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## THE CZECH NANNY AS A “DOOR TO THE MAJORITY” FOR CHILDREN OF VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION: BRINGING UP MIGRANT CHILDREN

Many children<sup>2</sup> of Vietnamese immigrant parents in the Czech Republic are brought up by Czech nannies. These women are hired to perform various activities depending on the age of the child – from changing diapers and feeding the child (first with baby food, later with “typical” Czech meals) to teaching the first Czech words, childhood poems, or singing songs and doing school homework. By hiring a Czech nanny, first-generation Vietnamese immigrant parents respond to the post-migratory challenges of their family lives: the intensification of work life at the expense of family life, their uprooting from the extensive kinship networks to which care can be delegated and resettlement in a country where the trend of re-familization in social policy leaves little support for childcare facilities. For many of them, delegation of child care is the only way to fulfil the migration project and ensure “better tomorrows” for their children. These children and their experiences being brought up by Czech nannies are the focus of this paper.

Here I present an analysis of 20 in-depth interviews with second generation immigrants (aged 16–25) whose recollections of their childhood with their Czech nanny were at the centre of my wider research. The data for this research was collected between April 2010 and November 2012 when I conducted 50 interviews (20 with second generation immigrants, 15 with their mothers, and

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<sup>1</sup> This study was written with the support by the Czech Science Foundation, under the term of the research project “Educational strategies of migrants and ethnic minority youth“ (P404/12/1487)

<sup>2</sup> Both second generation immigrants (born in the Czech Republic) and 1.5 generation (born in Vietnam who came to the Czech Republic at the age of up to 6 years) are included in my sample.

15 with their nannies). I focused on the broader issues of relationships between caregivers, care demanders, and care recipients which are negotiated in the post-migratory family resettlement of Vietnamese families. Interviews covered the following topics: childhood recollections, ties with parents, relations with nanny/nannies, upbringing and role of nanny/parents in it, meanings of family, kinship ties, and belonging. My research focused on those Vietnamese families who hire Czech nannies, not on all Vietnamese families. The study thus reveals the patterns typical in the lives of particular Vietnamese children cared for by Czech nannies, not all Vietnamese children in general.

Briefly, the position of the children I focus on here is shaped by the intersection of the following kinds of ties, all of which impact on their understanding of caregiving, the role of nanny in their lives as well as their positioning in Czech society. These are:

- (1) Relationship of intimacy, emotions generated in the practice of caregiving
  - (a) child's relations with *nanny*, and
  - (b) child's relations with *parents and their parents*.
- (2) Relationship based on caregiving which generates a sense of belonging
  - (a) child's relations with *Czech* nanny, and
  - (b) child's relations with *Vietnamese* parents and grandparents.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how second generation immigrants who experience the intersections of the above-mentioned relationships retrospectively understand the role of their nannies in their childhood and generally in their lives in the Czech Republic (a country which is not the place of birth of their parents, and in 11 cases even not of their own birth).

My analysis of narratives starts with the basic assumption that caregiving entails not only nurturance but above all *the transmission of skills, and social and cultural capital* (Macdonald 2010, Bourdieu 2001). The classic theory of social capital assumes that it is the “mother’s task to transfer the abilities central to social capital to their children” (Kovalainen 2004: 167). Hence, for many mothers who delegate child care the crucial issue is how to transmit cultural and social capital as well as customs and habitus through nannies “who may not naturally carry the same social and cultural assumptions” (Macdonald 2010: 26). Caregiving is culturally and socially specific, performed in a specific socio-cultural context and driven by particular cultural idea(l)s: the culture is actively transmitted in the caregiving. The question raised here is what happens when the children of parents coming from a particular minority and cultural background are brought up by women from the majority culture. If the culture is actively transmitted in caregiving, what is the content of this culture and what is its meaning for children? In answering these questions, I aim not only to relay the results of a particular case study that is in many regards exceptional (reverse ethnic logic, different

class logic, etc.), but above all to acknowledge the meanings of paid caregiving in the lives of (immigrant) children.

My understanding of these issues is conceptually based in two sets of scholarship. First is the scholarship on second-generation children and their up-bringing in the transnational/postmigratory context. In immigrant families caregiving gains importance as a means of transferring ethnic identity and the feeling of belonging. As Phinney *et al* (2001: 138) wrote, "the family is the major socializing influence on children and adolescents within a cultural context (...), and parental attitudes are likely to be important to ethnic identity" (Phinney *et al* 2001: 138). A study of Vietnamese immigrant families in the USA by Nazli Kibria (1993) shows how the postmigratory redefinition of family life goes hand in hand with accentuation of the Vietnamese cultural identity. "Vietnameseness", maintained above all in the realm of family life, is the main point of reference helping immigrants to find a new place in the new country. The author also gives much evidence of the parents' struggle against the Americanization of their offspring in relation to challenges to the gender and generational hierarchies of Vietnamese family life. Furthermore, transcending the borders of national state, many scholars have dealt with the question of how second-generation immigrants who never/rarely visit their parents' country of origin think of their home and homeland (Espiritu 2003, collection edited by Levitt and Walters 2002, etc.). In this context, Diane Wolf (2002) elaborates the concept of "emotional transnationalism", while Yen Le Espiritu (2003) offers the notion of "symbolic transnationalism". Both authors refer to the imaginaries of the homeland which are shaped, *inter alia*, by a person's position in the family/kinship network. In these studies, the role of parents is essential in the process of transmitting cultural values and mediating the ties to relatives who behind in country of origin, as well as attitudes toward the national homeland.

Second is the scholarship on delegated care work seen from the perspective of children. Surprisingly, the research on delegated care work has not paid much attention to the perspective of cared-for children, both children *currently* being looked after by nannies, and adults with the *past* experience of being raised by nannies. The perspective of recipients (cared-for people) is still missing. Most research studies focus on children left behind in countries suffering from care drain, children whose mothers care for Western children; while these Western children enjoy an emotional surplus (Romero 1997, Parreñas 2005). Children cared for by nannies, it is supposed in general research, benefit from global world inequalities, receiving more care than children of immigrant mothers (working as care workers) who stay behind in the country of origin and who lack the daily contact with their mothers. However, the experience of these children is not addressed; these children are considered a passive link in the care work

relationship. My article therefore contributes to the scholarship on care work focusing on the perspective of care recipients and their understanding of various aspects of delegated caregiving.

### VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANT PARENTS DEMANDING PAID CHILD CARE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Vietnamese immigrants are the third largest group in the Czech Republic after Ukrainians and Slovaks. Approximately 60 thousand people live here, which is around 15 % of the entire immigrant population, and 0.6 % of the whole population. Migration from Vietnam to the Czech Republic (and previously the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) was shaped by two radically-differing migration regimes: before 1989 in the context of state socialism it was a strictly state-managed migration between two socialist countries with closed borders; after 1989 it became a classic labour migration shaped by privatization and marketization (see Baláž and Williams 2007, Brouček 2003). This historical specificity of managed migration from Vietnam to the CEE and the continuing migration after the fall of communism in 1989 had a strong impact on the character of the Vietnamese diaspora in CEE which persists to this day (Williams and Baláž 2005). Two features of the Vietnamese diaspora in the Czech Republic are crucial for this article. First is the demographic structure of the Vietnamese population. Compared to other groups of immigrants, the demographic structure of the Vietnamese immigrant population is progressive, with a high percentage of women and children. According to the Czech Statistical Office, in 2005 21% of Vietnamese population were children 0–14 years old (in the Czech population 15%). 78% of the population are of productive age (15–64), and only 1% were older than 65 years old.

Second, the employment structure of the Vietnamese population is characterized by high occupational concentration. As Williams and Baláž (2005, 2007) have noted, a large proportion of Vietnamese immigrants are entrepreneurs in wholesaling and retailing, i.e. owners of small shops and/or open-air markets. Self-employment is thus the crucial aspect of their work life in the Czech Republic. In 2009 around 88 000 (63 000 men and 25 000 women) of foreigners in the Czech Republic held a valid trade licence; of these some 36 000 were Vietnamese (25 000 men and 11 000 women). As mentioned above, self-employment became a strategy for legalizing one's residence (Hofírek and Nekorjak 2009). The parents of all of my interviewees (with one exception) were entrepreneurs – usually both father and mother held the trade licence; sometimes they work in one shop together, sometimes each of them has his/her own shop

(usually selling clothes). The huge time requirements of such employment result in the parents’ lack of leisure time and time spent with their children. As one of my interviewees described:

They work there [in Vietnam] normally as Czech people do here, up to five-six pm. And after work they have their free time, they have their families. We work there, but we have leisure time and the time for our families. But it is not here. Here it is simply every day at work.

Phong<sup>3</sup>, 23-year-old boy born in Vietnam

Therefore, parents who came to the Czech Republic to pursue a better future for their children than they themselves had (because of war and poverty in the regions they came from) have only a limited possibility to be with their children. The pervasive ambivalence of a family life that is overwhelmed by work life expresses itself in the fact that parents are in the Czech Republic *because of* their kids; however, they are not here *with* them.

The specific position of Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech society – maintaining the dual-earner household with no or little support for child care either from kinship (only 1% of the Vietnamese population here was older than 65 in 2005), or from the state, leads parents to find a Czech nanny. Consequently, having a Czech nanny becomes a kind of “norm” within the Vietnamese community. In some cases the nannies pass from one family to another or they are asked to find nannies for their employers’ friends. In the Czech Republic, delegated child care does not have a big tradition; according to statistics, only 1–2% of population employs private child care (Hašková 2008). In sharp contrast to this, the responses of my interviewees indicate that delegated child care is a frequent phenomenon within the Vietnamese community, up to 80–95%. The nannies are usually retired or unemployed women (in rare cases also women on parental leave) for whom working as a nanny is not the main source of income (all of them have a social wage from the state, and at the same time the salary for caregiving is far below the minimal salary), and it is rather a way to fill time than a pure breadwinning activity. None of my nanny-interviewees (N = 15) perceived caregiving as a job, and the children in my sample emphasized that their nannies did not do caregiving only for money, but wanted to find a fulfilling activity after retirement and satisfy their need to be needed (which can no longer be experienced with their own children or grandchildren).

There are several constellations of the nanny-child relationship in terms of the spatial and temporal arrangements, and strength of the ties, as well as their

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<sup>3</sup> All names were changed.

persistence. The age of the child at the moment when the family seek for a nanny varies between several months (in case of children born in the Czech Republic) to several years (in the case of migrating children). It is quite common that the mother returns to workplace when the child is six months old, and from this time most of responsibilities around the child are on nanny's shoulders. This includes not only caring for the child's well-being but also activities outside the realm of the household – such as visiting the doctors or later the parent-teacher meetings. This is true especially in cases when the child starts living at the nanny's place (6 of my interviewees) and sees the parents only once per week/month. From the logic of this arrangement it is obvious that many parents temporally lose the control over the child's up-bringing when they lose daily contact with them. Although retrospectively the children understand their parents' decision, for some it becomes a painful issue filled with frequent misunderstandings between parents and children (caused both by language barriers, and by the differences in worldviews) and lack of common memories (which are overwritten by shared memories with the nannies).

The intensity of contact between cared-for child and nanny as well as the definition of caregiving outside the logic of employment, result in the emergence of close ties between nanny and child, ties characterized by emotionality, reciprocity and intimacy. In some cases these ties are temporal and the contact between child and nanny is ended when the family stops needing the nanny (which is usually when the child enters kindergarten, primary school, or when he/she is old enough to take care of him/herself). In many cases, however, the relationship between nanny and child is permanent and the contact is maintained until the child's adulthood.

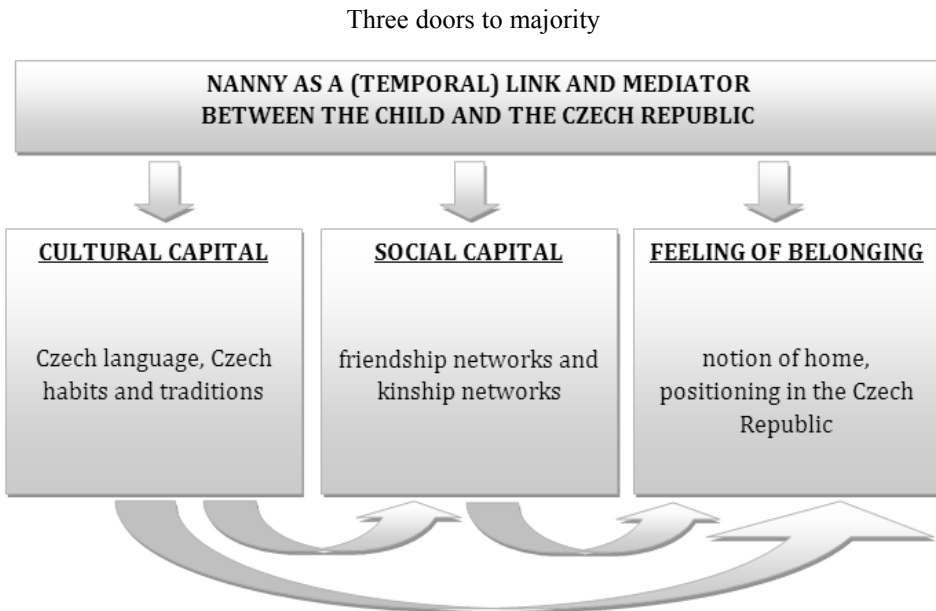
## DOORS TO THE MAJORITY AND THEIR MEANINGS FOR CHILDREN

In this section I will present the findings of my analysis that traced the children's emic understanding of the caregiving and the role of nanny in their lives in relation to the Czech Republic and its majority population. To address these issues, and departing from my analysis of interviews, I acknowledge the role of nannies as providing children with a "door to the majority". For this notion I am inspired by Judith Rollins's metaphor of "window to exotica". In her book on the domestic workers and their relationship with employers, she writes that in some cases employers use their domestic workers as "windows to exotica" (Rollins 1985: 157, 166). By this she means the constellation of unequal relationships between the employer and employee, where the latter provides

insight in her own “exotic” culture for the former. Observing ethnic/racial/class differences (in many cases the domestic worker is the only contact with the “third culture” for employers, see also Anderson 2000) provide white middle class women confirmation of their prevalent stereotyping and justification of a system which maintains particular types of persons in a position of disadvantage. The basic difference in Rollins’s analysis and mine lies not only in the reversed ethnic logic of employees and employers, but in the status of what the former provides to the latter: while foreign domestic workers provide their employers *a look* at the exotic culture (hence the “window”), the Czech nannies, as I will argue in this section, offer Vietnamese children with *an entrance* to the majority culture (hence “door”).

During the interviews I listened to many stories from the children’s childhood in which the nanny played the main role. Explicitly or implicitly the role of nanny was acknowledged as being *the mediator, the link between the child and the Czech Republic*. To address this mediation, I sorted the children’s accounts into three sets (doors) in order to depict the differences in the way they operate during the process of what children called “adaptation”.

Figure 1.



The figure illustrates the content of each door and their relationships, as it appeared in the narratives. These are the different layers – interconnected

and deriving from each other – of the everyday life of children brought up by Czech nannies. Each of them appears with a distinct intensity in the narrative of a particular interviewee. Generally, the first door was present in all interviews and all children put a huge accent on it, claiming that it was the most important “contribution” of the nanny to their lives. The second and third doors were emphasised especially in interviews with children who developed closer ties with their nannies (in fact the majority of my interviewees). It is apparent that the door to cultural capital serves as the path to the other two doors, as it is the base on which the relationship between nanny and child is enacted. Similarly, the second door of social capital partly enables the existence of the third door of belonging.

Before I turn to a description of each layer, it is important to highlight the *temporality* of the relationship and importance of these doors in the lives of the interviewed children. It is obvious that the role of nanny and the ties between nanny and child shift over time as the child grows up and his/her needs change. When the child starts primary school, finds friends (both Czech and Vietnamese), and starts spending more time with parents, the position and influence of the nanny in child’s life is weakened. However, in his/her early childhood the nanny is in many cases the primary caregiver, the closest person to the child, performing the majority of tasks around nurturing and up-bringing. She plays an important (if not the most important) role in child’s socialization, passing her cultural and social capital to the cared-for child.

#### *Door 1: Learning Czech and Experiencing Czech Habits*

All the children in my sample reported the essential role of their nannies in helping them to become part of the Czech imagined community by showing and teaching them the hidden curriculum of “life à la Czech”. In their narratives, the nanny often plays the role of the *mediator of Czechness* where Czechness is understood as the conglomerate of language, cultural facts, traditions and customs. Speaking Czech and being aware of Czech habits was interpreted as a necessity for their future life, the first step of their wished-for adaptation in the Czech Republic, and the roles of nanny as language teacher and tradition transmitter were highlighted across my sample.

*The nanny as Czech language teacher.* During my research I observed a huge discrepancy between the parents’ (first generation migrants) and children’s (second generation) knowledge of the Czech language. While the parents’ ability to speak Czech was limited to the vocabulary they needed for their work, their children were fluent in Czech since early childhood: even though Vietnamese was their mother tongue, it was the Czech language in which they felt the most comfortable and which they placed as their number one language. The role of



nanny in language socialization was indisputable. Since early childhood, long before they enter the first state educational institution (kindergarten or primary school), the children are in constant daily contact with the Czech language – including childhood poems, children’s songs, Czech fairy tales, etc. Many nannies also reported that child’s first word was in Czech and not in Vietnamese, as they spent more time with their Czech nanny (so-called “active time” over the day) than with their Vietnamese parents (with whom they were usually only sleeping under one roof).

Being brought up and socialized through and in the Czech language was interpreted as the biggest advantage of having a Czech nanny. However, at the same time, it was simultaneously described by some children and parents as a disadvantage because with Czech nannies the children were deprived the chance of learning Vietnamese. As one mother in my sample told me, for her and her children in some regards it would be better to have had a Vietnamese nanny, because with her the children could learn *their* language (meaning Vietnamese), while later in kindergarten they could learn Czech. Both for children and for mothers, language was perceived as the essential aspect of the children’s understanding of their place in the Czech Republic. As Tuyet, a 22-year-old girl born in Vietnam put it: “I am thinking in Czech, I have dreams in Czech.” Likewise Thi, a 21-year-old girl who came to the Czech Republic at the age of 5, told me that “I love Czech language, so ‘me and the Czech Republic’ it means the Czech language to me”, adding how quickly she learned Czech in her Czech family where she lived till the age of 11 – and also how quickly she lost all knowledge of Vietnamese, as she was in touch with her parents only a few hours a week. The children know they would learn Czech language at school; however, they appreciated that the spontaneous and non-problematic learning with their Czech nanny laid the grounds for their further success in educational system.

*The nanny as the transmitter of cultural facts, traditions and customs.* Like language learning, the understanding of Czech traditions came spontaneously in the lives of children in my sample. Over the course of the calendar year and during the years spent in the Czech family, the children could observe and experience the many events which – like pieces of a puzzle – gave them a colourful and meaningful picture of Czech cultural values and Czechness. The character of these events varied, from celebrations of big holidays surrounded by many traditions (such as Christmas or Easter), but also the smaller events in the common life of Czech families. Bui, a 19-year-old girl, described her first visit to a rural pig-slaughtering. Trai, now a 25-year-old man, told about fishing with the husband of his nanny, and Ms. Orlová (one of the nannies in my sample) showed me during the interview the photos in which Dui, her cared-for Vietnamese girl, was dressed in folk costume for a folk celebration (consecration

day) in the village where they lived. The nanny laughed when she told how people stared at a Vietnamese girl in typical Czech costume and frantically took pictures of her. Referring to the cultural differences between Vietnam and the Czech Republic, the children emphasised that experiencing some of these events would have been difficult or impossible if they had not had their nannies. Among the activities that Mia, a 16-year-old girl, stressed in the interview was Christmas, which was inevitably connected with her nanny and could not be experienced without her:

Mia: We are always with them on Christmas and have carp and potato salad [a typical Czech Christmas meal].

Adéla: So right on Christmas Eve?

Mia: Yes.

Adéla: So there are many of you there...

Mia: Grandmother, our family, that's five people, and then her daughter with her husband and two kids. Ten people together. Besides they take the dogs...

Adéla: It must be awesome, with a big tree. And so it is since childhood?

Mia: Since childhood, we spent Christmas there with my granny. To be honest, I cannot imagine the Christmas atmosphere at home because in Vietnam Christmas is not celebrated much, so...

The inseparability of particular events from the figure of the Czech grandmother was also articulated in other interviews. Tuyet, whose grandma had passed away, reported that the first Christmas without her “was not genuine”, nor was the preparation for it (such as making the traditional Christmas confections). These accounts make evident the exclusive role of the nanny in transmitting the cultural traditions and the “lessons” of daily life.

In summary, when it comes to the first door, the second generation immigrants in my sample put a huge emphasis on the role of the nanny in mediating direct and personal contact with the Czech environment. This was interpreted as one of the most important aspects of their childhood. Many of them concluded that they would surely *know* about Czech culture and traditions from school and friends, but thanks to their nannies they could *live* these traditions and experience them as *authentic*. In other words, it is the education system which passes on the cultural memory, and the nanny who passes to children the ordinary, daily, folk content of this memory. In accordance with the motto “knowing is not experiencing”, my informants pointed out many small events which – thanks to their nannies – allowed them to “learn to adapt” in Czech society (as many of them put it). At the same time, having a Czech nanny enabled them to understand *where* to adapt and what it means to adapt to an environment which is, thanks to the nanny, less unfamiliar.

*Door 2: Being Part of Social Networks*

When recalling her childhood Khanh, a 20-year-old girl, described the time spent with her Czech grandmother in the following words:

It was that I felt the part of family. I went with her to see her friends, she took me everywhere and it was automatic that I was with her and other people knew that I come with her. Or when she went to see her daughter, I call her aunt Jana, I came with her too and immediately I went to play with her children.

Like the experiences of other children in my sample, in this account Khanh depicted two kinds of networks into which they could incorporate through their nannies. Both of them had crucial impact on children’s understanding of their relationship to their nannies, as well as to their current images of belonging to their homeland (see below).

First are *networks based on the nanny’s friendship ties*. “People knew that I come with her,” Khanh told me, and described how the friends of her nanny got so used to her presence that when she did not come with her nanny, they were asking where she is and how she is. Caregiving the Vietnamese child caused many nannies problems with their existing friendship ties. For instance, Ms. Dudková reported how some of her friends negatively reacted to her decision to become a nanny, asking her how she can do this job *for the Vietnamese*. She immediately ended her contacts with these people. The same nanny also reported how often she mobilized her social capital to help the cared-for child (for example with teachers or doctors).

And second, more importantly, are *the social networks based on kinship*. As already noted above, the ties between nanny and child are characterized by the emotionality, reciprocity and intimacy. An excerpt from interviews with Mia and Khanh showed that children often call their nannies “grandmother”. This is not only a rhetorical strategy for making sense of the caregiving relationship coded in the context of family life (Murray 1998). More than this, the daily intensive caregiving establishes kinship ties between Czech nannies (grandmothers) and Vietnamese children (grandchildren). The child becomes the part of nanny’s family – for Khanh the nanny’s (grandmother’s) daughter becomes her aunt and her husband her uncle, etc. The children of course know that they have grandparents (their parents’ parents) in Vietnam, but in many cases their relationship with the Czech grandmother (being immediate, intensive, and filled with shared memories) is of same or even greater importance than with their “blood” relatives left behind.

“When I went somewhere, I went there with my grandma,” Khanh and other interviewees stated. The inseparability of the unit of nanny and child

(grandmother and grandchild respectively) was the most important outcome of the child's incorporation into the nanny's network, and the significance of this unit manifested itself in three respects (the third of which is elaborated in the next section). First because it strengthens the ties between the two actors by enabling them to create shared memories and to get to know each other very well. When the nanny becomes the grandmother and the cared-for child a grandchild, the activities performed in caregiving take on a new significance. They start to be labelled as "grandma activities", the activities a child usually does with a grandmother in the Czech Republic (and which because of the physical distance the children cannot do with the mother's mother or father's mother), and which the Vietnamese child can do only with a Czech grandmother (and not with parents). A typical example mentioned in all the interviews were holidays spent at grandma's. From many interviewees it seemed like the grandmother was the epitome of childhood; the time spent with her was described as active and filled with many events which created a relationship based on mutual trust and mutual responsibility. This contrasted with the image of childhood spent without a grandmother, with parents only: "without my granny I would be alone, or with my parents at the marketplace." Intensive daily caregiving lays the groundwork for the knitting of kinship relations between nannies (grandmothers) and children (grandchildren).

It also shapes the external boundaries between the nanny-child unit and other people. The nannies (and to a lesser extent the children) reported many instances of being asked by various people about their caregiving. Their friends wondered why they do it; passers-by asked them about their ties to children who were *evidently* not their own: "How did you get to this child?" "Is it your child?" "You do it for the money?" These questions were addressed to the nannies by various people on the street, in the shops, on the bus, etc. The nannies usually employ the strategy of saying they were related to the children, claiming that the children are theirs, that their son/daughter has Vietnamese partner. The nanny's statement that "the child is mine" played an important role for many of my children-interviewees who must field questions coming from strange people. For instance, Hanh stressed how her nanny without any hesitation affirmed that she is her granddaughter, which she retrospectively interpreted as a sign of emotional bond and shared intimacy; it gave her the feeling of being loved, belonging to a common network with the nanny, and being "her own grandchild".

### *Door 3: Feeling of Belonging*

As with the second aspect of the second door, the unit nanny-child operates as the mediator between the child itself and the Czech Republic. The nanny who declares that the child is hers provides this child not only with emotional

satisfaction, but she also gives him/her the message “I am here for you and I will protect you”. The consciousness that there is such a person, one’s grandmother, to whom the child can turn, was retrospectively for many children an essential step towards their (temporal) acceptance of the Czech Republic as homeland. Yen, a 19-year-old girl born in the Czech Republic, told me that if she had any problem during her childhood, she would run to her grandmother and asked for help (for example when quarrelling with her mother). She described the role of her nanny in the following words:

The most important thing I felt those days was that I just had a grandma. When kids say “I’m going to grandma’s”, so I also had such a grandma. You know sometimes it is hard to stay here only with mum and you have no other support. That is what I felt when I was small. Now I rely on myself, but before I just felt that with grandma, I had some kind of certainty and support.

In Yen’s narration two issues become prominent. First is the symbolic need for a grandmother as a sign of the “normal” family life which can make her life in the Czech Republic more comfortable. Likewise, Minh, a 17-year-old boy born in the Czech Republic, described his need for a grandmother in the following words: “It is, you know, that you just can say ‘I have a grandma’, just the word.” For children who lack the extended kin networks (usually only their parents are in the Czech Republic, in some cases they have aunts and uncles here), a Czech grandmother who is always here for the child becomes the main anchor in their family life.

The second issue is articulated in Yen’s “I had some kind of certainty and support”. The feeling of safety was echoed in the interviews as the main component of the definition of home – both home as family and home as national homeland (Boehm 2012). In many cases, hence, the nanny was part of children’s imaginations of home. Han, an 18-year-old girl born in the Czech Republic, narrated to me her life story, putting a huge emphasis on her current feeling of uprootedness. “I do not know where I belong,” she complained, and identified the source of her uncertainty in her parents’ decision to migrate. In her view, the parents took her home from her when they left Vietnam. However, the feeling of belonging “neither to Vietnam, nor to the Czech Republic” was not part of her life when she was a child. As child, she understood her place in the Czech Republic in relation to her nanny. Han told me:

She [nanny] gave me home at that time. Now she cannot give it to me because I am thinking differently. But at that time [when I was small] she was the home for me. I would not have left the Czech Republic not because of my friends or teachers but because of my grandma. Because my grandma was my home.

Han was the most explicit among my interviewees about feeling home *through* her Czech grandmother. For many children of Vietnamese parents, not just Yen and Han who are mentioned here, the Czech grandmother plays an important role in the process of settling down in the new country. Their imagination of home is very often connected to family and kinship, as it provides people with sense of belonging to a collective. The Czech nanny, who plays the role of caregiver and above all the grandmother, operates as the link binding the child with the nation state. The strength of the third door to majority the nanny opens to the child lies in transcending kinship ties into home-bonding ties, in knitting the child's relationship to the country through his/her relationship to the Czech grandmother.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has focused on how the children of Vietnamese parents brought up by Czech nannies retrospectively perceive the role of their nannies in their childhood and life generally. My analysis revealed that in children's narratives the nanny and her daily caregiving figures provide them the door to the Czech majority by transmitting to them the "authenticity" of the Czech culture and enabling them to understand and experience what it means to be part of the majority society (by "doing Czech things" and being part of the nannies' social networks). This is not to say that the nannies are the only door for Vietnamese children; on the contrary, children are well aware of the role of the educational system and peer groups in their lives. However, the nannies are the door that shapes the solid ground under their feet, the base on which other relations and competences (the Czech language, knowledge of cultural memory, etc.) are built.

The case of children of Vietnamese parents who are brought up by Czech nannies also shows the functions of caregiving itself. In this article, I have elaborated on the role of caregiving in the transmission of cultural and social capital, which has been acknowledged by many authors. In addition, my analysis revealed the role of caregiving in children's understanding of their place on the globe. Caregiving as the basis of kinship ties (second door) and kinship as the basis of home-bonding (third door) are an essential part of homeland imaginations – in this case both Vietnam and the Czech Republic. Hence for many children their Czech grandmothers become the main point of reference for children's feeling of belonging and understanding of their position in a country which is not their parents' country of origin.

In conclusion, the nannies play the role of a bridge between the Vietnamese "community" and the majority, on the level of integration of second-generation

immigrant children into the educational system and into society in general. Here the burden of integration projects is removed from the state, as this becomes one of the main tasks of the nannies who prepare children for kindergarten, primary school, and generally for life in the Czech Republic. Even though the child's adaptation to the Czech society is not the reason why the parents look for Czech nannies, this result of delegated caregiving is more than welcomed by parents, teachers, and the children themselves. But there are also hidden costs to such arrangements – the gap between well-integrated second generation children and their first-generation parents for whom an intensive work life makes such integration difficult. When the child is old enough (usually around the age of 13), he or she takes over the responsibilities around the household – including not only cleaning, cooking or caring for younger siblings; but above all the children become intermediaries between their parents and the Czech society (usually bureaucracies) by becoming the interpreters and experts in the Czech environment. Having been provided with a door to the majority by their nannies, their growing up is now becoming the “window to the majority” for their parents.

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