former is confessional and the latter deals with the description and translation of religious phenomenon. Confessional religious education has spread especially in Christian private schools in preschool and middle school. The confessional religious education given in private schools is based on the conditions set by the school's council, but even confessional religious education must remain a voluntary choice for students (Riigi Teataja 1998). In accordance with the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, non-confessional religious studies are voluntary for students, but mandatory for the school if the school grade has at least 15 students wishing to study it (Riigi Teataja 2012). Religious studies is taught today in roughly 70 schools (including private schools).

Based on the extreme secularity of the Estonian society, it is important to ask how much do conceptions of multicultural education consider religious diversity and how does religion manifest in these conceptions?

Since 2015, there have been strong attempts to develop multicultural educational strategies and several different programmes have been developed. The following projects have been established in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research: The Co-Learning School Project (2016); The Human Rights Education Project (2017) and; The Unified Estonian School Project (2018-2021). The latter project has resulted in an action plan, a specific school model, thematic packages, analyses and teaching materials. The former two have remained in their research phase. While they were great initiatives, they did not reach their development phase.

The article discusses the extent to which the aforementioned projects and their initiatives promote multiculturality to consider religious diversity in speaking about multiculturality and cultural sensitivity and to what extent different religions, including Islam, are covered.

It should be noted that all three school concepts define the concept of multiculturality differently and use different materials to explain and analyse the concept. Accordingly, the discussion of the concept of multiculturality is also different for different school concepts - it is not possible to provide a uniform definition.

Methodologically, the article focuses on thematic content analysis of the three multicultural education projects. The thematic content analysis makes it possible to study what is being discussed in the multicultural context and how it is being interpreted through these ideas and concepts (Kalmus, Masso, & Linno 2015). Thematic analysis helps determine:

(i) What is the purpose and methodology of these projects?

(ii) How far did their research get?

(iii) In what manner are multiculturality and religious themes depicted?

(iv) What are the actions required for the immediate betterment of cross-cultural integration according to these projects?

The final part of the article compares the results of the analyses and discusses the question of why, despite the development, extensive research, and the creation of different materials for different multicultural education projects, the fear around Islam persists in Estonia?

CO-LEARNING SCHOOL—A CONCEPT REGARDING THE QUALITY REQUIREMENT FOR SCHOOLS WHERE STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS STUDY

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The Co-Learning School Project began its development in Estonia in 2016—it described different multicultural school types and competencies. The purpose of this project

was directed at schools with students from different cultures. The development of the project was to be useful for both students as well as schools, and shift more focus on inclusive school environments, culturally aware teaching arrangements, the inclusion of the community, non-formal study and cross-subject integration (Ministry of Education and Research 2016). It was influenced by the migration crisis since in presenting the project's terms of reference, it was emphasised that there were around 400 new immigrants and returnees studying in Estonian schools and schools were continuously receiving students from refugee families as well as exchange students (Ministry of Education and Research 2016). Likewise, it was acknowledged that while multiculturality in a school setting might be an everyday reality, neither the schools nor the teachers are prepared for the arrival of students with new cultural backgrounds. Five pilot schools were chosen. The Co-Learning School Project launched in three schools and one kindergarten in 2016 (Ministry of Culture 2017).

The project set a goal of achieving the following objectives in 2016-2020:

(i) Describe the current state of multilingual schools from a multicultural standpoint (environment, language use, importance of different cultures) and map out the specific struggles of different school types)

(ii) Describe the quality requirements for schools with students of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

(iii) Present a programme that sets forth different crucial support structures that would aid kindergarten and schoolteachers in apprehending and bettering discussions around the topic of multiculturality and in applying the principles of content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

(iv) Investigate the fruitfulness of these supportive structures in the five pilot schools in the 2016/2017 school year. Choosing the pilot schools would be based on voluntary cooperation starting from May of 2016 (Ministry of Education and Research 2016).

In articulating the challenges of the project, various different studies were relied on that supported both a better language immersion for the Russian student body as well as new immigrant integration. For example, it was highlighted that in order to construct knowledge, it is necessary to develop a complete picture of the world, not just a combination of different fragments. In order to decrease prejudices, it is important to not just break racial and ethnic stereotypes, but also, in the Estonian context, overcome the disturbance on an ethnic basis created in relation to different ethnicities. The flexible use of comparative pedagogy, including specifically different teaching methods and technologies, is especially important (Ministry of Education and Research 2016; Kivistik, Pohla, Kaldur 2019). Consequently, the challenges of multicultural schools were that are characteristic of largely Russian-speaking schools and schools with high amounts of immigrant students were underlined.

The following were viewed as challenges for multicultural schools that have been subject to an increasing number of new immigrants:

(1) The lack of knowledge and skills to teach Estonian as a second language.

(2) Scarce cultural knowledge.

(3) Lacklustre topical integration knowledge.

(4) Ineptitude to involve the parents of students from minority groups or those with immigrant backgrounds.

(5) Inability to combat the reluctant attitude of students towards other students of different nationalities.

(6) The lack of monetary resources to hire additional workforce that would better the involvement of immigrant students in classes and create different hobby groups (Ministry of Education and Research 2016).

WHAT WERE THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY?

The roundtables organised in the Co-Learning School project raised the idea that similar to a bilingual school, the integration within schools with migration backgrounds would benefit from the consideration of and the mindfulness around core values, language immersion, flexible and conscious communication with the community, and the development of an environment that favours integration (Ministry of Education and Research 2016).

The development of the model relied heavily on the theory of USA social scientist James A. Banks. The theory is based on five components: content integration, the knowledge construction process, an equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks 1998). In order to see change in the school environment, the following are required:

— Activities that would support integration during and outside of class.

— Excellent content and language integration.

— Cultured teaching arrangements.

— A friendly and inclusive school culture that values diversity.

— Cooperative community (Ministry of Education and Research 2016).

The project did not reach its implementation phase and its operational plans, different models, and teaching materials were not developed.

RECOGNITION OF MULTICULTURALITY AND RELIGION IN THE CONCEPT

In setting its goals and expected outcomes, the Co-Learning School leaned on the concise objective of relating multiculturality in schools through a clear programme. The programme outlined the following:

(i) Multicultural schools have a student-friendly school culture that values and supports the integration of different cultures.

(ii) The management and the teachers of multicultural schools are well-versed in the principles of content and language integrated learning (CLIL)—the teachers are confident and skilful at its implementation.

(iii) Multicultural schools are actively collaborating with the community.

(iv) The teaching in multicultural schools is culturally informed and sensitive (Ministry of Education and Research 2016).

The project speaks mainly about two aspects of multiculturality, Russian-Estonian multiculturality and new-immigrant multiculturality - these two are differentiated. The Co-Learning School programme does not deal with topics on the culture of religion nor the consideration of students' religious values. The concept of religion does not appear at all in the programme, not even in the introduction nor when speaking about values and ethnic differences. However, the description of the project mentions Islam in relation to constructing cultural knowledge and the integration of culture into school subjects. It is mentioned that knowledge obtained from cultures remains fragmented and different aspects of how to connect various cultures in the classroom are not focused on. Teachers participating in the study mention that in relation to the refugee crisis, it is not enough to "conduct lectures on Islam in schools. Oftentimes, it is believed that celebrating Saint Martin's Day in Russian-language schools or conducting an Islamic lecture are good examples of cultural education" (Ministry of Education and Research 2016: 6). In regard to outlining existing State measures in relation to supporting multiculturality in schools, the non-profit Islamic Cultural Centre is highlighted, which organises Islamic Information Days in schools (Ministry of Education and Research 2016). This brings out the idea that Islam is spoken of as a culture that is unknown in Estonian schools and something that Estonian schools should be prepared to know.

Religions other than Islam are not mentioned. The Co-Learning School model is an answer to what teachers and school leaders fear and anticipate. There is a desire to react to the flow of new immigrants in Estonia and quality requirements for schools are developed so that schools would be able to better manage integration. However, this does not take into account the aspects of religiosity of the Islamic faith and its value system. It does not consider the fact that the value system by which students with an immigrant background and parents (if they are Muslim) operate is not secular, but religious. Concurrently, the Co-Learning School programme mentions the necessity for expert advice and the development of 101 materials – this makes it apparent that a broader preparedness which would include religious (including Islamic) topics is necessary for teachers and school staff (Ministry of Education and Research 2016). Religion, in the context of the Co-Learning School Project, is rather viewed as the convergence with the foreign Islamic culture.

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE IMPROVED INTEGRATION OF CULTURES ACCORDING TO THE STUDIES OF THE CO-LEARNING SCHOOL?

Foremost, it was apparent that multiculturality is always viewed in relation to language teaching in both the context of Estonian-Russian integration as well as the new immigrant context. Language is a tool for integration in the education system as well as a necessity in society as a whole. Language is the basis through which the protection of national identity is created.

The usage of the Banks model is suggested to ensure better integration, of which the founder, James A. Banks, is one of the main developers of multicultural teaching. Chiefly, the starting point was integration and multicultural education where the focus is on valuing and celebrating diversity, concentrating on creating positive relationships with the goal being to show different perspectives to the majority of students and include the background of minority students in study materials (Banks 1998). Foremost, the aim of such an approach is social harmony and the appreciation and knowledge of others (Järv and Kirssi 2019). Herein, it is crucial to remember to talk about different cultures whilst teaching and the aim is to create a unified social environment. However, it was very apparent from the programme what its weak points were. The accountability was mostly placed on schools and the education system to develop an integration-supporting environment for both Russian-speaking students and those with immigration backgrounds. The basis for the creation of this new environment is the recognition of a unified value space by the entire school staff and the conscious development of a unified identity (Ministry of Education and Research 2016). Additionally, schools are expected to have teachers who are better prepared for the integration of students with different cultural backgrounds (i.e. a 101 course for teachers would be required), make proposals for the project, create an environment that would support integration and have stronger linguistic support as well as developing extracurricular projects that would support socialisation (Ministry of Education and Research 2016). The introduction of religious studies into schools which would help students to understand and interpret a different worldview more broadly was not considered in the solutions' proposal.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION PROJECT

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The preparation of the concept was based on the understanding that the various demographical, social and immigrant processes that Estonia is subject to have made Estonian schools more diverse. This results in a situation where Estonian schools, now more than ever, must consider students' cultural, ethnic, religious, ideological and gender-specific backgrounds (Institute of Baltic Studies and Estonian Institute of Human Rights 2017). In support of these differences, the Ministry of Education and Research planned to develop the Human Rights Education Project and establish clear guidelines to ensure the integration of the human rights topic into different areas of the education system. The objective of the study was to highlight understandings

and directives that would aid in defining human rights education more clearly and to implement it more smoothly so that a unified understanding of why it is necessary to raise awareness of human rights education in both the school environment as well as in youth work more broadly would develop (Kivistik et al. 2019).

The study conducted for the project, undertaken in 2017, and its conclusions are based on qualitative data collection from Estonian schools. It consisted of interviews in 10 Estonian schools among 25 focus groups. Additionally, four expert interviews were conducted by experts educated in human rights. In order to create context, laws pertaining to school policies in Estonia were analysed and documents introduced in schools were reviewed (strategies, school rules, curricula, et cetera) in order to understand if and to what extent they include themes of human rights (education). The study's strong advantage is its description of exemplary human rights education practises in both the school context as well as in different projects that have shown great results in other countries such as Finland, Holland, Iceland and Australia (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

WHAT WERE THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY?

In conclusion, the general layout set the expectation that both students and teachers would be well-versed in the fact that human rights pertain to all people and they would be able to name specific rights and situations where those rights are infringed upon. The staff, teachers as well as students within the school would be able to relate human rights with school life and studies. However, this ability manifests more in the discussion of the topic rather than as a conscious practice. Especially for students, human rights were mainly understood from an individual rights perspective. Teachers and leaders saw the need, in talking about human rights, to consider the needs of others and highlight those needs next to the needs of themselves (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

The study highlighted several great practices of how to include students and parents and what the methods for implementing human rights education should be. On the topic of empowering youth, the study references an idea of a particular school with the creed "Notice, Influence, Change", which sets the objective of teaching to notice those around you and to intervene if help is needed (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

One of the methods highlighted for the teaching of human rights is discussing human rights in the context of history as well as on the examples of topical events. For younger students, this can be in the form of relating it to art and fairy tales. Aside from specific opportunities arising from celebrating something like the Citizenship Day, it is necessary to create opportunities for practising democratic processes (for example, the development of a student council). Additionally, initiatives such as interdisciplinary school projects, movie screenings, creating comics, excursions and inviting foreign guests can also help (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

The concept did not reach its implementation phase and ots operational plans, different models and teaching materials were not developed.

RECOGNITION OF MULTICULTURALITY AND RELIGION IN THE CONCEPT

The introduction of the study mentions that demographic, social and immigration processes are connected to change. The Estonian school environment is changing to something more diverse and there is an increasing need to consider and understand students' cultural, ethnic, religious, ideological and gender-based backgrounds. The cultural focus of the study is based on the goal for sustainable development agreed to by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 that emphasises sustainable development through global citizenship and valuing of cultural diversity (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

The Human Rights Education Project discusses religion from a cultural aspect and those discussions refer mainly to the Islamic religion and cultural space. These aspects manifest in the presentation of the study which had been undertaken with teachers and leaders in mainly dealing with migration topics. For example, the study's analysis highlights that "on the back of new migratory movements, teachers feel uncertain in dealing with the background of students and their parents from these migration areas, especially in regards to adjusting their religious particularities into Estonian norms" (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017:36). Islamic practises are also referenced by teachers' worries of how to establish rules around prayer during class or an exam or absences due to cultural reasons. In response to these worries, the authors of the study propose that when it comes to religious aspects, one should look at the practices of other countries and their effect on society as a whole and build a framework around that. The study clearly noted that these questions emerge from scarce experience with such situations and create a fear of conflict around restricting someone's human rights (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017). In the secular Estonian context, the above proposal can be rephrased accordingly: these situations emerge from limited contact with religion in the classroom and an inability as well as a fear of interpreting a different cultural-religious context.

The part of the study that deals with human rights and the implementation of its fundamental values within schools does not specifically highlight freedom of religion. This is partly understandable as the authors present the list of rights as thematic groups—for example, gender equality, freedom of expression or lack thereof, nationality, skin colour and sexual orientation. These differences do not mention religion. However, the research analyses of the same chapter highlight the topic of religion and outline the scenarios that could occur in a school environment if "a student with a specific religious or cultural background needs to pray during a class or be absent from school for cultural reason" (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017:26). It was noted that as people know little of cultural and religious differences and exposure to such situations is rather poor, people are afraid to make mistakes and create conflicts (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

The topics of cultural values, multiculturality and religion were more palpable in the analysis of exemplary practises of others, mapping the examples of Finland, Holland, Iceland and Australia, which have seen significant changes in the implementation of human rights and their foundational values into their curricula. While the

study does not specifically differentiate between cultural and religious aspects, the description of good practices does (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE IMPROVED INTEGRATION OF CULTURES ACCORDING TO THESE STUDIES?

The broad objective of the Human Rights Education Project is to improve the appreciation of social rights in schools and promote education around global citizenship. Accordingly, students' knowledge about social, environmental, economic and political aspects have to be improved. Human rights education focuses on the student's role in society so that the student would know how to act democratically, notice unjust actions and patterns and feel an intrinsic need to intervene (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

The studies and analyses occurred during the migration crisis period, therefore bringing into focus the integration of different cultures. Additionally, the undertaking of the study also happened when right-wing and populistic thinking was increasing in Europe. Due to this, the introduction of the social-political context to students was more prominent than for the Co-Learning School model. The descriptions in the study highlight unfair treatment and topics related to minorities—the refugee crisis is one topic that the social-values context is constantly exposed to. Students in the study were able to define minorities as also immigrants and persons under international protection (i.e. refugees) as well as black people. In relation to topics regarding refugees, it was apparent that it is not about people from Portugal or Ukraine, but rather refugees from Syria, the Middle East and North Africa, whose (mass) entry Europe was then subject to (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

The focus group of the study was mainly people from the Estonian education system, including school leaders, teachers and students. The uncertain preparedness for change and fears around specific human rights subjects was apparent from the entire focus group. It was widely thought that many *hot* topics such as LGBT or immigrants are not really class topics as they are controversial and could divide the classroom (Institute of Baltic Studies et al. 2017).

UNIFIED ESTONIAN SCHOOL PROJECT

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

An extensive research project began in 2018 called "Migration dependence and integration challenges for the Estonian government, employers, communities and the education system". The objective of the project was to map out and present solutions to problems related to migration and restrictions around integration. One of the project's sub-objectives was to develop a suitable school model for Estonia that would take multiculturality into account (Kivistik et al. 2019).

The project dubbed the school model the Unified Estonian School, which is defined as follows: "The Unified Estonian School is a school that supports the self-fulfilment of the Estonian national identity in the community and values the cultural identity of

students following the national curriculum and/or those with a cultural background who are following a mainly Estonian curriculum based on principles of contemporary learning" (Pedaste, Kirss, & Kitsnik 2019:3).

The school model raised the key issue that Estonia has few "evidence-based methods and means to deal with multiculturality in society" (Pedaste et al. 2019:3).

The need for the Unified Estonian School was based on the assumptions that:

(i) A segregated school system recreates social divide.

(ii) Studying Estonian as a second language is ineffective.

(iii) Continued education is highly dependent on Estonian language competency.

(iv) The Estonian society is changing and its members have to be better prepared for this change.

Similar to the vision of the Co-Learning School, the project took into account the need for language learning, making it sustainable and incorporating culturally-sensitive teaching (Rääsk et al. 2020). The project took into consideration the integration of the Estonian society concept which had the main objectives of developing and strengthening a unified national identity, preservation and development of cultural identities and increasing the cultural commonalities of the population. Culturally sensitive teaching was seen as the main supportive agent of multicultural education (Pedaste et al. 2019:3). While the topic of multiculturality was handled in several different analyses in the study, it was mainly in relation to the question of identity. The Unified Estonian School Project also built on the understanding of multi-identity. In comparison to other concepts, the topics around identity are key discussion points. It takes into consideration that the cultural background of students in Estonian schools is a defining part of their identity (Rääsk et al. 2020). The objective of many of the concept's base studies is to develop a unified language environment and a (well-integrated) national identity (Ehala 2019).

There were several different methodological approaches and data to be used in developing the concept, starting from different general demographical surveys, integration studies, questionnaires for different target groups, seminars and trainings. The Unified Estonian School is not simply meant for regular schools, but also for different educational institutions including kindergartens and studies for adults. A lot of focus was also put on community studies and a community-supporting role (Rääsk et al. 2020).

WHAT WERE THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY?

In comparison to the other education concepts, this concept managed to, from its terms of reference and studies, put together a whole project. Both tools and mechanisms for the prevention and solution of integration-related problems in schools and communities were developed. A migration income-expense model was built which also encompassed the expenses of the Unified Estonian School. The Unified Estonian

School was one project that was included in the wider migration and integration context and helped build clearer packages, models and solutions (Rääsk et al. 2020). Many different studies were undertaken during the project as the project's objectives were broader than just developing a new school model. However, the current description only pertains to the different packages, models and scientific supporting materials (the list of materials is available in the bibliography) of the Unified Estonian School.

Summaries were developed of the Unified Estonian School during 2018-2020 named "The Unified Estonian School—a vision of the future of schools" and a model analysis "The development of the Unified Estonian School model in Estonia". Additionally, different guides, self-analysis tools, teaching materials and thematic descriptions were developed which would support the introduction of the Unified Estonian School model into the Estonian society and education landscape. These materials can be divided into three thematic areas:

(1) Great practises and examples in Europe, including "The European school—an example of cultural and linguistic diversity in school" (Soll 2019); "Multilingual and multicultural school—examples from international practises in Europe" (Säälik et al. 2019) and "The politics of multiculturality in Norwegian and Swedish schools" (Pukspuu 2020).

These materials highlighted that Europe has been faced with the question of integration and finding of good practices for a long time. Nordic education systems have developed different methods of how to solve the problems arising from multiculturality as well as marginalisation and radicalisation.

(2) Language teaching methodologies and proposals for making classes more diverse, including "Estonian learning model for adult immigrants—REDEL" (Praakli & Klaas-Lang 2020); "Multi-perspective and culturally-sensitive teaching of history in Estonian schools" (Oja 2020); "Materials supporting culturally-sensitive teaching for teachers" (Järv & Kirss 2019); "Our multi-lingual and multicultural school. Evaluation guideline for schoolmasters and school leaders" (Järv & Kirss 2020).

This sub-category includes methodology, teaching materials as well as self-analysis opportunities for teachers and school leaders. It becomes immediately apparent that multicultural education is associated foremost with building a strong language-teaching foundation. It is believed that through the teaching of the Estonian language, it becomes possible to create a multi-identity for students of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds where mutual values are built on the foundation of students' cultural identity and Estonian national identity.

(3) Topics related to radicalisation and support of the community, including "Integration of communities, transnationalism; conflict and radicalisation" (Ainsaar, Maasing, Nahkur, Narusson, Roots, Salvet, Uibu, & Vihalemm 2020), "Prevention of polarisation and radicalisation. Collaboration between the local

government and the community" (Maasing 2018), "Radical violence and radicalisation in schools – 10 answers a teacher should know"(Maasing & Salvet 2020); "Analysis of ethnic conflict" (Nahkur et. al. 2020), "Proposals to schools for the prevention of ethnic conflicts and radicalisation" (Nahkur & Maasing 2019).

In relation to radicalisation, the need to increase information pertaining to the multicultural world in school programmes was raised. Additionally, the education system needs to consider ethnic and racial stereotypes and religious polarisation, especially as the root of conflicts. The studies emphasise that schools need to develop a conscious feeling of inclusion and shared values among students and underline tolerance, gender equality, equal rights and a unified national identity" (Nahkur & Maasing 2019).

In addition to special guidance, the standalone document "RITA-migration package 5, main research conclusions and proposals for schools" offers general recommendations on the basis of migration-research results which highlight the importance of prevention of radicalisation in schools (Narusson et al. 2020).

RECOGNITION OF MULTICULTURALITY AND RELIGION IN THE CONCEPT

The preliminary version of the Unified Estonian School made no mention of religion nor any religious perceptions. The terms of reference only touch upon multiculturality and ethnical as well as racial differences which are to be considered in relation to multicultural educational environments. The subject of religion is integrated into the final report and in many of the materials related to the concept.

Cultural diversity is encouraged but the integration must, first and foremost, happen through language and creating a multi-identity (Tammaru et al. 2020). Similar to the Co-Learning School vision, multiculturality is always viewed in relation to language study and in the Estonian-Russian integration context. The emphasis of the concept was on the development of different language teaching methods, environments and materials that would form a collection of materials and documents on the entire subject of multiculturality in education.

Alongside notions of culture and ethnicity, the final report also mentions religion. This is largely connected to research by Desmet, Ortuño-Ortín and Wacziarg, which analysed how cultural diversity, including its religious aspect, is connected to the potentiality of the emergence of large civil unrest and civil wars as well as the number of public services available in the society based on the World Values Survey (Desmet, Ortuño-Ortín ja Wacziarg 2017). The conclusions of the research by Desmet, Ortuño-Ortín and Wacziarg, highlight the potentiality of the occurrence of value-based conflicts such as those based on individual liberty, child-rearing or attitudes towards different cultural traditions. Such a chance of value-conflicts occurring is more likely in societies where ethnic groups that differ greatly in their religious beliefs or ethnic-religious groups live side-by-side with very secular groups (Tammaru et al. 2020).

Next to education that is multicultural and socially just, the Unified Estonian School Project considers the most effective student-centred and integration-supporting approach to be through culturally sensitive teaching methods (Järv & Kirss 2019).

Culturally sensitive teaching is characterised by relating the student's cultural background with the subject of study and its methods – the students are given an opportunity to reflect critically on their life and topics in society and the student's cultural competency and ability to discuss social-political matters is supported (Aronson & Laughter 2016:163).

Culturally sensitive teaching materials also mention religion. For example, in connection with developing a supportive environment, it is highlighted that "when a classroom contains posters that depict people, those people should represent different races, genders and religions" (Järv & Kirss 2019: 4). The term *beliefs* is also mentioned and it is said that "it is important for studies to delve deep into cultures that are related to the student's identity and beliefs" (Järv & Kirss 2019: 2). The text also makes mention of Islam in introducing specific tools for teaching, including the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT). It is mentioned that the tests help to evaluate one's own prejudices towards race, Islam and skin tones (Järv & Kirss 2019: 11).

Religion in the context of the materials and the baseline study of the Unified Estonian School Project was mainly discussed in relation to topics relating to radicalisation. In reference to the polarisation of society, examples are brought of Russians, immigrants and Muslims or the opposition of Christians and Muslims are mentioned. Albeit, these examples are brought in a positive light that society should avoid such polarisation so that the members of these groups would not feel as if they were under the microscope simply due to their national or religious belonging (Maasing 2018). Religion is mentioned in relation to different extremes (radical right-wing, radical left-wing and religion-inspired radicalism). The topic of religion is also raised in relation to propaganda pertaining to radical religiosity (Maasing 2018).

These materials focused on radicalisation define religion as both part of culture, noting that "One of the RITA Project's target groups is new immigrants in relation to whom we talk mainly about cultural identity that is based on ethnic, religious and racial identity" (Maasing 2018:4), and as separate from culture. Religion is what reflects students' diversity (Maasing 2018:9). The term *religion* appears in the context of a warning where a teacher must be vigilant if someone is becoming more religious (Maasing 2018:9). The final recommendation also raises the idea that if collaboration with local government is established and there is a search for a point of contact to encourage integration, then those points-of-contact should be competent in discussing questions around religion in schools (Maasing 2018:11). Religiosity is also discussed in relation to the possibility of conflict, highlighting the Bloom, Arikan and Courtemanche 2015 analysis' understanding that, like ethnic identity, religious identity increases opposition to those from another group (Bloom, Arikan, & Courtemanche 2015; Nahkur, Ainsaar, Maasing, & Roots 2020). Similarly, religious themes in relation to radicalisation can be found in the document "RITA-migration package 5, main research conclusions and proposals for schools" as well as in the final report which again associates religion with radicalisation and as a precursor to conflict and relates religion's strong ethnic values to a source of danger (Narusson et al. 2020:7).

Religion was additionally dubbed as a sensitive topic in the research analysis "Multi-perspective and culturally sensitive teaching of history in Estonian schools". The

study, conducted among history teachers, highlighted that what is meant by religion being a sensitive topic is mainly in relation to Islam as teachers were asked the following question: "Oftentimes, some history lessons can contain sensitive subjects because they can be interpreted in several ways and society's opinions about the matters can trigger an emotional response. Please rate the level of sensitivity that each of the below topics has for you" (Kaarlõp & Oja 2020:21). The 14 topics listed included the year 1944 in Estonian history, Putin's Russia, right-wing and left-wing radicalism as well as Islam followed by the topic of migration (Kaarlõp & Oja 2020:21). The list did not mention any other religion nor was there a mention of religion in general.

The materials of the Unified Estonian School Project contained an extensive self-analysis tool for schoolmasters and school leaders called "Our multilingual and multicultural school: evaluation guidelines for schoolmasters and school leaders". The questionnaire of the self-analysis had religion next to culture and ideology and contained the question of "Which religious, cultural or ideological factors play an important role for students and the school community?" (Kirss & Järv 2020:6). Therefore, religion is foremost related to the background of teachers and students. Following questions that pertain to school organisation, multicultural education and educational goals do not mention religion.

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE IMPROVED INTEGRATION OF CULTURES ACCORDING TO THESE STUDIES?

The entire RITA Migration Project developed thematic summaries which described pluriculturalism and multi-identity. This included studies and thematic analyses such as "Multiculturality: a theoretical framework" and "Pluriculturalism and inclusion opportunities and challenges in Estonia." These documents are based on the principle that different cultures and identities are inevitable and necessary in the contemporary globalising world, but the concept of multi-identity needs to be introduced in order to have integration (Raud 2019).

The main suggestion in these materials for schools is that students of other languages should, alongside acquiring Estonian-language education, also acquire Estonian cultural competency and national identity in order to be accepted among Estonians. However, acquiring the new Estonian identity would not exclude one's own identity, but quite the opposite—school life would support and value the different cultural identities of students. Therefore, it is not necessary to abandon or reject one's own culture, but the expectation is simply for the change towards multi-identity. The foundation of this understanding is based on the results of the study by Desmeti, Ortuño-Ortíni and Wacziargi (2017) according to which diversity enriches the community only if the diversity is balanced and supported with shared values (for example, in the context of the Unified Estonian School, this would mean the development of inclusion through national identity (Ehala 2019).

According to the idea of multi-identity, the acquisition of new competencies, especially Estonian cultural identity competency, is paramount. This new cultural acquisition means that a new layer of competency is added to previous cultural competency.

It is highlighted that such a multi-identity approach differs from widespread multicultural understandings. Multiculturality, in the context of integration, means the regulation of power dynamics between the majority and minority groups, mostly the implementation of group-specific compensation methods for members of the minority in order to equalise alleged social barriers in society which restrict them from being successful such as they are (Ehala 2019; Vetik 2018).

The development of multi-identity and the feeling of inclusion is not based on the desire to regulate or organise different ethnic groups, but rather to expand people's cultural competency further so that immigrants would feel like part of the locals. Likewise, one should not ignore nor deny people's national identity which is part of their distinctive cultural competency and a value unto itself. Importantly, it is noted that nobody should be discriminated against nor treated differently due to their distinctive cultural competency (Ehala 2019).

COMPARISON AND INFERENCES—MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN ESTONIA AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

Comparing these three education concepts—the Co-Learning School, Human Rights Education Project and the Unified Estonian School—all three concepts are a reaction to the migration crisis and the question of how to manage new immigrant integration into the school environment, considering therein the situation and opportunities of the Estonian school. The Co-Learning School and Human Rights School concepts remained in the initial research phase in which work began on developing their vision and reached only the development of their description and mapping which marked the necessity of the schools and the current climate. Therefore, it was only possible to analyse two documents. The Unified Estonian School Project is thus different—the concept reached programme development with the creation of thematic packages, different school models, study materials and self-analysis opportunities. This, in turn, makes it rank higher in its proverbial weight group as its analyses provided, in comparison to other concepts, several additional documents. Therefore, it is understandable that both cultural diversity and religion and Islam topics are more prevalent in these studies and materials in comparison to the Co-Learning School and Human Rights Education studies.

Additionally, it is apparent that the three different concepts are not only reacting to the migration crisis, but they are in the very epicentre of the crisis, meaning that they describe changes taking place in the society, hot topics and fears as they are happening. It is also to be mentioned that the two former concepts lay a foundation for the third concept by describing the situation in Estonian schools, how teachers, school leaders, the community and students perceive the need for change in schools in order to integrate both Russian-speaking students as well as new immigrants who come from a different ethnic, cultural and religious background.

All the school visions were based on different models of multiculturality and differently defined how to understand culture in the school setting and to what end it should be applied in school life as well as study materials and the school model. In the

case of the Co-Learning School, multiculturality was understood on the basis of Banks' theory where the objective is to show the student majority different perspectives and include the background of the minority in the study materials and to focus on the creation of positive relationships in the classroom. In the case of the Human Rights School, the foundation for multiculturality was rather social co-existence based on respect for one another.

The Unified Estonian School operated based on the theory of cultural sensitivity where the focal point is not a tolerant classroom nor mutually acknowledging co-existence. The culturally sensitive Unified Estonian School focused on the student-oriented culture concept and the student's ethnic and cultural differences are valued in the classroom. Through this individual approach, the students' pluriculturalism and multi-identity are developed. The culturally sensitive approach to students and the classroom relates to the Estonian Education Development Plan 2035 which relies on a student-oriented learning approach (Ministry of Education, 2021).

The original model of multicultural education originated in America, where, as a result of close cooperation between representatives of different ethnic groups, a unique cultural unity and group identity developed (Sile 2013). The modern model of multicultural education requires the individual acceptance of different cultures and the preservation and consideration of their specificities. In addition to their coexistence and intertwining, originality must be preserved. Valuing differences could be an experience that enriches intercultural cooperation. Interaction between cultures should be seen as conducive to the preservation and development of one's identity, the development of multicultural skills and the prevention and successful resolution of conflicts caused by national and other differences (Sile 2013). Banks sees a teacher's multicultural competence as a balance between cultural, national and global self-determination (Bank 1998). M. Ramirez, on the other hand, believes that multicultural competence is manifested in the teacher's striving for maximum personality development; ability to adapt to different situations and for social justice for all citizens (Ramirez 2011). D. Pop-Davis, H. Coleman, V. Ming Lu, R. Toporek define multicultural competence as a collection of teacher characteristics that are expressed in the pursuit of acquiring cultural knowledge and collaborating with people from different cultures; in awareness and understanding of attitudes and stereotypes; in an effort to broaden the worldview; in social activity aimed at overcoming all forms of social injustice (Sile 2013: 7).

Coming back to the article's main question of what is the role of religion in these different concepts and why is multicultural education powerless in responding to Islamophobia in the Estonian society, the following answers emerge from the concepts: the concepts, which understand the needs and changes of education, deal with religion in relation to culture, which forms a background system rather than a matter in itself. Religions are not discussed separately, but only in connection with radicalisation, with religion being understood mainly as Islam. For the development of one's identity, the development of multicultural skills is also the claimed goal of all these school concepts. Consideration of ethnic identity and originality is also important, but it conflicts with the reflection of religion and speaking of Islam in all these concepts. It

is argued that religious identity is to be taken into account, but is essentially avoided or associated with radicalisation.

How religion is understood and why such an understanding contributes to the entrenchment of Islamophobia rather than its opposition can be outlined through five fundamental views:

1. *Religion manifests mainly in relation to culture in these school concepts.* Although religion or religiosity is sometimes mentioned independently next to culture, in discussing different multicultural fundamental theories or describing cultural sensitivity, religion is mainly viewed as a part of cultural or ethnic backgrounds. This approach makes the importance and significance of religion a peripheral issue.

2. *Religion is foremost associated with radicalization.* The Unified Estonian School Project considered ethnic conflict and radicalisation. This is understandable considering the constant threat of terrorism, the ongoing Syrian war and ISIS as well as the active operation of other terrorist groups which are associated with radical Islam. However, due to the aforementioned, one would have expected the descriptions to include mentions of Islam, not the opposition of Muslims and Christians.

3. *Religion and Islam were dubbed as sensitive topics.* All three—the materials of the Unified Estonian School Project as well as the Co-Learning School and Human Rights Education Project—raise the idea that addressing the topic of Islam is feared by teachers because it is highly sensitive. However, the concepts do not take this sensitivity seriously and do not engage in targeting this problem.

4. *The topic of religion is foremost associated with the students' background.* The Co-Learning School's programme had Islam courses and collaboration with Islamic organisations that would educate school leaders and teachers in understanding and dealing with Muslim students. The self-analysis materials for school leaders of the Unified Estonian School focused on studying the students' backgrounds in relation to religion. This knowledge of the student's background was again left in the cultural background system. It was not considered as a separate matter.

5. *The topic of religion is avoided to avoid making religious exceptions in a secular society.* Fear, and consequently an understanding that exceptions are not wished to be made, was apparent in all the school concepts. There was readiness to value and develop (in a culturally sensitive manner) a different (other) value system and worldview. The objective was still to create a multi-identity that consists of a unified value-system based on which interaction in schools happens. That means that the school does not integrate prayer traditions, new holidays, or customs among common values.

Considering the religious juxtaposition of fear and radicalisation, the question aris-

es—are the Estonian Lutheran legacy or the European Christian culture, which affect the creation of unified values, taken into account when creating national identity? None of the concepts raised the question of which attitudes, competencies and skills schools hope to provide students in their discussion with students of other religions and how the value of this different religion is accepted and understood.

Looking at the Runnymede Trust Report, it can be seen that the following insights appear in all school projects: 1. Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static, and unresponsive to change; 2. Islam is seen as separate and "other." 4. Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, and supportive of terrorism (The Runnymede Trust Report 1997:1; Tiliouine & Estes 2016:626).

All school concepts want to take into account and address the challenges and needs arising from migration and the migration crisis, but until religion and Islam become an object to be seen and taken into account, not just to fear and push to the cultural background, various prejudices, stereotypes and other phobias around the Islamic question will continue to persist.

CONCLUSION AND SOLUTIONS

The practices of good examples were important for both the Human Rights Education Project as well as the Unified Estonian School Project. The practices integrated the subject of religion very clearly with the subject of culture. The Unified Estonian School materials included a study "The politics of multiculturality in Norwegian and Swedish schools." The study mentioned that in order for cultures to be able to communicate with one another, it is important to draw attention to the different aspects of the cultures that go beyond the cultures' general understanding. For the creation of favourable conditions to understand one another, it is necessary for multicultural education to consider and take seriously ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender- and social-class based differences as well as differences of thought and lifestyle (Lahdenperä 2018). In the case of Norway and Sweden, it is highlighted that schools dealing with new immigrants are in constant need of consultation and training in regards to the needs of students with multicultural backgrounds, taking into consideration their social, cultural and religious needs (Pukspuu 2019).

In reference to other great practices of European countries, it is apparent that religious literacy is paramount in the co-existence as well as integration of multicultural people or those with different worldviews (Schalejeva 2020). This is equally true for cultural sensitivity where it is important to not just know different facts about cultures such as cuisine, national holidays and customs, but rather to understand the meaning and history behind these facts. In multicultural school environments, it is important to value religion and support students' readiness to analyse both religious and cultural worldviews. Religious differences can work parallel to cultural differences in affecting people's function as an individual as well as within a society. Religion, including Islam, is not just the background of a student, but rather a pivotal part of their world-interpreting schema and multi-layered perspectives for understanding the world.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Democratic movements in Lebanon and children's understanding of their rights

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ABSTRACT: Children's rights should be applicable for children, and be acknowledged by children themselves and practice them in the present and future lives. The increasing awareness and concern about children's rights need a thorough investigation of how children themselves understand their rights. The aim of this study is to analyze the perspective of children in Lebanon of their rights and examine the impact of democratic movements on their understanding of their rights. A qualitative research methodology was employed and data were gathered in the form of semi-structured VoIP interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The analysis presented in this paper signifies that the democratic movements are being both a source and an approach of recognizing and practicing children's rights, especially the right to participate, freedom of expression, and equality, along with the right to education, social security, and protection from all forms of abuse. Hence, it could be concluded that democratic movements are important in constructing and reconstructing children's understanding of their rights.
KEYWORDS: Childhood, Qualitative Research, Children's Perspective, Sociopolitical Factors

1. BACKGROUND

Children's rights serve for the development of children with respect to their physical, mental, emotional, social, moral, and economic care and protection (Akyuz 2000). Children must be seen as social actors and rights holders rather than perceiving them as inactive and reliant on the adults (Qvortrup 1994; Mayall 2002). "There is a distinction between 'having' rights and being allowed to exercise them" (Freeman

2009:387), children's rights should be applicable for children, and be acknowledged by children themselves being applicable and practice them in the present and future lives (Liebel 2012:1). The universal recognition of children's rights and the increasing awareness and concern about the concept needs a comprehensive investigation of how children themselves understand their rights (Ben-Arieh, Khoury-Kassabri, & Haj-Yahia 2006; Helwig & Turiel 2002). Children can understand their rights and responsibilities in significant ways to their daily behavior (Covell, Howe, & McNeil 2008).

The study aims to adhere to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, which proposes a groundwork for integrating the different aspects correlated with children's views of their rights. The ecological perspective suggests that children's attitudes to their rights are a "dyad" between the child's individual characteristics and the circumstantial and environmental factors. Previous studies have found maturity as an eminent aspect of children's understanding of rights (Melton 1980; Ruck, Abramovitch, & Keating 1989). Furthermore, perspectives on the suitability of maintaining children's rights and the significance of specific types of rights were found to be conditional on the social and economic situation (Melton 1980). Children's significant participation in civil society and their well-being persist an understanding of their rights being individuals in a family and society (Limber et al. 1999; Melton & Limber 1992). Still, little is known about the democratic movements that affect children's understanding of their rights. This insufficient knowledge is of interest as most studies to date have fixated on children from Western communities and colonial countries. Therefore, studies in non-Western societies and among postcolonial countries are crucial if we are to fully understand the special role of democratic movements.

Other earlier studies found social movements important in constructing and reconstructing the understandings of Human Rights (HR) (Stammers 2013). However, the impact of the democratic movements hasn't been examined to date. Democratic movements are defined as extensive, social public demonstrations that are particularly pro-democracy. Participants' requests necessarily include democracy, direct election, or change of authoritarian constitution, where participants articulate their views by physical demonstrations, protests, or strikes (Minier 2001:996). Saleh (2013:80) investigated the children's participation in the Syrian revolution against Bashar al-Assad. She declared that "The involvement of children in democratic social movements and regime transitions has not been addressed in the literature, although some works describe the role children can play in making public policy or in the humanitarian domain." She claims that "just as the role of women and of university-aged youth was gradually incorporated in the body of research on the social movements and regime transitions, so should the role of children be studied." (As cited in Sinha, Garofalo, & Olimat 2013:2). Henceforward, the main aim of this study is to use new data on democratic movements in Lebanon and to assess and analyze how children in Beirut city (7 children aged between 12 to 17 years) understand their rights and place in democratic movements. The ideas, attitudes, and knowledge they possess. Where and how did they develop these concepts. Based on the gaps in the literature, the research question is: *What Impact do the democratic movements in Lebanon have on children's understanding of their rights?* To acquire a more profound answer, the specific rights that children

mobilize and prioritize in their discourse; the main violations and challenges children experience in their social life, according to their view; the main influences that shape children's understanding of children's rights; and sources of information about children's rights they have access to, were tackled.

In consonance with previous studies involving children's perspectives of their rights, the researcher hypothesized that the democratic movement that took place in Lebanon contributes to the children's understanding of human rights in general and children's rights in particular since the democratic movements are being both a source and an approach of recognizing and practicing human rights, especially the right to freedom of expression, participation, and equality. Therefore, the researcher expected that most of the children might understand these aspects of children's rights.

1.1. CHILDREN'S DISCOURSE OF THEIR RIGHTS

1.1.1. POSTCOLONIAL CHILDHOODS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children's rights are to be considered human rights (Freeman 2009; Invernizzi & Williams 2011). The verifiable truth that the universality of human rights is not assured but only a procedure of their universalization has results for how every perception of human rights should understand itself and should act towards itself: it should endure a constant self-criticism (Liebel 2020:127). Undoubtedly, human rights in their fundamental manner date back to the European Enlightenment in the 17th century. The issue here is not of the idea and its European inception, but of the affirmation that the history of human rights represents a linear and unrestrained progress of the Enlightenment, and is an exclusive accomplishment of Europe, where the people outside of Europe would only have to follow it, which means, its claimed as a task (ibid:130). The allegation of universality was firstly ignored by the colonies, whose ambition is to attach the concept of human rights to themselves. Strictly speaking, human rights were betrayed by the brutal forces of European powers. To the present moment, the imperial allegation and the analogous instrumental use of human rights in the 'development message' demonstrate that the Western 'democratic' powers had to teach human rights to the 'underdeveloped' societies (ibid).

Edward Said (1978), in his influential book 'Orientalism', addresses the claimed universalisms, not only that it camouflaged power structures and their bias but also firmly advocated and maintained the existent depraved polarizations. Said recognized them as an indication of the 'doctrines of European superiority' (Said 1978:14), which are entrenched in a 'formidable structure of cultural domination' (ibid:26). It is bizarre that time after time, double standards are applied to human rights, and the Global North conventionalize itself as the trustee of human rights, in the time that the Global South is exposed to the accumulation of demands in human rights (Liebel 2020:129). In accordance with Mutua (2002), the reference of governments of the global North and the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), towards the Global South is placed in an inappropriate continuous link with the former colonial officials and commissioners. Mutua suggests, as a substitute, an inclusive and participatory method on a global level and conceives a 'multicultural' conception of human rights

that perceives and adapts to none-western cultures' attitudes towards human rights (Mutua 2002).

The majority of the world's children live in economically destitute areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Punch 2003:1). When examining the minority (First) and majority (Third) worlds, quantitatively, the most prevailing form of 'childhood' is, accordingly, the one of ‚Third World' children, where many of them work. On the other hand, in a contradictory manner, Third World childhoods are likely to be deemed as abnormal when investigated within the universalism model of childhood that depends on the western standards where children only play and go to school but not work (Boyden 1990). Within media and popular discourses, children of the majority world who start working from an early age: "burdened with adult-like duties and responsibilities" (Kefyalew 1996:209), are apt to be conceived as 'miniature adults' (Boyden, Ling, & Myers 1998; Ennew 1994; Green 1998). In such a manner, the popular perception of childhoods that do not adhere to such standards is that they have ‚abnormal' childhoods (Edwards 1996; Save the Children 1995:40). By the same token, research on the majority world children aims the attention, vehemently, on their work while disregarding their play (Punch 2003:3). As a substitute for considering the childhoods of the Third World children as 'abnormal', one must bear in mind the fact that First World children are more likely to live protected and privileged childhoods juxtaposed to the rest of the world's children. Oversimplified differentiations between childhoods of the minority world and the majority world are precarious for the reason that children's lives differ based on a scope of aspects including gender, age, culture, class, ethnicity, religion, birth order, and disability (Punch 2003:1). Hecht (1998) mentions the distinction between the protected, nourished childhoods of the rich (minority world) and the self-reliant, nourishing childhoods of the poor (majority world).

In the last decade, research approaches have arisen, which can be beneficial for a discerned assessment of children's rights – as well as in the postcolonial frames of reference (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys 2013; Liebel 2012; Reynaert et al. 2015). In their perception, "children's rights are not only about rules but also about structures, relationships, and processes" (Reynaert et al. 2015:p.5). Notwithstanding the foregoing, these new approaches do not distrust the fact that children's rights and the UNCRC are the most substantial legal fundamental for all the children in the world (Liebel 2020:2).

Only a few studies have examined children's understanding of their rights connected to their own participation in research. Research demonstrates that children understand what they are being requested to do in the investigations, but only a few of them understand the purpose of the studies. Younger children are hardly sure that their feedback is confidential and less certain of how to withdraw from the study if they desire to (Hurley & Underwood 2002:134).

1.1.2. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Participation in social and community events is significant for the children, for the community, and for democratic realities (Melton 2006). Empowering children to com-

municate their viewpoints and feelings about incidents happening in their surroundings and to engage firmly in their lives indicates respect for children as human beings here and now (Weithorn 1998). The aforementioned respect bolsters the children to prosper a positive perception of self and self-respect, like Weithorn so delightfully asserted, "to enable children to stand" up for themselves, for others, and to those who will try to influence them, we must help them develop their dignity and self-worth". Child and youth participation, via cultural, communicative, and political procedures, develops into a debated resource for several individuals, institutions, and networks (Khalil 2017:703).

1.2. THE LEBANESE CASE

1.2.1. POLITICAL HISTORY OF LEBANON

Lebanon's unique political and social dynamics coupled with its history of civil war and sectarianism are factors that continue to shape the environment. Though Lebanon has reconstructed its government, social services, and infrastructure relatively successfully, its history appears to have a continued impact and to inform the current political context, the weak state, socioeconomic disparities, the treatment of refugee communities and social violence. These factors deeply impact the situation and wellbeing of the child, not only in terms of protection and service provision, but also in terms of discrimination, violence, and safety. Understanding the history and current political trends in Lebanon is pivotal to developing and implementing effective child-centered projects. (Save The Children 2008:16)

The Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) was characterized by societal separations along sectarian lines with powerful armed groups that dominated different districts of the country (Nagle 2016:51). One of the ongoing inheritances of the civil war is a displaced populace who have not been able to return to their homes, for different reasons such as the destruction of the houses; possession of properties by other people; restricted employment opportunities; a deficiency of infrastructure; and a deficiency of conciliation between the displaced and present populace (NRC/IDMC 2006:8). Another continuing inheritance of the civil war was Syria and Israel's presence in Lebanon, and political sectarianism and armed groups. Israel's long occupation of the south has acutely impacted the political, social, and economic growth of the country as a whole. From 1990 to 2005, the Syrian army and political forces were entangled in the political realm of Lebanon. During this period, Syrian intelligence played a critical role in political growth and security. All through the civil war and afterward, armed factions, associated with political or religious groups of all sects, have dominated regions of Lebanon and have had a strong impact on the political realm (Save The Children 2008:19-20).

After the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and the popular revolt that occurred on 14 March 2005, the Syrian forces withdrew from Lebanon. The public required improved governance, greater transparency, and reduced clientelism and

sectarianism. Following the withdrawal of Syrian forces in 2005, congressional elections took place, with the attendance of EU observers, and a broad range of economic and political reforms was conferred with the international community (ibid:20).

Lebanon has been reconstructing itself since the violent conflicts that occurred at the end of the 20th century. The well-being of children has predominantly been sabotaged by recent geopolitical circumstances. While moderately improving, Lebanon still has much to improve, for the full protection of children's rights (Humanium n.d.).

Lebanese youth are broadly involved in politics and humanitarian activities. Yet, the political crisis and the heritage of the civil war made youth extremely mistrustful of politics and social systems. As echoed in their identity endeavor, youth are also seeking solutions, more engagement, and motivation to avoid withdrawal (Save the Children 2008:10). When children in Lebanon were asked about their awareness of the children's rights, Lebanese children were most adept to recognize their rights, while refugee and migrant children were hardly aware of their rights (ibid:143).

1.2.2. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS

Lebanon has witnessed repeating influxes of mainly youth-led throng protests since 2005 when the alleged Beirut spring compelled the withdrawal of the Syrian military that had occupied the state for almost 30 years. In the past, the state's leaders have usually homogenized the movements to dragging the youth into their particular political encampments (International Crisis Group 2019). The Lebanese have had many reasons to demonstrate in recent years, with a desolate economy that causes many young people to depart the country for satisfying jobs; with landfills and beaches overflowing with rubbish; with the government constantly paralyzed over amendments. But since October 2019 it has gone beyond the usual humiliations: a stumble currency; a crisis over wheat and gas; and, earlier in 2019, forest fires for which the government was not prepared, necessitating a call for firefighting assistance (The New York Times 2019).

In October 2019, Lebanese citizens actively protested, across sectarian, class, and regional lines. Demand for the Lebanese government (formed in January 2019) to resign is what unites the protests. For the 10 months prior to these protests, the government has failed to protect Lebanon from an aggravating financial crisis mainly induced by government mismanagement and corruption. From the beginning, protesters started characterizing their actions as revolutionary. Although it could not be predicted whether the protests would lead to a political revolution, it was clear that we have witnessed a social one (Aljazeera 2018). Bishara (2019:3) stresses further that Lebanon's protests were historic and were the first real challenge to the sectarian system. Bishara proposes a title which is „citizenship" for what is currently happening in Lebanon, i.e. rejecting sectarian affiliations as the organizer of the relationship between the individual and the state, emphasizing the idea of citizenship and the nation-state and rejecting the idea of political sectarianism and quotas resulting from it, and in this, the revolutionary movement that is taking place in Lebanon reshapes the national identity and highlights it in Confronting political sectarianism (ibid:2).

Bishara adds saying what occurred in Lebanon in October 2019 is, to a large extent, a political and cultural revolution (ibid). Lebanon witnessed the rise of a central balancing stream that is clearly hostile to the sectarian system and adheres to the „state of citizenship" and the civil state. This happened in Lebanon for the first time since 1863, and this is a great historical event. There were always anti-sectarian movements but they were ideological movements, leftist or nationalist parties that reject sectarianism from their ideological-political perspectives, and not a general civil trend that represents a central trend in society that violates the sects and crosses over them, rejecting sectarianism out of citizenship (ibid:3).

Lebanese children's identities are defined by social and political engagement. They have the education, power, and capacities to play an active beneficial role in Lebanon. Nevertheless, this is restricted by feelings of instability; regardless of the pressure of the political crisis. The majority of youth have conviction and trust in their capability to affect the system ultimately and persist to search for opportunities and measures for improvement (Antoun 2007:33-35). Bishara (2019:3) emphasizes that the great civilized step in the revolutionary wave in Lebanon is that it is also a generational revolution and that the starting point of the young generation that filled the streets is moral, not ideological. The liberal civil spirit is very clear in the Lebanese movement.

2. METHODS AND ETHICS

A qualitative methodology approach was conducted to answer the research question/s, as it allows the researcher to thoroughly investigate the respective topic and themes. The qualitative research approach is suitable for social relations researches for two reasons: It can be used to answer questions about the experiences and perspectives, mostly from the participants' points of view; It leads to developing theories from the empirical studies through a bottom-up approach (Flick 2014:11-12) as it accentuates processes, meaning patterns, and structural features (Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke 2004:3).

The destined participants of this study were 6-8 children aged 12-17 years from Beirut. The participants were recruited by asking acquaintances, hence, a snowball approach was applied, which engages in getting the researcher's acquaintances to recommend relevant people to participate in a study (Saunders and Thornhill 2012). Despite the fact that such an approach could be biased, if there are obstacles in determining the target population for the study, the sample may be procured in this way (Henderson & Bialeschki, 2002). Participation in the research was rigidly and deliberately of one's own free will. On one hand, the main considerations and worries were to ensure that sampling was the embodiment, which is a very critical point here due to the time-consuming nature of such a study. On the other hand, all sampling methods are purposeful and aim to recruit samples, which can supply plentiful and deep data about topics that are fundamental to the purpose of the research (Patton 1990). In the beginning, eight children were recruited, but, unfortunately, one of them apologized and had to cancel at the last minute, for personal reasons, their participation in the research. All of them gave their own assent, as well as their parents.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a question guide to keep the researcher on track through the interview process and gather all the necessary information. The question guide was developed explicitly and independently for this study based on the literature view. It maintains some structure but also allows additional questions or a conversation to evolve, encouraging the participant to share more and more details. The method of a semi-structured interview provides both flexibility and structure, which is important for young researchers (Flick 2014:217-218).

Within this study, the interviews were conducted via video conferencing technologies (Skype). The application of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) for interviews is a comparatively new phenomenon in qualitative research. While other technologies have been applied to manage 'remote' or 'distributed' sessions (Stevens 2008; Yankelovitch et al. 2004). The adoption of VoIP video interviews in this study was propelled by the difficulty of the researcher in traveling to Lebanon, contacting individuals, and organizing face-to-face interviews with the potential participants.

After collecting the information from the children, interviews were transcribed accurately (Flick 2002:176-220) in Arabic, the original language of the interviews—as it is both the mother tongue of the participants as well as the researcher—aiming to keep the exact genuine meaning of the participants' inputs. Selected quotes were translated to English by the researcher. The data was analyzed on the basis of a thematic analysis of these transcribed interviews, which is a form of constant comparison used to analyze documents in a textual form. It involves making inferences by systematically identifying characteristics of messages and is related to a process of ascertaining meanings about a written phenomenon being studied (Henderson & Bialeschki 2002).

 Within this study, the researcher guaranteed that potential participants give their informed consent for participating, discerning the voluntary essence of their participation and that they could freely end their engagement whenever needed, for any excuse; understand the advantages and disadvantages of their participation; comprehend the conditions and standards under which they will participate, such as confidentiality (Abramovitch et al. 1995; Abramovitch et al. 1991; Leikin 1993; Weithorn 1983). Aside from ethical accountabilities, the validity of most of the data relies on the understanding of children of the research agenda and their rights as research participants (Hughes & Helling 1991).

3. FINDINGS

In this chapter, first and foremost, the compelling findings of the interviews are presented in a manner that stays sincere to the children's perspectives of their rights and lives.

As stated in the previous chapter, thematic analysis was used as the data analysis method. Therefore, the results are presented based on themes and categories, derived from the coding process.

3.1. MAIN RIGHTS THE CHILDREN MOBILIZE AND PRIORITIZE IN THEIR DISCOURSE

In what follows, presented are the children's rights that participants themselves referred to in the interviews.

Child Participation

One of the most valuable and crucial rights according to the children is the right to participate. All of the children talked about the importance of freedom of expression and having the right to express their views freely in all matters impacting their life. This could be exemplified by the words of participant D (16 years old):

> So I believe as a child, adolescence, or a teen I should have the freedom to make my own decisions, this is my life. I believe this is one right I don't know if it is proven or if it is said by people.

According to participant F (15 years old), when children are able to choose the things they like to do, they feel happiness, satisfaction, responsibility, comfort, and relaxation. Summarizing their idea at the end of the interview aiming the attention on children's agency and participation in the family, saying:

> The child, whether a boy or a girl, should have the possibility to choose what he wants, to do and try the things he desires and is interested in, parents shouldn't prevent their children, of course, they should give guidance and advice, but not forbid their children from doing so.

Another aspect of the children's participation significance was highlighted in the interviews when the researcher asked about the children's motivation for participating in this study:

> I was interested in participating in this research because our thoughts and rights are our messages, and we want it to be delivered to the community, parents, government, even other countries around the world, simply to everyone. (Participant A, 12 years old).

Education

All of the participants talked about children's right to education. They brought it up within the first few rights. They named and explained their views about education, discussing its significance and positive value for their present and future:

> The child has the right to education, children should go to school, learn and expand their knowledge and skills, and for that to happen, I believe the state has to provide complimentary education, so all the children in Lebanon can go to school. (Participant A)

This point was backed by participant D, mentioning the link between education and civilization, saying:

Children should have a proper education because that would lead to a good civilization in the future, so it has several advantages.

Equality

One of the most significant rights the participants focused on during the interviews is equality, to live without facing discrimination of any kind, regardless of one's religion, gender, national, ethnic ancestry, political opinion, socio-economic status, or any other factor.

First of all, equality, irrespective of sex, color, or age. It is the most important right in human rights. For example, racism based on color or the distinction of nationality, and other rights. By the country or at home, for example, the child should not be subjected to discrimination between the siblings by the parents. (Participant C, 14 years old)

Regarding gender equality, participant F stressed:

Parents should trust and grant freedom for all children, despite their gender. Some parents restrict the girls' choices and movement while allowing the boys to do whatever they want and go wherever they want.

Furthermore, they have stressed that all children have the right to be registered in the country or, for refugees, to receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance:

I think that if, for instance, I am here in Lebanon as a migrant or displaced person, I do not want to be treated with violence or not to be allowed to attend school, because I am a human being as well just like any other person. Even if I have a different nationality, I would still care for my future when I return to my homeland. (Participant G, 13 years old)

Approved by participant A:

All children have the right to receive medical care if they are sick, and someone to take care of them and take them to the hospital, it doesn't matter if they are Lebanese or refugees. Once, we had a research assignment in school and found that only the Lebanese citizens and children can go to the hospital and get treated.

In addition, the findings reveal that adults, in particular parents, tend to have higher expectations from older children than younger ones, so they treat them differently, strictly holding them accountable on almost everything, just for being older than their siblings. It could be that parents focus on the „maturing" progress of the children, the older the child is, the more mature they would be, and the more responsibility they would take in their personal and social life, emphasized by participant A:

They mostly blame me or put the responsibility on me just because I am older, so I should understand and act accordingly, but I don't like this actually. I mean, even though he is younger it is still his fault, so he should be responsible. It is

my right not to be blamed for things I didn't do, we should be treated equally, it doesn't matter who is younger and who is older.

Protection from all forms of abuse

Children have a right to be protected from any physical or mental abuse, injury, neglect, maltreatment, or violence. Children deserve a loving caring environment and good relationships between them and their parents and family:

Unfortunately, there is a high percentage of violence in Lebanon, 63% of the children aged between 1-14 years, face at home at least one type of violence." (Participant B, 16 years old)

Furthermore, it is not safe enough for participant A' to go by himself to his social activity as it is quite far. As he mentioned, there have been some kidnapping incidents, and their parents don't let him go by himself out of fear. Further emphasized by participant G:

I think the situation in Lebanon is critical for another reason, the absence of safety, and for me, this is the minimal of the basics of children's rights, for them to feel secure and safe in their surrounding community and their country.

There was another point mentioned only by one participant, participant E (12 years old), explaining that some legislations or restrictions are for the child's safety. Stressing that maturity experience in life is accumulated by age, and that's why there are particular rights that are provided only after a certain age, such as driving license, living alone, etc.

Social Security

The right to social security, to access and claim benefits in order to obtain protection at the economic level, particularly for families with children, as the state shall enforce and realize the socio-economic rights of children:

I believe that the state should maintain social security for the families, and this is not met in Lebanon, a lot of families cannot guarantee adequate living conditions for their children. And I believe this situation leads to some violations of children's rights and human rights in general. (Participant C)

Social security would protect citizens from the loss of income caused by unemployment:

The government shall provide financial protection for the unemployed people, and help them find jobs after finishing their education. (Participant F)

3.2. CAUSES FOR CHILD RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

School System

The children expressed their dissatisfaction with the school system and curriculum. For instance, participant C said:

> The curriculum, in my opinion, is a critical issue within the Lebanese state school system, it is very old, and not developed or adjusted to meet our generation or the age we live in.

Furthermore, participant D mentioned another aspect regarding the curriculum:

> I believe that in Lebanon the curriculum in the traditional schools, I mean the state schools, will not build focused determined and confident children for the world. That is what I believe in because all the schools care about is getting high grades and a good rank in the official exams.

Concurrently, participant A is not satisfied with the break time in the school day and addressed the need for extra time for rest and play. At the same time, he further talked about a different element of the school system hindering the implementation of children's rights, which is the school staff attitude towards the students, saying:

> Not all of them, but some teachers keep shouting on the children all the time, even if they are not causing any trouble or disturbance in the class.

Bullying

Bullying is extremely critical phenomenon children endure and suffer from, which violates the children's rights and its principles:

> Children frequently encounter bullying in school and the bullied child might just get depressed and left out. Indeed, sometimes the situation gets so bad, it gets to the point where the child has suicidal thoughts and intentions, especially if he or she doesn't get the support needed for dealing with and surviving the bullying. (Participant E)

A disturbing and alarming fact is that adults, as well, tend to bully children while they are supposed to empower and support them and their developmental progress, educationally, socially, and mentally:

> Every now and then, the bullying comes from the teachers themselves, not only the classmates, and this is very harmful and immoral, in my eyes. (Participant G)

3.3. THE PRESENCE OF DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Child and Youth Awareness

All of the participants have referred to the democratic movements happening in Leba-

non as a "revolution". The Lebanese children are aware of the real critical situation in Lebanon, regarding government corruption, human rights violations, and much more:

> The government is not taking responsibility and not even interested in applying or planning community projects raising awareness on human rights, children's rights, gender equality, etc. because the politicians themselves don't believe in these things and don't want citizens that are aware, knowledgeable, intellectual, and open-minded, so they can benefit individually more. (Participant F)

While the government treats their people in this manner, both children and adults, through these democratic movements, show their awareness of the critical situation it has lead Lebanon to:

> We are protesting for our rights. They thought that we as children are going to be quiet and go to school as always, however, we did not. On the second day when the bell rang, we sang the national anthem and then we all sat down on the floor and we didn't agree to continue our classes unless the school let us go to those protests. And this is, I'm telling you, this is a small protest that happened in our school, so if we continue in our protests in the whole country, we can get them, we will get our rights. (Participant D)

Future-makers

All of the children expressed their demand and need for adults to take them seriously and uphold their political potential as future-makers, in a situation where there is a critical need for social change:

> If we go down the streets now, we can see that the majority of the protesters are between the ages of 15 and 30 years old, and without this aware generation, we wouldn't be holding this revolution. We as students are not attending school for being in protests, we might tolerate 'losing' this educational year, but we won't tolerate losing our future. (Participant B)

This point of "future-makers" could be further emphasized by participant C:

> For us as children, in these protests, we are establishing our futures and strengthening the spirit of our homeland within ourselves. We are all together, without sectarianism. The revolution must start from the students not adults, and schools should abate and moderate its schedule so we, students, can attend both the protests and school because we do care for our educational future.

The words of participant C, mentioning the spirit of their homeland, bring us to the next category.

Patriotism

The participants have mentioned their refusal to leave the country when they get older, as most young Lebanese people do, due to high academic expenses, and unemployment regardless of their academic accomplishments. They want the best for their

community and country. They want the Lebanese government to do better for its citizens and for Lebanon to have a better reputation, rights wise, worldwide:

> At first, I told my mother that I want to participate in the protests, she agreed and supported me, so we went down the streets. I gained a lot from this experience because when I get older, I would like to remember that I took part in this revolution for improving the situation in Lebanon. (Participant G)

Adults attitude towards children

From the data presented, we can see that children are assuredly demanding their right to co-create their present and future or even be the main creator. Furthermore, their participation in the democratic movements has also raised the awareness of adults on children's agency and competencies:

> In this revolution, adults have discovered that we, the younger generation, can comprehend what happens in life. Despite our age, we are conscious and aware, not as everyone was thinking before, so we can participate in society. (Participant E)

> The greatest change that happened during the revolution is nonsectarianism, we, all of the Lebanese people from the different communities, religions, went together down the streets hand in hand for the same purpose, sharing the same demand, which is claiming our rights. (Participant B)

3.4. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS & HUMAN RIGHTS SOURCES

This section of the results presents the main resources and influences on shaping the children's conceptions of human rights in general and children's rights, in particular.

Family

The family, in particular parents, plays a crucial role in their children's lives by teaching and providing children's rights, and being a role model for adhering to human rights generally in life:

> My father always tells me: your freedom ends when it starts imping the freedom of others. My parents also support my right to participate in the house and broadly in my social life, for example, when they tell me 'We are proud of you' for the things I make in my life, I say that without them I would not even get to this point. But I see the need for this being the case of all Lebanese parents and families. (Participant B)

Supporting the last point, participant B has claimed, by participant D's observation of the situation in Lebanon, that parents are responsible for teaching and passing the basics of human rights and children's rights to their sons and daughters, saying:

> I believe our parents owe us to teach us how to be independent, and this is some-

thing that we lack here in Lebanon, in my opinion.

School

It was noticeable in the findings that children recognize the role of the school in spreading awareness and information about human rights:

What developed this sense within us is the school, every week we have seminars or workshops on human rights, and we would have assignments researching different topics regarding human rights or women's rights for example. (Participant E)

Moreover, school and education influence children's understanding of their rights, as well as, their comprehension of the social and political situation in their country:

Our education is our weapon. With our knowledge we are able to face corruption, I mean, if we hadn't realized the reality, we couldn't have reached this stage of the revolution. And where did this awareness and knowledge come from? from our education and from our thoughts, the mental reflection of the young Lebanese generation came this way. (Participant B)

Democratic Movements

The democratic movements, or the revolution as children call it, played a significant role in the children's lives as a source for human rights and children's rights. For children, revolution means resisting an oppressive regime, whether it is a political or a social system, and in this case, they mention both systems. The revolution also means changing the course of these oppressive regimes to democratic courses that give a place for the child and their own social and political opinions, and the beginning of society to take them into consideration:

I watched a TV interview during the protests, interviewing people both adults and children, and when listening to what they have to say, I realized then that this revolution is occurring for the sake of children's rights and human rights. (Participant E)

Participant B, as well, emphasized the function of the democratic movements in shaping the children's understanding of their rights:

Before the movement, we had the same thinking, the same values, and the same national impulse, but the difference now is that I am capable to express my opinion more freely. I mean, before, when I was telling them this is our homeland and we want to protect it, or those are our rights we should get them, they did not accept me, while after the revolution started everyone now understands, accepts, and supports what I say on this topic.

4. DISCUSSION

A total of 7 children between the ages of 12 and 17 years were interviewed about their perspectives on children's rights and the Lebanese democratic movements that occurred in October 2019.

The findings indicate that the democratic movements, the 'revolution' as children referred to it, have impacted on two levels: The first one is that children have begun to recognize they can all live together and be with each other and meet children of their generation yet from different communities, such as different religions, sectors, or political factions. In addition, they have started to discern their significant place, among adults, in the demonstrations, the ability, and significance of expressing their opinions and demanding certain rights. Correspondingly, it could be said that for Lebanese children and youth, 'patriotism' is a participatory culture, a valuable way for them to be active in society, participate and express their views, work and put effort for the sake of improving the critical situation in Lebanon regarding human rights, children's rights, and all other aspects such as economics, social security, transparency, services supply, etc. By doing so, they can practice their agency in the community and country as they aspire to.

At the same time, on the second level, we can discern the influence that democratic movements have on adults, who have begun to perceive children and youth as possessing a role in society and having the ability to assert their views, and that their voices must be listened to. In other words, it raised adults' awareness of the children's agency and competencies.

Furthermore, the data presented in this study suggest that the Lebanese children and youth are involved and active, striving to conceive and build a new identity in the greater political and social tensity surrounding them. Their thorough comprehension of street politics along with technology development generated habitats for connectedness and togetherness across and past Lebanon.

One of the reappearing themes is a consideration and apprehension for the future, especially as it is linked with the capability to afford a safe and secure environment for children. This emerged in the interviews and the movements' media coverage as well as in social media posts. Children's political involvement is indeed not a new phenomenon. Offered the exceptional media reportage, the options granted by social media, and the deplorable conspicuous indication of corruption. Children's political engagement in the democratic movements and its discussion illuminate to the people what childhood studies have been demonstrating for years, most markedly that children, far from being inactive and innocent, are knowledgeable social actors who manage, every so often, also to function as change agents. What couldn't be conveyed further in the academic realm is distinctly conveyed by children themselves at a national, even international, level through their activism, seeking to be perceived solemnly as future-makers, confronting adult power and control, and requesting a definite change.

Furthermore, the findings signify that children themselves refer to their rights in accordance with the universal rationale of human rights and children's rights mentioned in the literature review, showing that children themselves can now place re-

liance on rights, which are endorsed internationally. At the same time, the argument here is a bottom-up approach where children's rights ought to be fulfilled in their real context, what Liebel Manfred (2012) call 'children's rights from below'.

Various discussions about children, participation, democratization, and social change assemble in these democratic movements. In an exceedingly politically polarized country, the protests' organizing groups could captivate youth and children, accompanying their parents. Participatory politics incorporate street to digital practices to eagerly involve in matters of public concern.

The results fit with the socio-ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979), showing that children's attitudes towards their rights are assembled from their circumstantial factors, environmental determinants, and their personal characteristics. Based on the literature reviews as well as the results of the interviews, a theory could be developed. The children address the crucial rights they prioritize, explaining that, mainly, these rights are violated in Lebanon, therefore, they give them greater weight. For the children being able to analyze the surrounding circumstances in the way that the state and society do not adhere to these rights of the child—which was themed under the children's awareness. Eventually, the children's awareness and comprehension along with their patriotism and sense of belonging to their homeland and society, lit up their will, motivation, and impulse to claim their rights, and engage in the democratic movements, realizing that adults are actually protesting for the same exact intention, demanding their rights from the government.

Figure (1) illustrates the suggested above theory demonstrating the relation between democratic movements and children's understanding of their rights:
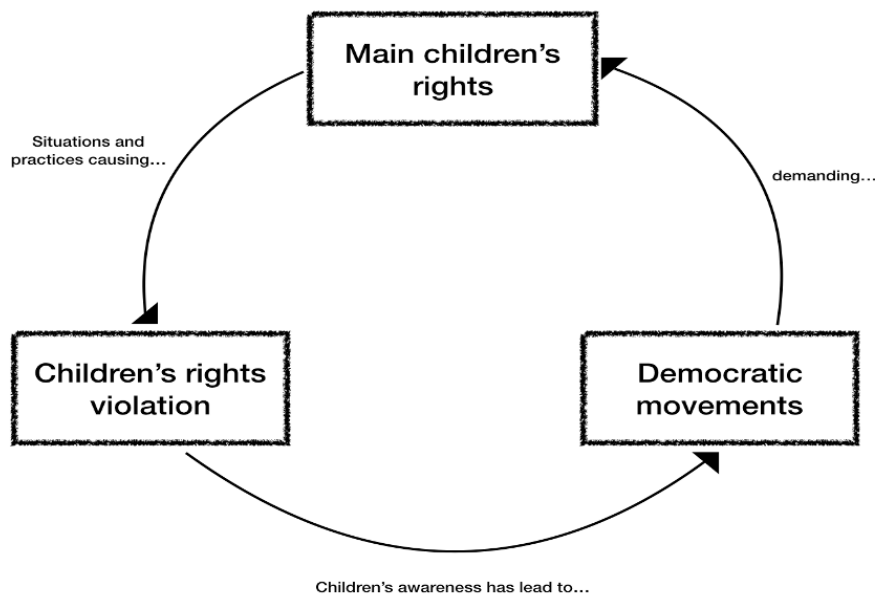
Source: Developed for this study by the researcher, based on the findings.

The generalizability of the results is limited by the fact that all participants are from Beirut city and it, probably, might not be representative enough. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies take into account interviewing children from rural areas and villages. The situation in Beirut, the capital city, cannot generalize the situation to different regions in Lebanon, living in dissimilar conditions and traditions, where children might have different views and perspectives on their rights, and endure distinct experiences in the democratic movements affecting their understanding of their rights in another way.

5. ORIGINALITY/VALUE

The researcher's aspiration was that this study would add much-needed data and information to the literature of children's understanding of their rights, especially related to democratic movements within the context of government corruption and deficiency of social justice, particularly in a postcolonial context.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Death in children's literature against the background of selected child and childhood research approaches

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ABSTRACT: The present publication deals with the sensitive topic of the social taboo of death with regard to the process of the child's education and development, with particular focus on the use of thanatological literature as a factor shaping the child's personality. The text presents the perception of the death by children, and the essence as well as functions of thanatological literature. Presented are also selected analytical categories of literary texts, among which an objective and a subjective approach to the child and childhood can be distinguished. The first approach is consistent with the perspective of the childhood sociology shown in the article and the post-colonial theory, while the second approach refers to mainstream developmental psychology and the colonial theory. The articles also shows the impact of child and childhood research approaches on four well-known literary works for children (at the kindergarten and pre-school age), dealing with the discussed topic. The selected research method consists in qualitative analysis of the content of the books. The works have been selected due to their popularity and presence in scientific publications on the topic of death in children's literature. Based on the analysis of content values of the four literary works, it can be concluded that respect for the child's subjectivity and the value of their voice supports development of the youngest, among others, in the aspect of dealing with the sensitive topic of death. In the modern world, dominated, among others, by worship of youthfulness and physical strength, which has a significant influence on the shape of the education, thanatological education becomes an important challenge which cannot be neglected.
KEYWORDS: thanatological literature, death, education, child, childhood studies, sensitive topic

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to draw attention to the need of de-tabooization of death in social space and to emphasize the importance of subjective approach to a child in the context of conversations with children about death, based on thanatological literature for the youngest. It is worth mentioning that the topic of death in children's literature is being explored internationally (including in Poland) by researchers such as, among others, Joanna Haynes, Karin Murris (2012), Martin Salisbury, Morag Styles (2012), Sandra L. Beckett (2012), Angela M. Wiseman, Katarzyna Slany (2016), Alicja Baluch (1994), Dorota Wojciechowska (2005), Krystyna Zabawa (2012), Maciej Skowera (2013) and Elżbieta Więckowska (2005), Anna Józefowicz (2017), Lesley D. Clement, Leyli Jamali (2016).

The article presents the process of understanding death by children. It also shows factors affecting the manner in which the youngest ones interpret death. Those reflections are supported by selected results of scientific research conducted, among others, by Birgitta Johansson and Gun-Britt Larsson, and concerning the way children perceive the topic of death. Thanatological literature is characterized and its functions are distinguished in the context of supporting the education process and child development. Also, conditions are presented which allow children and adults to be open to a dialogue about death. An analysis of contemporary research on childhood is presented, conducted from two perspectives of the sociology of childhood and the mainstream psychology, as well as the colonial and post-colonial theory in the context of childhood research. Those reflections help establish and describe categories of analysis of the four selected literary works for children with regard to the taboo of death. That analysis allows to draw specific conclusions, concerning, for example, the method of supporting development of children, among others, in the aspect of dealing with the sensitive topic of death.

For the purposes of the article, four popular literature works for children at a pre-school age were analysed in the context of the taboo of death. The works are: *Złota różdżka. Czytajcie dzieci, uczcie się, jak to niegrzecznym bywa źle* [Golden Wand. Children, read and learn how bad things happen to the naughty ones] by Heinrich Hoffman (1987), *Pinokio* [Pinocchio] by Carlo Collodi (2012), Żaba *i ptasi* śpiew [Frog and the Birdsong] by Max Velthuijs (2015) and *Czy tata płacze*? [Does Daddy cry?] by Hilde Ridden Kommendal (2008). The methodological framework of the study has been established as the qualitative method of analysis (Łuszczuk 2008). In the contents of those works, the author looked for dependencies between the way of talking about death, and the image of a child and childhood presented in the given work.

The topic of taboo in culture certainly bears numerous meanings. A taboo in art, in particular in children's literature, is a place full of complex and overlapping specific dependencies. De-tabooization of difficult topics in books for children is a violation of that what is *sacred*, since in the society, literature belongs to the sphere of sacrum. Nevertheless, it often presents both marginalized and de-tabooised contents and forms strictly related to humanity. In this sense, the society becomes democratic (Cackowska 2013:20), and the child is perceived as an active subject who creates their

social world (Ornacka 2011) and at the stage of childhood, participates in execution of the project of politicization thanks to the process of production, distribution, and reproduction of socially constructed knowledge (Cackowska 2013:20).

Reflections on the taboo in children's literature are strictly related to the meaning and understanding of the position of a child and childhood, since contents of the works, reflecting a specific social and cultural perspective, always disclose particular attitudes of adults towards childhood. According to William A. Corsaro, the interpretation of the term "childhood" depends mainly on the culture and the organization of the given society (Corsaro 2011:7). Still, according to Peter Hunt, the image of childhood as resulting from various discourse formations presented both by authors and publishers of children's literature is one of the strongest cultural influences (Hunt 2008:62).

One of important taboo topics discussed in books for the youngest readers is death. It has been proven that both parents and teachers are afraid to talk to children about illness, suffering and death (Królica 2012:193), which might result in anxieties in children, as well as create emotional distance between the child and the parent (Deręgowska 2015). The incapability to deal in the emotional sphere with such a difficult event as death of a close person may have far reaching consequences in from of, for example, emotional disorders (Deręgowska 2015). The reason for the observed phenomenon of excluding children from the uncomfortable but cognitively important topic of death (also in a situation of the process of the closest ones dying) could be the conviction of adults that such topics have a detrimental effect on children (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:74; Kirwin & Hamrin 2005:62). According to Murray Bowen (2004), protecting children against mourning leads to a situation when they develop unrealistic phantasies related to life and death, which continue to accompany them also in their adult lives. According to the American psychiatry professor, adults should be open to every question asked by a child after a close person dies.

Already Janusz Korczak in his work *Magna Charta Libertatis* (Korczak 1929) wrote about excessive parental care, which in consequence limits the child and isolates it from life. The first item of that work was the right of a child to die (Męczkowska–Christiansen 2013:192). This right shows that "children are people, and not reservoirs of adult fears, plans and hopes" (Czernow 2018:28). According to Astrid Męczkowska-Christiansen (2013:192), this right established by Korczak is also the right of a child to live a full life through "active experiencing of the world and their own capabilities within it". Also as a lecturer, Janusz Korczak strongly emphasized the respect for the child as a person (Liebel & Markowska-Manista 2017), and pointed out the importance of subjectivity, equality and individuality of a child's experience (Ciesielska 2020). In particular in the context of the topic of death discussed in the present article, the above-mentioned key right in the pedagogics of Janusz Korczak becomes, in a way, a guideline to treat a child as a human, capable to discuss various issues, including difficult topics such as death. Perception of a child as a human of equal value and with equal rights is present also in thanatological literature, which becomes a safe tool to familiarize children (as active subjects) with death, as its language is adapted to their knowledge and abilities. Thanks to children's literature, which talks about death and

dying, and grieving, a young reader has to opportunity to observe and get to know those areas of human life, which due to specific cultural factors and psychological resistance of adults are being avoided or pushed into the background. Reflection of a child on that aspect of life definitely enriches their world and teaches them that death is an unavoidable part of every existence (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:74-77).

According to Brendy Tofanenko, talking with children about difficult topics is important and requires from adults, among others, knowledge on how to deal with emotions and emotional problems of young people (Trofanenko 2009). Still, due the social taboo, difficult topics are often neglected (Machul-Telus & Markowska-Manista 2011:236; Machul-Telus & Markowska-Manista 2017). A dialogue on difficult topic is particularly important with regard to contemporary changes in the social and cultural life, strictly connected to elements of the global cultural ecumene (pop culture, modern information and communication technologies, consumerism, mediatisation, etc.) (Peret-Drążewska & Peret 2016:255). That culture is characterized by variability and superficiality, and, therefore, does not create an environment which would help children, among others, learn how to approach death (in mass media, death is often presented as funny, reversible, unreal, or scary) (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2018:72).

UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEATH PHENOMENON BY CHILDREN

"Taboo topics are not known to children, they are introduced by adults" (Sehested 2012:19). Often the reason to create a taboo topic is the strong need of adults to protect children against unpleasant emotions. A situation is created when topics are avoided which are considered harmful by adults, give rise to strong feelings, or which cannot be understood by children because of their young age (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:72). Research of Maria Królica proved that kindergarten and pre-school teachers avoid responsibility for problems of their wards, "they abandon the attitude of a mature listener or mediator of the reading matter, instead choosing mechanisms of negation, denial, tabooization of death and children's experiences in that scope" (Slany 2018).

The neglect of death in social life, and the disappearance of rituals accompanying the funeral (Zakowicz 2011:60; Kruczkowska 1986:174; Stoiński 2001:164) as well as the aforementioned lack of readiness on part of parents and educators to talk with children about death definitely contribute to the fact that this topic is considered not only a taboo, but also to be harmful (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:74). Undoubtedly, the failure to engage in conversations with children about life and death has a negative impact on shaping of their awareness in this area. According to Natali Ruman, adults often fear an open and honest discussion and emotions of the child in a situation of their real encounter with death. Therefore, they do not approach the child as a subject and a partner, and fail to acknowledge, among others, the child's competences, agency, and power. This results from the lack of knowledge of adults about the emotional development of children and their cognitive abilities (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:74).

Meanwhile, it has been proven that even the youngest children already have spe-

cific knowledge on the topic of death and are naturally interested in it (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:71). One can refer, for example, to empirical studies of Birgitta Johansson and Gun-Britt Larsson (2018:148), which showed that children often think about death (Dymel-Trzebiatowska 2018:148). Dorota Wojciechowska (2005:200) points out that children understand changes related to experiencing death and suffering, which is confirmed by the acceptance of those phenomena in fairy tales for the youngest recipients.

Expanding the awareness of this topic among teachers and parents would allow them both to support the child's development (without neglecting existential issues) and to react properly in a situation of actual experiencing of death by children (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:73).

Research of Virginia Slaughter and Maya Griffiths has shown that an open discussion with children about death and discussing its biological aspects do not give rise to fears in children, but rather diminish them (Slaughter & Griffiths 2007). According to Aleksandra Tobota and Beata Antoszewska (2017:212), the fear of death is necessary for correct development and shaping of attitudes towards death. Inadequate experiencing of death can result in a high level of fear in children, which may have a negative influence on them (Antoszewska & Tobota 2017:212). An example can be a situation of sudden death (or many losses) as a result of a random event, which might cause shock, trauma, pain, and violent emotional reactions (Frączek 2017:157). The range and force of damage related to such events pose a risk for the mental balance of the child (Ford 2010). It is also worth mentioning that children who experienced posttraumatic stress as a result of a loss of a person close to them are prone to additions and risky behaviours. Symptoms of posttraumatic stress include hyperactivity, tension, irritability, or nightmares (Dąbkowska 2002). On the other hand, a low level of fear or lack thereof is equally detrimental (Antoszewska & Tobota 2017:212).

A consequence of neglecting and denying death as a social phenomenon can be, among others, the inability to cope with emotions and the feeling of being left alone (Kielar-Turska 2008). One should emphasize also the role of the adult, whose task is to support the natural development of the child, taking into account the child's interest in various phenomena and processes which are present in the consciousness and the environment of the child, among them death. Thanatological education certainly cannot be ignored, however, it is important to maintain healthy proportions in that space. The topic of death should not obscure life but contribute to its affirmation, allow to meet one's goals and face of challenges as well as show respect towards other people and animals (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021).

The latest data on the perception of death by children more and more often include also the infant stage and are also supplemented by information how children grieve. According to Joanna Sztobryn-Bochomulska (2021:76), the child gradually starts to be perceived as a subject experiencing and participating in social and ritual life, just like adults do. In particular in this context, parents and teachers should be aware of how a child understands death at the given moment of their life. Presented below is the characteristic of a child's perception of death:

(i) Children from 4-5 months up to 3 years old:

- children react in a similar way to the lack of presence of their close ones caused by absence, travel, and death;

- when children experience separation from a close person for a longer period, they feel sad and reach a state close to mourning, as characteristic for adults (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:77);

- three-year-olds understand the notion of death in a primitive way, but have a limited ability to understand its consequences (Galende 2015:96);

(ii) Children aged 2-4 (pre-operative stadium of cognitive development):

- death is considered by children a separation and another form of life;

- children may identify death with travel or dream (Kielar-Turska 2008:325);

- children do not fear death and do not refer it to themselves;

- about four-year-olds become interested in the topic of death (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:77);

(iii) Children aged 5-10 (stage of operative thinking and concrete operations):

- five-year-olds understand death as separation; they are afraid they will be left alone and that their parents will feel alone after they die; some children worry that the dead cannot move and are unaware that the dead cannot see or feel anything;

- most children aged six understand the irreversibility of death, its causality (death always has a physical cause), as well as the fact that vital functions stop;

- children aged seven mostly understand the universality of death;

- for most children aged eight, the lack of feeling after death is understandable;

- about ten-year-olds begin to fully understand „constant attributes of death – its universality, unavoidability, and irreversibility" (Kielar-Turska 2008:326).

Just like an adult, a child is an active subject who "perceives death as a fact in a third person dimension, experiences emotions related to the loss of the close ones, and eventually, can also become its main participant. However, contrary to adults, children do not understand death in a mature way. They do not fully understand the totality and finality of the force which determines also their own lives. Due to their intellectual and emotional immaturity, children's perception of death develops gradually" (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:85). The understanding of death is, therefore, of a developmental nature and corresponds to stages of cognitive development by Jean Piaget (Kotowicz 2012:180)

According to Robert Kastenbaum (1977), the way children interpret death is strictly related to their cognitive development, personality, personal experience, the social and cultural context as well as communication and support from their environment.

It should also be noted that a child is being constantly subjected to the influence of modern culture, which often provides both false and distorted images of death (e.g., death as a spectacle for the viewer in the unreal reality of media or computer games) (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:74; Kuligowski & Zwierzchowski 2004:9). In the canon of modern literature, death is depictured as funny, fascinating, and scary, unreal, reversible. Therefore, one could say that the manner of depicting death is inconsistent with the facts and inadequate for the age of the children (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:74).

The importance of parents' approaches in the process of creating the image of death for children was shown by research of Maria Królica (2009:135). The analysis of drawings made by six-year-olds proved that death depicted by their authors referred mainly to religious and funeral symbols. Based on that, it can be concluded that children's notions are affected by family traditions and not, as it could seem, modern pop culture (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:78).

To sum up the above reflections, it can be concluded that the awareness of the process of shaping the perception of death in children, as presented above, is significant for the process of education in terms of building relationships between the child and the adult (parent or teacher). Knowledge of the contents described in the above subchapter can be helpful in the context of understanding children's behaviour, as well as increasing the awareness of the importance of de-tabooization of death in contemporary world, which simultaneously supports the general development of the child. Furthermore, such knowledge could also be promoted, e.g., through kindergarten and pre-school educators at various workshops for parents, or online webinars.

THANATOLOGICAL LITERATURE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CHILD IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TABOO OF DEATH

Before the 20th century, there was much more focus on the mortality of children, its causes, tombs, burials, and eschatological issues, rather than on emotions which accompany the parents and the siblings. It can be observed that in the case of a death of a child, the perspective of the adult dominates both in the material, social and psychical as well as aesthetical sphere (Waksmund 2018:61). According to Ryszard Waksmund, it is difficult to oppose the narrative of an adult with the viewpoint of a child who also witnesses dying, participates in the funeral, and assigns the same weight to the death of a close person as to the death of an animal, or even a toy (Waksmund 2018:61).

Thanatological literature created in the second half of the 20th century and in the 21st century criticizes the model of a conservative adult (parent and teacher) (Slany 2018:38). Development of global thanatology was influenced by the hospice movement, referring to the aid for the ill and dying, represented by English-speaking researchers, such as Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and Cicely Saunders. Furthermore, thanatological concepts were also shaped by the French movement providing philosophical and anthropological reflections on human life, represented, among others, by Philippe Ariès, Louis-Vincent Thomas, Edgar Morin, Michelle Vovell, Vladimir Jankélévitch (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:13).

The discussed literature has four functions—familiarizing, therapeutic, supportive, and normalizing (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2018: 75).

The first of the listed functions of thanatological literature is to familiarize children with death and dying. Authors of the aforementioned literature use the principle of discursiveness of death, presenting it as a natural stage of existence of all living things, and a part of the perpetual cycle of nature (Czernow 2018:28). Modern authors reminding readers about the universality of death point out that the kindergarten and pre-school age is the so-called age of questions, when children express their curiosity about the world by asking numerous questions, also concerning difficult issues. Such talks usually are a challenge for the caretakers, who prefer to avoid them because they do not consider themselves competent interlocutors (Królica 2009:202). That is why many works dedicated to the youngest show concrete methods of dealing with death. In texts directed at children, various familiarizing strategies can be found. They include, among others:

- showing the cyclicality of life and death on example of plants and animals,

- presenting burial rituals, as well as making children aware that they have the right to grieve,

- talking to children about illness, including more and less serious diseases, and how it affects a person (Slany 2018:40-44).

Therefore, the discussed literature affirms formation of a partner dialogue with the child, consistent with the formula of the naturalistic approach to death and the practice of affirmation of life. According to authors of thanatological literature, such works could "neutralize fears and support openness for word/image also in other texts for children, whose target recipient is devoid of age, which means that the young ones and the older ones can offer each other a lot in terms of interpretation, as well as emotionally" (Salisbury & Styles 2012:78-79).

The second task of the researched literature is the therapeutic function, which consists in providing the reader with a substitute experience aimed at "working out a different assessment of the event, one's participation in it, or the coping strategy, which helps reduce negative emotional tension" (Molicka 2011:154). According to Joanna Papuzińska, texts about death, which belong also to the so-called literature of darkness, accompany the reader in their suffering and make them feel not alone in experiencing it (Papuzińska 1996).

Support is the third role assigned to children's literature dealing with death and dying. In this aspect, the themes of thanatological texts encourage the reader to reflect on the essence and sense of their own life. Death is inseparably connected to life, so its meaning in human life cannot be marginalized. The discussed literature allows to understand the essence of death and encourages to perceive life as a unique and unrepeatable event (Adamczykowa 2004:29). The world presented in the discussed literature is constructed in such a way as to, among others, show the importance of interpersonal ties, life values (love, friendship), and attitudes of the protagonists who experience difficult situations, such as suffering, illness, and death. That way, such

literature encourages the reader to reflect on the quality and meaning of life.

The last function of thanatological literature is the normalizing function, which aims to present the category of death in a different dimension than the one functioning in modern culture, which is not a natural one (Zamarian 2015). Thus, children's literature overcomes the social taboo, becoming a medium for an image of death which deepens the knowledge about the death itself and has a shaping impact on the child's personality (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2018:81).

The four functions of thanatological literature, as described above, show that death is an inseparable part of human life, which should be talked about in order to familiarize the child with this difficult topic, which children will have to face at some point in their life. That way, such literature contributes to de-tabooization of the socially difficult topic of death.

According to Sandra L. Beckett, expert in children's literature dealing with the topic of death, the best way to explain those phenomena to children at kindergarten and preschool age is to emphasize biological concepts of seasons of the year (Tychmanowicz 2018:108). All what happens in nature is a metaphorical version of vital processes of every organism. That way, nature becomes an example of the same processes people are subject to (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:13). In this sense, presentation of death as a change of the ontological status can be observed already in kindergarten education, in which the world is shown as dynamic and non-homogenous and children are provided with knowledge on the "cyclicality of passing of days and nights, months and seasons of the year" (Korczak 2018:208).

Certainly, work with a child in the context of the discussed literature both at school and at home depends also on the good will of the adult, their competences, and awareness (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:70), as well as upbringing and their cultural background. A factor which might impact the openness of children for dialogue on the topic of death is, among other, readiness of teachers "for thanatological education realized within the framework of the educational curriculum. This, however, requires their preparation already during their university studies" (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:70). According to A. Zamarian (2015:78), the new model of thanatological education, based on supporting the individual in the process of growing up to full humanity, as well as on dignified experiencing of life at its every stage (also in the perspective of death) should become the object of both theoretical and empirical studies, since development of scientific research conditions the aforementioned academic education. This seems an issue of particular importance due to the fact that, as observed by Artur Fabiś, actions taken in educational circles in the area of thanatological problematics, are of intuitive and spontaneous nature (Szewczyk 1998).

Contemporary texts employing strategies of familiarizing young audience with death certainly contribute to the so-called de-institutionalizing of death, which in the closest environment of the child, their family and school has the status of a topic which is not talked about, or even prohibited (Slany 2018:54). In the opinion of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, in consistence with the psychological immunization as a process of full preparation of a child for life, which is strictly connected to the adequately early activation of their internal resistance, a child should be included by adults in the topic

of death, since thanks to that, the child is able to deal with this particularly difficult topic in a way in advance (Kübler-Ross 1996:69-71). Besides, thanatological literature requires from adults not only openness to talk about death, but also to approach the child as a subject who becomes a partner in socially significant discourses (Slany 2018:40). It also supports the shaping of an attitude preventing repression of feelings and allowing deepened reflection on human existence, which is also related to the ability to ask oneself and others non-standard and metaphysical questions, regardless of one's age (Zabawa 2012:271).

A CHILD IN SELECTED RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES—PRESENTATION OF SELECTED ANALYSIS CATEGORIES OF LITERARY TEXTS FOR CHILDREN

An exemplification of the changing understanding of a child and childhood shall be presentation of the transformation which took place in the image of childhood in modern age societies belonging to the European cultural circle. In the 19th century, a child was viewed as a project to complete, which manifested itself in giving the child specific tasks to fulfil. In the religious vision of a child, those tasks involved mainly ensuring continuance of the family and salvation of the individual (Slany 2018:40). The scientific movement rooted in the Enlightenment's project of reconstruction of the world depicted the child as the future citizen of the state (Garbula & Kowalik-Olubińska 2012:27). Only in the 20th century, a child stops to be perceived as a project, and becomes value, a person who has the right to create themselves and the world around them. In the post-modern age, the child acquires the status of a partner in relationships with adults, and has the right to co-decide about matters important to them (Buliński 2007). Noteworthy are also educational practices of parents belonging to individualistic and collectivistic cultures. In an individualistic culture, a child is considered an independent, assertive, self-reliant, creative person, capable of intelligent action. In turn, in collectivistic cultures, children are considered persons dependent on adults and able to subordinate their individualist goals to social goals and standards (Matsumoto & Juang 2007). The example of socialization presented above, functioning in different types of cultures, shows that childhood is a social construct which emerges from tradition as well as different political, social, economic relations and technological progress. Based on the examples provided above, one must conclude that childhood is strictly related to factors such as, e.g., social class, gender, place of living, background culture, or health (Garbula & Kowalik-Olubińska 2012:27).

Contemporary research on childhood is conducted, among others, from the perspective of assumptions of the mainstream developmental psychology and the new sociology of childhood. Differences between those two research approaches are shown by their constituting ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. In developmental psychology, ontological assumptions point out that a child is foreseeable developmentally, less important to adults, and in the centre of research, but outside the social and cultural context. Within the framework of epistemological assumptions concerning the knowledge of a child, the researcher's task is to collect objective findings on universal principles of a child's development. Furthermore, it is

assumed that the adults' knowledge of children is of much higher value than the children's knowledge. On the other hand, according to methodological assumptions of the research of a child, the social and cultural context is eliminated in the research process, and the child becomes the object of research, which is conducted in controlled conditions, using standardized tests. Therefore, quantitative methodology dominates in the discussed approach (Garbula & Kowalik-Olubińska 2012:27-30) (Hogan 2005:25).
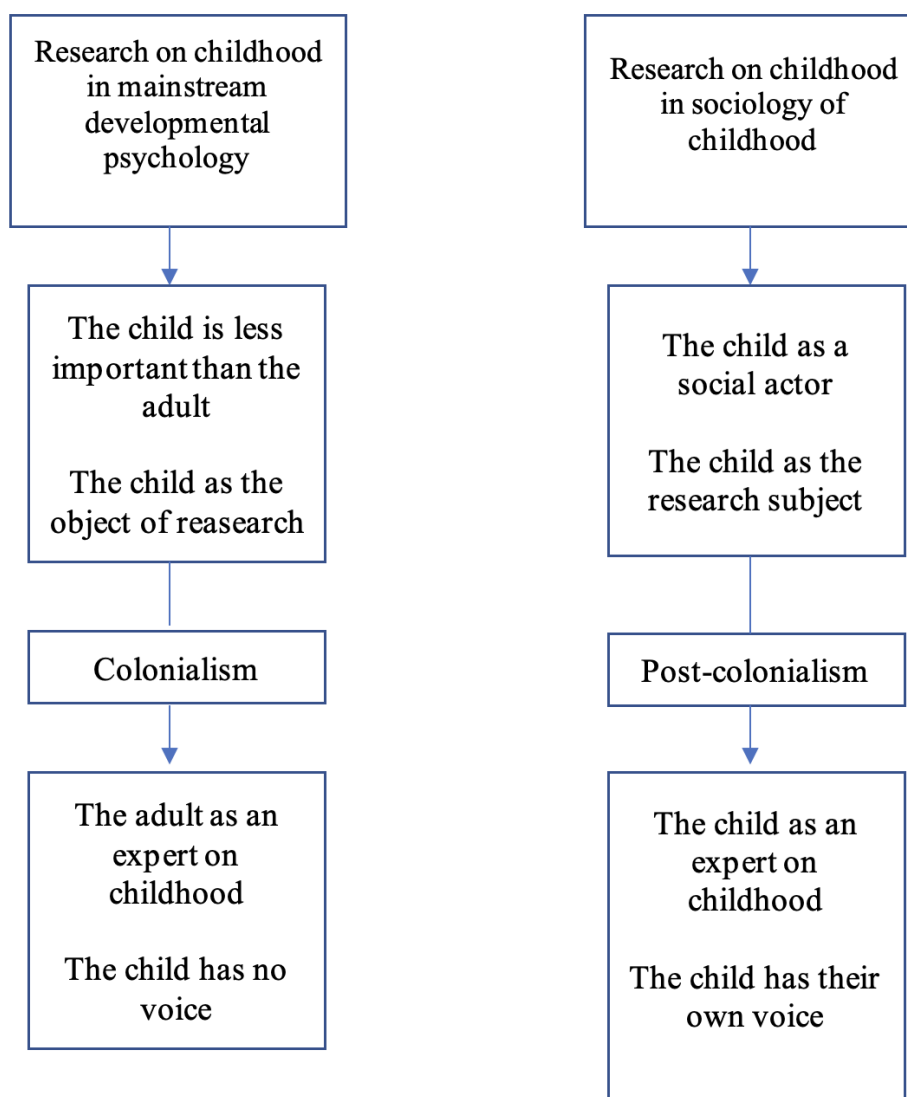
Research with children in the new sociology of childhood, in terms of ontological assumptions, presents life and development of children in a broad social and cultural context (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). That approach emphasises the basic thesis of the discussed research perspective, which is the multitude of ways of experiencing life and the surrounding world by children. Children are considered "subjects actively constructing and determining their social life, the life of people around them and the communities in which they live" (Jenks 2008:112). Children become co-authors of their own biography, and through actions in a group of peers, they also generate their own cultural world (Corsaro 2005). The discussed paradigm also formulates epistemological assumptions, which refer to the need of co-constructing by children and adults (as cognitive subjects) of knowledge concerning subjective childhood worlds. Furthermore, research assumptions within the framework of the new sociology of childhood, lead to the application of the qualitative methodology (Garbula & Kowalik-Olubińska 2012:30-31). Methodological assumptions of research with children indicate that the researcher must take into account the social and cultural context in which children are placed. It should be emphasized that children become active research subjects, who have the right to express themselves about their own experience, and that way, their perspective of perceiving childhood (Woodhead 2008:10).

Perception of children as social actors and active subjects (Jarosz 2020), as well as initiating and conducting of research "from the children's perspective" definitely contribute both to their emancipation (Ozkul 2020) and to actions directed against modern practices of childhood colonization (Markowska-Manista 2018:60). In this sense, Manfred Liebel postulates the so-called decolonization of childhood, understood as a multi-dimensional process regarding various aspects of social, political, cultural and economic inequalities, related to specific situations of children and adults, as well as imbalance of power between various age groups (Markowska-Manista 2020:16; Liebel 2020).

According to Urszula Markowska-Manista (2020:16), the past thirty years led to a change in the paradigm, and reflection on methods of researching and understanding children, their rights and childhoods in various areas of life, such as, among others, upbringing, education, care, or health. Thus, it is particularly important to draw attention to protection of children's rights in the context of marginalization, discrimination, as well as social, cultural and political exclusion of children, who in practice do not feel that children's rights help them in everyday life. Therefore, the postulate of decolonization of studies on childhood and children's rights can be considered important and socially useful (Budde & Markowska-Manista 2020). It indicates the need to change the way of thinking both about children's rights and children themselves, perceived as important experts and informants about their issues and situations, since

one cannot understand the perspective of a child, who is an expert on their childhood if one ignores the child's voice (Cheney 2018). Undoubtedly, research conducted within the framework of critical post-colonial studies on childhood, directed at rights of a child, their "de-colonisation", subjectivity, participation, could eliminate the negative phenomena described, and that way support children, who are neglected in the political, social and cultural majority discourse (Markowska-Manista 2020:17).

In this approach, the above-mentioned research on childhoods and children's rights should be not only the area of adult researchers, but should also provide a place for children as researchers (Alderson & Morrow 2020), who, if needed, can receive advice. The minors should be treated not as a passive object of the research, but as an active partner in the research process (Markowska-Manista 2021).

Research on childhood in mainstream developmental psychology	Research on childhood in sociology of childhood
The child is less important than the adult The child as the object of reasearch	The child as a social actor The child as the research subject
Colonialism	Post-colonialism
The adult as an expert on childhood The child has no voice	The child as an expert on childhood The child has their own voice

Source: Own work based on J. M. Garbula, M. Kowalik-Olubińska (2012) and U. Markowska-Manista (2018).

It should be noted that this approach comes close to the research perspective discussed above, as proposed by the sociology of childhood, simultaneously constituting

a discourse of the "new" childhood, in which the subjective perspective of the child is important with regard to assessment of their own situation (James & Prout 1997). According to Ben-Arieh and Tarshish, the changeability and evolution of discourses concerning children can be depicted as a shift from the category of the child's welfare and the child as the object of care to the category of the child' well-being, which should be understood as "subjective experiencing of the good quality of life and own well-being" (Ben Arieh & Tarshish 2017). Those two researchers define the discourse of research on childhood as a positive orientation, resulting from the fact that the weight was shifted to questions concerning possibilities of improvement, directions for strengthening and support, as well as the use of the individual and environmental potentials. The researchers also point out to the convergence of the discourse of the child's welfare with the discourse of children's rights (Jarosz 2017:70).

To compare the discussed discourses from the perspective of the mainstream developmental psychology (showing the child as the object of research and a being less important than adults) and from the perspective of the sociology of childhood (presenting the child as a social actor and research subject), as well as post-colonial research on childhood, one can use the figure to present their characteristic traits, similarities and differences.

The categories of the child and childhood in the perspective of the mainstream developmental psychology and the sociology of childhood, including influence of colonial and post-colonial theories in the context of research on childhood, as presented above, constitute analytical categories for the selected literary works for children, dealing with the topic of the taboo of death, which are discussed in the next chapter.

A CHILD AS AN OBJECT AND SUBJECT OF RESEARCH, AND THE TABOO OF DEATH IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Simultaneously to the increase of contemporary interest in difficult and sensitive topics, which are generally described as taboo topics, a new tendency can be observed in children's literature to talk directly about death (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:120). However, it should be noted that death functioning in children's literature also underwent changes. According to Małgorzata Gwadera, presentation of death in works directed at the youngest was and still is dependent on both cultural and social perspective (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:121). One must also keep in mind that each work for children also includes a specific vision held by the adult with regard to the child and the world in which they live (Cackowska 2013:21), and literature has unquestionable importance for the development of the human due to, among others, emotional, aesthetical, cognitive values, etc. (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:121).

In this sub-chapter, the author analyses four works for children at the kindergarten and pre-school age.

The research method was the qualitative content analysis. The author is interested how the selected works depict death and what image of the child and childhood emerges from the contents of the given text.

Analytical categories of texts include:

(a) Child as the subject (as proposed by the sociology of childhood), including the perspective of the colonial theory considering the adult to be an expert,

(b) Child as the object of research (as proposed by the mainstream developmental psychology) in the area of childhood, including the post-colonial theory considering the child to be an expert in their field (childhood).

Golden Wand. Children, read and learn how bad things happen to the naughty ones by Heinrich Hoffman, published in 1844, is the most representative example of a didactic story written as a warning. In the discussed work, child protagonists face drastic punishments, or even demise, which is grotesque and simultaneously cruel (Czernow 2018:22). The book had international and historically lasting success (Czernow 2018:23).

One of the stories told is a tale about a boy who did not want to eat. For being a fussy eater, he was punished by starving to death (Fati 2015:64).

On the fifth day, something chokes him in his chest and throat/The one that does not eat soup, must die./So it was with Michaś, who was healthy and fat,/For five days he was fussy, on the sixth day, he was dead. (Kozak 2016)

Death depicted as uncompromising and indisputable is supposed to raise fear and anxiety, and becomes a punishment for the child's behaviour, in this case—not eating. The adult does not ask about the reasons for the child's behaviour, their welfare, possibility to improve the situation, since the adult has the full knowledge of the child's needs.

A particularly expressive motif of death and dying as a punishment for a child protagonist was used by Carlo Collodi in *Pinocchio* (Czernow 2018:22). "The scheme of a 'plotline triptych' (warning—wrongdoing—punishment) is repeated multiple times, the wooden recidivist always strays from the path of virtue, each time suffering unpleasant consequences". Similarly as in the Hoffman's work, death serves as a so-called bogey and appears when the puppet refuses to drink bitter medicine—at which time, he is confronted with the vision of his own funeral (Czernow 2018:25).

After those words, the door opened and four rabbits entered the room, black as ink, carrying a coffin on their shoulders. – What do you want from me?! – Pinocchio screamed, and sat on his bad, terrified. – We came for you—said the largest rabbit. – For me? But I'm not dead yet! – Not yet, but if you refuse to take the medicine which would pull you out from fever, you have just a few minutes of life left! (Collodi 2012:74)

The child presented in the abovementioned works is treated as an object and a problem. This is indicated, among others, by the lack of clear focus on individual experiencing of existence by the child protagonist, and lack of reflection on improvement of the quality of his life. On the other hand, there is a strong emphasis on consequences of his actions. Death is supposed to raise fear, it appears as the highest punishment which cannot be disputed, and the world of the child's emotions is pushed to the background, often neglected, or completely unnoticed. Furthermore, the adult has full

knowledge of the child, his childhood and needs. Thus, the child has no voice of their own, as it is taken away from him by adults. In this context, it must be said that the abovementioned stories written for children as a warning, and using for this purpose the motive of death as a punishment, show the child from the perspective of the mainstream psychology and colonialism, as an object of research. The child depends on the adult, who has comprehensive knowledge of the child and their childhood.

With regard to the motif of death as a punishment, presented above, it must be noted that a sudden lack of a parent, a caretaker or a close person can be perceived by a child as an intentional action, or even punishment. That is why it is so important for caretakers to support the shaping of the notion of death in children, in order to eliminate the risk of solidifying the false understanding of death (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:192).

On the other hand, the classic picture book by Max Velthuijs, entitled *Frog and the Birdsong* (Velthuijs 2015) is of contemplative nature, contains philosophical content, and allows the child to understand that death is a natural end of life. The work refers to the naturalness and the processual aspect of death. This is a tale of a bird which sings beautifully, but dies. Other animals feel sad because of its death and bury it properly. In time, animals start to play again and announce that life is beautiful, according to the epicurean motto *carpe diem* (Velthuijs 2015:42). The cyclicality of life and death, shown using a metaphor in form of plants and animals, may help children project their own experiences to processes taking place in nature (Slany 2018:43). Furthermore, "in this text, death becomes one of the basic existential topics, presented in a simple and gentle way, adequately to the age of the recipient" (Slany 2018:43).

Among contemporary publications which aim to help a child deal with the death of a close person, the book by Hilde Ridden Kommendal entitled *Does Daddy cry?* should be mentioned. This is a story about the fact that death of a close person gives rise to various emotions, for example, anger. "The strong dad, who was the head of the family, worked on the farm and played with his sons, starts to disappear. He does not have the strength to handle everyday affairs, even to play with his children. Eventually, he goes to the hospital and dies there. The sons, in particular the few-years-old Olav, one way or the other had to accept the fact that they can no longer play with their father, and that their mother is crying, although they are very angry about it" (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2018:301). Lack of a parent can be perceived by the child as abandonment. In order to deal with the loss, the child often applies defence mechanisms (in this case, denial) (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2018:192):

I am not sad because Dad is dead, I did not like him at all—insisted Olav. Olav looks at photos of his Dad and knows that he was nice. But sometimes, looking at the same photos, he says that Dad was stupid. (Kommedal)

According to Beata Stachowska, a psychologist working at a hospice and managing support groups for families in mourning, that story is a perfect guideline, showing how to accompany orphaned children in their grieving process. The content of the story are conversations held by the mother with her five-year-old son (Woda 2012:18). In those talks, it is clear that the boy's mother is emphatic, accepts the child's emotions,

supports them—also when Olav says that he is not sad because of his dad's death and that he did not really like him.

The two books discussed above are inspired both by thanato-pedagogics, postulates of the hospice movements, and the post-humanistic discourse concerning the de-tabooization of death in modern societies. In those works, the subjectivity of the child manifests itself in the way of talking about death, which is adapted to the age and capabilities of a small child. Death is something which happens and lies in the nature of every being. Also, the child protagonist is treated as a subject functioning in the social and cultural context, and their "voice" is respected and, most importantly, heard. Therefore, the object of the discourse is no longer (as in Hoffman's and Collodie's works) the child as a problem, but problems faced by children and the subjective perspective of showing their experience and looking for methods to improve the quality of children's lives in this scope (Jarosz 2017:71). Based on the above-mentioned examples of literary works, one can see that the child is shown in the perspective of sociology of childhood and post-colonialism, considering the child to be a subject and a social actor, having their own voice and being an expert in the area of childhood.

In the 20th century, the way of thinking about the child and childhood changed. In this period, movements emerged proclaiming the child's autonomy. This definitely had a huge impact on children's literature. An example is the change of the motive of dying of children, who gradually stopped dying as an example or a punishment (Slany 2018:28). The humanistic approach to upbringing, which started at the beginning of the 20th century, influenced the change of the literary motif of death, shown from the existential perspective (Fati 2015:64). As a result of the abandonment of authoritarian pedagogical systems, the motif of death, on one hand, became a new inspiration for authors, and on the other hand—started to function in the sphere of a taboo, as a topic too scary, too difficult, and also too sad for the child, whose psyche needed to be protected, according to the 20th century spirit (Fati 2015:29).

According to Dorota Wojciechowska, in contemporary works for children, the index of taboo topics has been extended to include the problems of death, pain, illness, and suffering. However, it must be emphasized that those topics usually come up in specific contexts and approaches, and are subjected to the basic composition principle, according to which the story must end in a pleasant and nice way (Skowera 2013:128). It should be added that the terror of a happy ending forced artistic restrains on authors (Wojciechowska 2005:197). Contemporary thanatological children's literature shows individuality as well as intimacy and naturalness of death. More important and more valuable than off-hand remarks about death are wise conversations with the child, allowing the child to prepare for such final events and to get a proper distance to death (Slany 2018:41).

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted review of theoretical issues related to the understanding of death by children, the essence and function of thanatological education, as well as the analysis of the selected works based on the categories of analysis of the child and childhood, as

presented in the article, show that treating the child as a subject in terms of a dialogue with children about death supports their comprehensive development.

The discussed process of shaping the understanding of death by children develops gradually due to the emotional and intellectual immaturity of the child. The way children interpret death depends, among others, on their cognitive development, personal experience, the social and cultural context, as well as support from the closest environment of the child. It was also shown that children are naturally interested in death, and an open conversation about it does not cause fears in children. This is also confirmed by the selected scientific studies presented in the text, conducted by researchers such as, among others, Virginia Slaughter and Maya Griffiths as well as Birgitta Johansson and Gun-Britt Larsson. At this point, it is worth mentioning that the knowledge of the process of perception of death by children is important from the perspective of education. This refers to the relationship both between the teacher and the child as well as the parent and the child. Also, the knowledge of the discussed contents may contribute to better understanding of motivations of children's behaviours.

The characteristic of thanatological literature discussed in the other part of the article allowed to distinguish its four functions: familiarizing, therapeutic, supportive, and normalizing (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2018:75). Based on those functions, it was proven that such literature familiarizes the child with the topic of death, contributes to reduction of emotional tension, encourages reflection on the essence and sense of life, and abandons the social taboo of *distorted death* through affirmation of the category of death, which, in turn, shapes the child's personality. In terms of working with children in the context of the discussed literature, both at home and at school, it was noted that the use of such literature by adults in the context of upbringing depends on their will, awareness, and competences. The openness of both children and adults to a dialogue about death certainly depends on the teachers' readiness to offer thanatological education within the scope of the curriculum, and this is closely related to the academic education of future educationists. Such education should be preceded by deepened research in terms of theory and empiria (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:70). Certainly, results of such research would allow to determine the status of education in the context of achieving mature understanding of death in the process of both formal and informal education (Zamarian 2015:78). It should be noted that such research is also interesting from the point of view of development of children, who tend to spend more and more time in front of a TV or a computer screen (Wilczek-Różyczka 2002:17). In accordance with the canon of contemporary literature, the world of mass media depicts death as funny, scary, unreal, but also reversible, thus presenting death to children in a false way (Fati 2015:64) (e.g., presenting violent death as a result of a murder as well as violence in movies or computer games) (Sztobryn-Bochomulska 2021:177).

Furthermore, reflections aimed at determining and describing the categories of analysis of the four selected works for children in the present article showed that children's literature always constitutes a specific vision of the child and the world, and those visions shape the identity of the young recipient. Based on the presented transformation which took place in the understanding of the child and childhood over the

last three centuries, a reference was made to contemporary research on childhood, conducted from two perspectives: the sociology of childhood, and the mainstream psychology. Likewise, the analysis of the two aforementioned discourses allowed also to show similarities in the perception of the child and childhood with regard to the colonial and post-colonial theory in the context of research on childhood. Therefore, as categories for the analysis of children's texts dealing with death, selected were: the child as a subject, a social actor, and an expert in the area of childhood (sociology of childhood, post-colonialism), and the child as an object, less important than the adult, and the adult as an expert in the area of childhood (mainstream developmental psychology, colonialism).

The exemplification of depicting the child in children's literature about death based on the abovementioned analytical categories and the related research perspectives, was the analysis of the following works: *Golden Wand. Children, read and learn how bad things happen to the naughty ones* by Heinrich Hoffman, *Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi, *Frog and the Birdsong* by Max Velthuijs, and *Does Daddy cry?* by Hilde Ridden Kommendal. The two first works are warning stories, in which death becomes a penalty for the improper behaviour of the child. The fact that the child in the discussed literary works was perceived as less important than adults and as a problem resulted in an approach to the child as an object, which is consistent with the optics of perception of the child and childhood by mainstream psychology and colonialism. It was also proven that such an image of the child in literature was influenced by the then functioning philosophy of the child and childhood. Abandonment of authoritarian pedagogical systems is reflected in the last two works representing contemporary thanatological literature, based, among others, on the post-humanistic discourse referring to the tabooization of death in the modern world. Contrary to the first two works, here, death is not a punishment, but something which simply happens as it is part of the never-ending cycle of nature. Thus, the emphasis in the works by Velthuijs and Kommendal on the child as a competent being, functioning in the social and cultural context, and the search for solutions to problems of the child and that way, improvement of the quality of their life, makes those stories consistent with the perspective of the sociology of childhood and the post-colonial theory of research on childhood.

In literary works for children, one can find a specific image of the child and childhood. Treating the child as a subject in the context of the topic of death definitely supports the child's correct development and is expressed, among others, by the openness of adults for a dialogue with children about that topic. That holding of a dialogue is clearly visible in the contents of highly artistic thanatological literature, which does not make one fear death, but familiarizes it through specific language adapted to the age and perceptive capabilities of the child. Familiarizing the child with the topic of death seems particularly important from the point of view of modern culture which approaches death in an unreal way, as well as scientific research confirming that lack of support from the child's environment regarding that topic may result in emotional disorders when the child experiences real death in their own life. Undoubtedly, knowledge of thanatological literature dealing with death in a familiar way, and related to the perception of the phenomenon of death by children in the context of the child's

development should be popularized, especially among parents as well as future and present teachers. It is the adults who open before children a path to a dialogue about death, which is part of existence of every person (Grzybowski 2009:9).

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Plieth-Kalinowska, Izabela & Adam Musielewicz. 2019. *Acceptance and social adaptation of children with developmental dysfunctions*, Bydgoszcz: University of Kazimierz Wielki, ISBN: 978-83-801-8239-4, 136 pp. (paperback)

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ABSTRACT: This is a review of a book entitled *Acceptance and social adaptation of children with developmental dysfunctions,* written by Izabela Plieth-Kalinowska and Adam Musielewicz. The monograph shows the specificity and ways of organising the developmental conditions of a child with a disability functioning in different social environments. The publication contains characteristics of theoretical conditions of disability and practical ways of its diagnosis and examples of supporting activities.
KEYWORDS: child with disabilities, Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD, developmental dysfunction, rehabilitation process

The number of children with various developmental dysfunctions is growing. Therefore, there is a justified need for continuous updating and deepening knowledge about this group of people. Izabela Plieth-Kalinowska and Adam Musielewicz (2019), in their book *Acceptance and social adaptation of children with developmental dysfunctions,* bring the reader closer to selected issues related to attitudes towards disabled people and the influence of various environments on the functioning of a child with impaired development. The authors also review selected ways of working with children. The advantage of the book is that Izabela Plieth-Kalinowska, in addition to her scientific activity, has professional experience as a teacher, so she knows the environment in which people with developmental dysfunctions function. In turn, Adam Musielewicz research interests include socialization, social changes or exclusion. All

these concepts refer to children whose development is disturbed.

In the first chapter, we find a short analysis of attitudes towards people with disabilities in the local environment and reference relationships with peers. The problem is the organization of social support for people with disabilities in the local community. It was pointed out that spending time with people with disabilities could change the negative social attitude. The authors rightly noticed those *rehabilitation activities in which people with intellectual disabilities participate focus primarily on reducing diagnosed dysfunctions, less on helping to regulate interpersonal contacts and supporting in stimulating social activity in their natural environment* (p. 15).

In the second chapter, the authors take up the topic of family conditions for developing and improving the functioning of a disabled child. A deep emotional crisis experienced by parents may disrupt the ability to meet the child's needs. The authors devote a lot of space to parents' experiences related to experiencing a child's disability. They rightly notice that the child's functioning and the whole family depend mainly on the parents' attitudes. The great value of this chapter is to draw attention to the need for formal and informal family support in coping with a difficult situation caused by a child's disability. A model of early development support targeted at parent-child interaction, according to Andrzej Twardowski, was proposed.

The next chapter systematizes the reader's knowledge about the Polish education system for disabled children. The authors refer to legal acts regulating the organization of educational institutions as well as material and financial assistance for disabled children. A critical analysis of the leading education system was made, which is not prepared for the education of disabled children. It was noted that a special school causes certain isolation of disabled children from healthy peers, and inclusive education would be the best solution. According to the authors, the educational proposal of the Ministry of National Education is insufficient about the needs of people with disabilities. Referring to the latest statistical data of the Central Statistical Office, the authors state that still few disabled children have the opportunity to study in mainstream schools or integration classes. Public schools do not have adequate tools to support disabled child and their families, teachers do not have the right qualifications, and the educational subsidy „does not follow a child". It was found that the school now segregates students instead of integrating.

The fourth chapter is an abbreviation of information on the organization of early support for developing a child and his family, which underlines the importance of cooperation between parents and therapists. Izabela Plieth-Kalinowska proposes her own model of cooperation. The model includes possible ways to establish collaboration between specialists and parents, the principles of cooperation in improving contact with children and the principles of joint preparation to implement activities supporting the child. The author's suggestions can be constructive both for specialists who start working with parents of a disabled child, as well as for those who encounter difficulties in contact with parents. At the end of the chapter, the author briefly describes the therapeutic methods.

A joint chapter on the functioning of a child with developmental dysfunctions in the public space (family, school, kindergarten) is based on research following case study

and research principles. Although the book's title indicates a reference to children, case studies for unexplained reasons concern adults. The advantage of this chapter is to describe the benefits of inclusive education.

The penultimate chapter introduces the reader to selected ways of working with children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and Down Syndrome. The structure of this chapter is a bit chaotic, disordered. It is unknown if the presented methods relate to work with the previously described child or just a description of the method. The value of this chapter is the placement of exemplary Individual Educational and Therapeutic Programs (IPET). In the last chapter, the authors raise the topic of peer community influence on the functioning of a child with developmental dysfunctions. The analysis is based on two case studies in which, unfortunately, there is no explicit reference to peer relationships.

The book's structure, and above all, the order of the chapters, is a bit chaotic. In the first and the last chapter, the authors take up the subject of relationships with their peers. Also, the topic of the second and third chapters is repeated in the fifth chapter. Including an issue in one chapter or subsection will help the reader understand the content. The chapter could start with the theoretical aspect and end with an example of a life or case study.

The book's title indicates that it applies to children, while some case studies refer to adults. The terminology used is also not consistent. In some chapters, the authors use the term, *disabled child*, while the *child with developmental dysfunctions in others*. It should be explained to the reader how the authors understand the term *developmental dysfunction*. Despite some critical comments, I greatly appreciate the book. This is undoubtedly an essential source of information about the functioning of children with impaired development in Polish society. Although the authors analyze known problems, and the conclusions are not surprising, I think that the book will find recipients, especially among pedagogy students. Its advantage is that the authors gave specific ways/suggestions for actions that could improve the help system for people with disabilities in Poland. In addition, the book has an extensive bibliography that enhances its quality.

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