

RIPENING BANANAS: A CASE STUDY OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICTS WITHIN THE VIETNAMESE DIASPORA IN CZECHIA

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To show the nature of the inter-generational conflicts within the Vietnamese diaspora living in the Czech Republic (CR), the chapter analyzes four main areas of these conflicts, i.e., disputes between children and their parents over education and future career, the children's intimate relationships and choice of marital partner, and following the Vietnamese traditions of the 1.5 and second-generations of the diaspora. Also the endless efforts of the first-generation Vietnamese to maintain the good reputation of the family in the diaspora is depicted as additional source of inter-generational conflicts. The analytical data were collected through participant observation in four families over a period of three years, and through semi-structured interviews with 20 members of the second-generation and 19 members of first-generation. The chapter also shows that those conflicts, together with the racist/xenophobic attitudes of the society at large, are the main agents in the identity formation of the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese living in CR. It argues that, as a result of those antipodal identity-making agents, the identity of the young Vietnamese living in the CR is articulated as an exclusive cultural identity located somewhere in between the Czech and Vietnamese socio-cultural environments.

Keywords: Vietnamese diaspora, family system, ethnic economy, intergenerational conflict, partner choice

1. Introduction

*I think in Vietnamese when I am with Vietnamese people
and in Czech when I am with Czechs.*

(Anh, male, 32 years old,
moved to the Czech Republic
at the age of 13)

Roughly four million people of Vietnamese descent are living in diaspora all around the world. Of those, approximately 62,000 are living in the Czech Republic. The last census of 2021 shows that at least 15,391 of those people are between 18-40 years old and 5,935 of them were already granted Czech citizenship (Czech Statistical Office 2021).

Some of the existing studies (Broucek 2017; Nozina and Kraus 2020) suggest that first-generation Vietnamese migrants living in the CR display a tendency to isolate themselves socially and culturally from society at large. Due to their specific socio-political status, cultural differences, and migrant precarities, the main goal of the first-generation is to attain a satisfactory degree of socio-economic security for them and their whole family/kin, including those in Vietnam (Mai 2021). Our research confirms the findings of Yeoh et al. (2013) and Luong (2018) showing that the members of the first-generation consider money the most powerful means of socio-economic security, frequently being used to fulfill family or community obligations, and to satisfy one's emotional needs.

The first-generation (13 out of 19 respondents) reported that in order to earn money and resist the migrant precarities, they establish family business networks, open to their children.¹ But the first-generation (15 out of 19 respondents) believes that these networks can properly work only if the children share the same socio-cultural values with them. To ensure the children's socio-cultural affinity, the children are expected to follow the family traditions (at least celebrate the ancestor day, Lunar New Year), internalize the Vietnamese socio-cultural values and display proper social behavior (17 out of 19 respondents). Another related problem is the strong desire of the first-generation to maintain a good image of the family, especially within the local community/diaspora and in their natal villages in Vietnam. Part of the good image of the family is the children's success in study, job, and personal life (16 out of 19 respondents).

Nevertheless, the 1.5 and second-generations have grown up in a very different socio-economic environment. As their parents, mainly economic migrants, had to work

¹ The children are supposed to, by means of education, work or marriage, to economically secure their own lives. If possible, they should also take over the moral duties of their parents towards the family/kin members who are in need, including those from Vietnam (Mai 2021).

for long hours during the day, the children grew up in the hands of Czech nannies, who, together with the schools, taught them the Czech variety of “Western” socio-cultural values (Souralova 2014, 2015). As a consequence, there is at least partial socialization into Czech socio-cultural values, and the members of the 1.5 and second-generation (17 out of 20 respondents) report only loose ties with the socio-cultural world of their parents. These people mainly speak Czech and are only hardly able to read Vietnamese literature, newspapers, or learning materials. They also demand a relatively high degree of personal freedom, which is not always accepted by their parents. From our research, it is apparently that they developed different socio-political and economic security strategies, emphasizing privacy, warmth, and mutual understanding in intimate relationships, instead of negotiable duties and mutual obligations defined by the social lives and ties of their parents. Individual choice, passion for love, free choice of education, and a job career also seem to be the social norms of the 1.5 and second-generation.

The two generational cohorts also complain that their parents are requiring them to maintain the good reputation of the family within the diaspora and broader family in Vietnam. For them, to behave according to Vietnamese social standards is only an additional psychological burden, which often leads to inter-generational conflicts. Conflicts that, as the young Vietnamese Czech report, become agents in their identity articulation.

2. State of the art

This process cannot escape scholars’ attention, and a relatively huge body of literature exists on the Vietnamese diaspora and its integration into Czech society. Various problems of the Vietnamese and their living conditions, adaptation strategies, and working environment, or how those factors shape the integration tendencies of Vietnamese migrants, have been studied by Hofírek and Nekorjak (2010), Brouček (2017), and Freidingerová (2014). Tung (2001) and Martínková et al. (2012) have further elaborated the life of Vietnamese communities in certain localities, such as Prague and Chomutov. Strašáková (2016) added gender issues to the whole picture. Pechová (2007) researched human trafficking related to the Vietnamese migration and organized crime within the Vietnamese diaspora in the CR and its role in the community formation had also been elaborated (Nožina and Kraus 2016; 2020).

The socio-economic situation of migrant families in the CR has also been of research interest (Uherek et al. 2008; Schebelle and Kubát 2017; Mai 2021). Studies on ethnically or culturally mixed couples and families are rather rare. According to the research of (Leontyeva et al. 2018, 23) almost one-third of the foreigners living in Prague have a Czech partner. The situation with the second-generation

of the Vietnamese diaspora is studied as well. Souralova (2014, 2015) studied the relationships between Czech nannies and analyzed their role in the rearing of Vietnamese children. Freidingerová and Mai (2018) focused on the grassroots activities of young Vietnamese migrants, while Formánková and Lopatková (2018) analyzed the professional life of second-generation Vietnamese migrants in the Czech labor market. Hrebickova (2020) studied the cultural orientation of different generations in the diaspora and Svobodova (2017) tried to understand the younger generations of Vietnamese in the CR from a transnational point of view.

The identities of the second-generation Vietnamese were not systematically studied, but a pilot study on identity development in Vietnamese youth exists. Svobodová and Jánská (2016) showed that, due to similar cultural identity, some members of the second-generation Vietnamese prefer co-ethnic romantic and marital partners. A pilot work on inter-generational conflicts, as it is revealed in online space, also exists (Formánková and Lopatková 2022). Systematic research on inter-generational conflicts and its impact on the identity of Vietnamese migrants in the CR, or mixed Vietnamese partnerships and families, has not been completed, however, and we need a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena.

To better understand these inter-generational conflicts, the chapter focuses on four main sources of conflicts as identified during our research, i.e., the selection of education and job career of the second-generation, their intimate relationships, and following Vietnamese traditions. The last potential source of conflicts is the endless efforts of the first-generation Vietnamese to maintain the good reputation of the family in the diaspora.

The authors of the chapter believe that these conflicts are, in fact, generational conflicts, exacerbated by different levels of integration of the two generations into the host society. As a result of different levels of integration, the two generations maintain slightly different types of transnational identity that, together with two different sets of precarities, faced by the two generations, are reflected in two different concepts of socio-economic security, life strategies and cultural values. The chapter argues that the different socio-economic and cultural values lead to frictions between the members of the two generational cohorts, which significantly influences the identity formation of the younger generations in the diaspora.

At the same time, both migrant groups are facing various forms of exclusion and otherness from society-at-large that, together with close family relations, effectively mitigate the inter-generational conflicts, but further complicate the identity formation of the two generational cohorts. The research indicates that, as a result, the second-generation in the Vietnamese diaspora adopts a kind of floating identity, that is not only ever-changing but also articulated as purely exceptional, i.e., not belonging to the Czech or Vietnamese socio-cultural or political

entity. The nature of the identity will not be elaborated in this chapter. The chapter is only mapping the most important inter-generational diaspora conflicts, as revealed by the respondents of our research, and shows that they are significantly contributing to the identity formation of the younger generations in the diaspora.

3. Theoretical framework

On the theoretical level, the chapter argues that Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of the third space is losing its analytical grip, at least as it is recently over-used in postcolonial scholarship.

In Homi Bhabha's original concept, the third places may have different forms, ranging from the concept of physical third space, complemented by the concept of metaphorical third space, to discourses allowing usage of subversive, ironic, or performative mimicries that create a discursive dissenting environment where the migrants and their extended families "negotiate a hybrid cultural third space [...] to create their own identities." (Tran 2022, 150)

It is basically true that facing precarity is pushing the first-generation migrants to create third spaces that provide the migrants and their extended families with "social spaces" for upward mobilities (Bhabha 1994, 18). These are definitely not places, however, where the members of the second-generation feel free and embodied in their particular particularity (Kraus and Mai 2021).

The problem is that identity formation is not only a matter of personal choice, but is more related to the process of socialization into the two main migrant social groups, the diaspora and the society at large (Pyke and Dang 2003; Sportel 2016). Thus, as in the case of Asian people in Western countries, the identity of the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese living in the CR is formed by their non-white physical appearance in a white dominant society (Min and Kim 2009). In this sense, they may resort to their parents created third space to mock the main social narrations and negotiate their own identity.

But the third spaces are used by various actors for various reasons and our research indicates that the third spaces are used as platforms of the socio-economic and cultural subjunctivization of the 1.5 and second generation. As such, the third space is also a place where the identities of the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese are articulated against the socio-cultural world of their parents. The situation leads to a certain crisis in the identity formation of the 1.5 and second-generation (Freidingerová and Nováková 2021; Min and Kim 2009; Zhou and Bankston 1994) who juxtapose their identity in between the two (Vietnamese and the Czech) cultural and socio-economic environs.

As a result, the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese in the Czech Republic developed a hybrid identity which can be characterized as "bicultural in between"

(Bun Dorais 1998; Pike Dang 2003), or a hyphenated identity strongly related to their ethnicity, but without directly referring to the country of origin (Baldassar, Pyke, and Ben-Moshe 2017). In the CR, in contrast, the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese are not invisible (Min and Kim 2009), and are not assumed to be non-citizens (Pyke and Dang 2003), or considered members of a broader Asian diaspora (Barber 2015). The Vietnamese have been recognized as the only non-European Czech ethnic minority since 2013, with 1.5 and second-generation considered as well-integrated into society at large and valuable citizens of the CR.

In this sense, the chapter argues that at the beginning of the inter-generational conflicts are different sets of socio-cultural identities and life strategies (Kibria 1990, 1997) that developed from the different sets of precarities² faced by the two diasporic generations. Those different identities, together with different levels of integration into Czech society, lead to the different socio-economic behavior of the two generations that produce various inter-generational conflicts. In this situation, the 1.5 and second-generation in Vietnamese diaspora adopts a kind of floating identity, that is not only ever-changing, but also as an identity of not belonging to any socio-cultural and political entity as we know them today. This identity is a pure particularity and exceptionality of the self-determination defining those who identify themselves as the Others. And that is what the chapter will be about.

4. Methodology

The chapter adopts anthropological approaches to analyze the nature of the inter-generational conflicts, the different sets of identities, and the different visions of the socio-economic roles of the family in the lives the two diasporic generations. The respondents were selected through the snowball method. First, they were informed about the research and tested through informal interviews. Only if they agreed with their participation in the research, were they provided with informed consent and interviewed.

The analytical data were collected through interviews with 20 members of the 1.5 or second-generation, and 19 members of first-generation Vietnamese living in Brno, Prague and Olomouc. These data were supplemented by engaged observations of the daily life in four Vietnamese families in Olomouc, Brno, and Prague. The data collection, together with its preliminary stage, took place over a period of three years from 2019 to 2022.

The three cities were selected because of their large size Vietnamese diaspora, relatively cosmopolitan social environment (where we expected less xenophobic

² Than can be further divided according to the gender and sexual orientation.

attitudes from local people) and stable job/business opportunities for the young generation. But, apart from two respondents from Prague and two from Brno, all of the people involved in the research have migrated from small cities and villages all around the CR to larger cities. Only recently, they settled in the city where they were interviewed.

By the term “bananas,” we are referring to the respondents from the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese Czech, who were born in the CR, or came at an early age (up to 7 years old).³ Among the 20 people, there were 10 females and 10 males (6 from Olomouc, 7 from Prague and 7 from Brno). Eight of them were born in Vietnam and moved to the CR at ages ranged between 3-7 years old, while 12 respondents were born in the CR. At the time of the interview, 18 respondents have Vietnamese parents; 2 respondents have Vietnamese fathers and Czech mothers. Four respondents could not speak Vietnamese but were fluent in Czech and English.

There were five couples among those from the 1.5 and second-generation (three already married) and ten single people, all with experiences with romantic relationships. The average number of ex-partners differs significantly from 2 to 7 (the girls have an average of 3 partners, and the boys tend to have 5). The age of the respondents also differed significantly, the youngest was 18 years old, and the oldest was 34 years old. Over this time frame, however, all ages were almost equally represented. Twelve of the respondents have a university education, at least at the bachelor's level. The rest, eight people, are not interested in higher education. Half of the respondents were students or graduates at the moment of the interview. All of them have work experience. Ten of the respondents were working in the service sector, five were in various administrative positions, and three were self-employed entrepreneurs. Finally, two worked as artists.

Among the respondents of the first-generation, there were eight couples and four individuals (3 men, 1 women). Three of these people came to the CR before 1989, eight during the 1990s, four respondents in the 2000s, and five in the 2010s. Four couples were running convenient shops *večerka*, two people sold merchandise on Vietnamese markets in Brno and Prague, four owned Vietnamese restaurants and three couples were running shops selling cheap garments in Olomouc, Brno and Prague.

³ We are aware of a certain controversy over the term *bananas* and its limited analytical value. But, the term was invented possibly in the U.S. by the second generation of Vietnamese to describe their complicated ethnic identity, i.e., as looking Asian, but inside being culturally western. Moreover, during the research most of our respondents refer to themselves as *banana*. In this situation, we are using the term as a provocative title of the chapter.

The interviews, collected by three academics,⁴ usually lasted from 1.5 to 2 hours. Interviews lasting over 3 hours were not exceptional. All the members from the first-generation were interviewed in Vietnamese. Eight interviews with the 1.5 and second-generation were conducted in Czech, six in Vietnamese and six in English. The selection of language was a matter of convenience. The research team consists of three people, two Vietnamese scholars, one Czech. All the researchers were fluent in Vietnamese and English, but two do not speak Czech. Given the language barriers, the ultimate choice of language was on the side of the respondents. No interpreters were used. None of the researchers can be considered a member of the local community, albeit two are Vietnamese.

The engaged observation of the families took place especially during weekend visits and during the regular family gatherings on various occasions, such as the celebration of New Year, espousals, opening a new family business, birthday parties, or weekend feasts. During these gatherings, the families not only discuss family matters but also plan the future businesses of the family and chat about the educational possibilities for their children, or discuss the problems of their families/kin in Vietnam, etc. The families were informed about the intention of the researcher to select them for research purposes, this having been explained in great detail. After six month of observation, four families of nine observed were selected, mainly on two criteria. They must consist of at least four diasporic generations, i.e., those who came 10-15 years ago, their children being classified as 1.5 or second-generation and newcomers (5-7 years ago) with small children. The second criteria was their willingness to participate in our research.

All the respondents and members of the observed families (except for small children) were provided with all the information related to our research, its purposes, and outcomes. They were provided with informed consent in three languages, Vietnamese, Czech and English. All of them agreed to participate in the research only under the condition of anonymity, especially when publishing their statements in the text. In order to ensure their anonymity, all the names were changed, but some personal information about the age, education, or the place of living were preserved in order to provide the reader with the basic information about the respondents' background, which nevertheless cannot serve to identify the respondents.

When analyzing the collected data, no analytical software was used. The answers of the interviews were transcribed into Vietnamese and English and consequently analyzed by the authors of the chapter. First, the main areas of the inter-generational conflicts were identified. Then, the most typical reasons,

⁴ The chapter is dedicated to the research project "Negotiating Intra-ethnic Partnerships and Intra-Generational Conflicts within the Czech Vietnamese Diaspora" sponsored by GAČR under the number 21-223985.

patterns of behavior and the process of the conflicts were found. Finally, the most typical cases were selected to demonstrate the research problem. The final analysis was summarized in this text which was divided into several sub-chapters.

After the description of our methodology, the chapter analyzes four domains of inter-generational conflicts as revealed by our respondents, i.e., 1) the conflicts over the education and job career of the children, 2) the conflicts related to the intimate relations and marriages, or 3) problems of the second-generation with following Vietnamese traditions and finally 4) maintaining the good reputation of family within the diaspora/community. Before the concluding sub-chapter, the chapter will 5) discuss discrimination and racism against Vietnamese in the CR.

5. Education and job careers

The respondents from the first-generation revealed that they consider good university education as a precondition for their children to have a satisfactory job, this being considered a measure of family success. (Kraus and Mai 2021). Not in all cases, however, did the children agree with their parents and many of them preferred working without a university education. In eight cases of twenty interviews, the children refused to study at the university level. In five cases, however, the parents insisted on a university education, despite the children's position. Ultimately it was revealed that the educational requirements were negotiable:

My parents wanted me to study and study, and then go to college. My dad was so strict with me, so when I dropped out of my university, I thought he would punish me. But, he did not. I told him that I did not like studying at university, and I did not know what I was doing there. I wanted to be a dancer. We discussed it and told me that it was ok, I can do whatever I want. (Chuong, male, 26 years old, moved to the Czech Republic at the age of 7)

It should be recalled, however, that the majority of Vietnamese people are economic migrants who came to the CR in order to improve the living standard of their families, including providing their children with better educational opportunities (Nožina and Kraus 2020; Souralová 2016; Klačková 2017). In our research, respondents from the first-generation (10 out of 19 respondents) revealed that children's education is considered a part of their own success. For these people, a good study record of their children was also a way to promote the good reputation of the family within the local migrant community/diaspora and within the natal family/kin at home. As such, they are willing to support, or in some cases even push, their children to achieve higher education. As one of them puts it:

Actually, my son is not good at school, and I do not know how he can obtain a university education. I believe, however, he is a good and

communicative manager. We have several shops, and I would need him to help me with these shops. But, when we were leaving Vietnam, I told my parents that the children could have a better education abroad. Now, the family sometimes asks me about it. Moreover, many of the children in the family/kin are studying at good universities in Hanoi. How can I tell them that he only graduated from high school? (Hung, male, 55 years old, came to the Czech Republic in 1984)

Over time, the emphasis on education and the mass media celebration of the good performance of the second-generation developed into a myth of Vietnamese children as excellent students. While this may be correct in certain aspects (Vavrečková and Dobiášová 2012; Lee and Zhou 2014; Klačková 2017), it is apparent from our research that the myth exerts pressure on less talented members of the second-generation. Thirteen respondents report that their parents are using newspaper articles celebrating Vietnamese children as exceptional students to complain about their poor performance in school (Huong, female, 22 years old, born in the Czech Republic). In any case, the future prosperity of the children, or at least the financial independence of the children, is of the parents' concern. Only in four cases, mainly due to financial reasons, the parents prefer their children to work without a university education:

I was studying in Prague, but my parents did not want me to study. After I graduated from high school, they want me to work and earn money. I was about to go to work, but finally I decided to study. My parents' only concern was whether I will rely on them for money. Since the age of sixteen, I have been working various part time jobs, so I decided to continue like this. Now I am half working, half studying. Its tiring, but I have no other choice and I am trying to continue (with my university education). (Chinh, female, 22 years old, moved to Czech at the age of 5)

It seems that the actual selection of job career is not considered the most problematic in the diaspora families. Practically all our respondents mentioned freedom in the selection of the future career. The only concern of the parents is the financial independence of the child and the stability of the job.

The research also revealed that the parents are not very familiar with the Czech job market and leave the responsibility to find a satisfactory job to the children. At the same time, the parents always try to create a vacancy in their family business (12 of the 20), in case the children will be not successful on the Czech job market. Thirteen interviewed parents prefer their children work outside the ethnic business, in preferred occupations such as doctors, dentists, various kind of engineers or IT specialists, as well as lawyers, economists and businessmen. As one of the respondents from the first-generation puts it:

I have never been competing on the Czech job market. I am working here at the market [Vietnamese business center Olomoucka in Brno] and I hope, my child will have a normal job. Before, I wanted him to be a doctor, but now I just want him to be happy and financially secure. If he needs a job here at the market, I can help him, but I told him to go and work for a Czech company and do what he likes to do. Now he is working for an airline company in Prague, and he is going to marry a Czech girl. I am proud of him, but I do not think he is Vietnamese. (Hung, male, 60 years old, came to the Czech Republic in 1984)

Finally, our research indicates that the children's education and selection of job career may produce some points of friction, but these conflicts do not deeply harm the family relations. The next problem, the children's selection of romantic and marital partners, proves to be a bigger issue.

6. Intimate relations and marriages

In Vietnamese society, family as a social institution plays a much stronger role than in the CR (Nozina and Kraus 2020, 31–2). The family guarantees the basic socio-economic security to its members and is designed "to help its members co-operate economically to satisfy the basic needs of their life: production, consumption as well as those of human reproduction – childbearing, child raising, caring for the elderly, etc." (Pham Van Bich 1999, 3). In Vietnam, it is still a common practice that a young couple live with the husband's parents, at least for a certain period of time (*ibid.*). The family business is one of the most popular business patterns in Vietnam and families usually build complicated networks of family businesses (Hitchcock and Wesner 2009, 273). It is apparent from our research that this popular pattern of family businesses was transplanted to the diasporic life in the CR, where the families build various forms of family businesses in which the entire family can participate. This can effectively help the family fight various obstacles faced by its members. But there are some side effects, and the problem is more complicated.

Generally speaking, the parents do not expect the children to live with them in one household (19 of 19 respondents), but they do maintain joint business ventures in the form of mutually supportive family business networks. The problem is that the parents only exceptionally pay social insurance and know that they will have no paid retirement in the future. To secure their senescence, they plan to rely on one of their children who will take over their well-established business in the CR (12 of 19 respondents). But then, the child who inherits the family business is expected to take care about the aging parents, including the domestic care taking. In this design, a Czech partner may be a crucial problem. The simple reason reported

by 9 of 19 parents is that, due to the different social values, the partner from the society-at-large may not agree on the financial support or domestic care taking of the aging parents.

Although many of the parents do not need the financial assistance of their children when they grow old (12 of 19 respondents), they still oppose a mixed marriage for various reasons. Two of the most important reasons are the language barrier and cultural differences. Another frequent objection of the parents (in 19 out of 19 interviewees) is the high level of divorce in Czech society and the lack of Czech family cohesion. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that the parents strongly oppose the intimate relations of their children with members of the host society. In our research, disagreement over these relationships proved to be the biggest source of conflict between the two generations.

Most of the respondents from the 1.5 and second-generations share similar beliefs on modern partnership. For economic reasons, they prefer free partnership over marriage, even if they have a child or share property with their partner. For all the interviewees, the free choice of partner is the rule, with a preferred sequence of getting to know each other, love, sex, marriage, and children. Marriage is usually, however, not that important in their sequencing (13 out of 20 respondents).

Young people basically have no preferences about the ethnicity of their future partners. Only in 3 out of 20 cases, the respondents declared that they didn't want to have a Vietnamese partner. On the other hand, only one young male mentioned that he would not date or marry a Czech girl. More females prefer or are/were dating/living with, a Czech partner (9 females to 6 males). All of the respondents had a strong preference for mutual understanding and good personal characteristics over the physical appearance of the partner, which is also not a negligible feature of the prospective partner. Only one female mentioned wealth as the most important feature of the partner.

The research reveals that Vietnamese children have certain periods in their lives during which they are closer to their Czech friends (and when they may prefer a Czech partner). These are periodically replaced by times when they are closer to Vietnamese diaspora friends. All except one of the respondents acknowledged that most of the time, they have been making Czech friends, but with two significant exceptions. The first period of making friends with Czechs by Vietnamese occurs between the tenth and fifteenth years of their lives when they start to make use of social networks, such as Yahoo Messenger, Facebook, and other platforms. The second period usually started upon the completion of their education, usually in case they start to work in an otherwise Vietnamese working environment, or after an unsuccessful partnership with a Czech romantic partner.

As the following case demonstrates, the overwhelming majority of the young respondents (16 of 20) revealed multiple romantic experiences with partners from different ethnic backgrounds:

When I was 14 – 15 years old, I had my first Czech girlfriend. She was pretty and good at sports. As such, she was popular among our peers. She was the reason why Czech boys hated me. And they did not know why she loved me, a small Vietnamese boy... Later, I dated a Vietnamese. She was older than me, but she helped me when my father died. Later on, I felt I had been wrong and that dating a banana may be better for me... To be honest, when I was 18 or 19 years old, I had both Czech and Vietnamese girlfriends. In my opinion, Czech girls are easier than Vietnamese girls, they are more open than Vietnamese girls regarding sex, expression of opinions, way of thinking, or way of communication. Vietnamese are different. My girlfriend is now a Vietnamese girl. She moved to the CR when she was 12 years old. Her Vietnamese is better than her Czech. We met each other when we worked together on a project. I was impressed by her and fell in love with her because I could see that we had the same background. We have not married yet, I do not know when, but not now. We have a baby, but I am not ready to marry her. (Nam, male, 33 years old, born in Czech)

The consent of the parents with a romantic partnership does not seem to be a decisive factor in the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese partnerships, but the consent of the parents is welcome psychological support for those young people. Females are more eager to secure their parent's consent than the males – 8 female respondents, compared to 4 males, mentioned that the consent of the parents is important.

All the parents made it clear that they would be happier with a partner of Vietnamese origin. The preference is clearly due to cultural affinity when the parents believe that the possibility of divorce is higher if their child marries a Czech partner. The solid financial situation of the prospective partner, especially in the form of ethnic-oriented businesses, is also considered an advantage by the parents (11 out of 19 cases). Only in one case, a mother advised her daughter to marry a Czech, who may be "more gentle and less bossy than Vietnamese men" in her imagination. (Hien 53, male, came to Czech in the 1980s)

For the majority of the respondents, however, the Czech partner is finally accepted. The ability to speak Vietnamese, higher education (of both the parents and the prospective partner) or a long-term relationship between the two families, and good social status of the Czech partner are all factors facilitating the acceptance of the partner. Some of the parents agree on the children's choice of a Czech partner, because they believe that the children are culturally closer to the Czech cultural

environment and their relationship with a Vietnamese partner may not be stable (8 out of 19 cases).

In practice, the acceptance of the Czech partner may be more difficult. In 4 cases of 19, the parents do not accept the relationship under any terms and, in 1 case, the father ignored the relationship completely (in spite of the girl's protests, he tried to introduce her to a Vietnamese boy from a family owning several convenient shops, *večerka*). In 13 cases, disagreement over the partner ended up in arguments of various intensities. In these moments, the parents argue by referencing the high level of divorces in Czech society, the possibility of premature pregnancy that may jeopardize the child's education, or the loss of prestige in the diaspora/community. In 3 cases, the parents openly threatened the child that they would be disinherited if they married a Czech partner. The thread was also supported by the parents' claim to expel the child from the home immediately if the relationship continued. In two cases, the children were expelled from the home.

The children argue, in contrast, that they are more Czech than Vietnamese, and thus the cultural gap is only imaginative (which usually leads to another round of quarrels about the children's ignorance of their cultural roots).⁵ In four cases, the quarrels developed into a long-term silence, or even temporal interruption of the mutual contacts (two cases). In all the observed cases, the relations were slowly renewed with the hesitant acceptance of the mixed relationship or with a pretense that nothing has happened. Nevertheless, the respondents reported two cases of their friends when the broken family relationships proved to be lasting.

Our research makes it apparent that the romantic relationships and partner choices of the second-generation produce more conflicts between the two generations. For the children, the consent of the parents with their partnership or marriage is important, but not decisive. The majority of the parents prefer a co-ethnic partner. Though, in order to avoid the possible alienation of the children, they usually agree with the mixed relationship. The Czech partner's knowledge of Vietnamese culture, or Vietnamese language proficiency, always facilitates the process of acceptance of the partner by the parents, but it is not necessary. Finally, the parents only take control over peripheral matters, such as setting a proper date for the wedding according to Vietnamese geomancy. In some cases, the parents try to assume control of the wedding rituals that are considered to be social events presenting the success of the family to other members of the community/family/kin. These representations of family success and the second-generation participation in various rituals and diaspora activities are also, however, sources of conflicts that will be elaborated in detail in the next part of the chapter.

⁵ As the children usually try to save the parents' pride, the other arguments are usually left unanswered. In privacy, however, the members of the second-generation express little interest in the rumors among the other members of the Vietnamese diaspora.

7. Following Vietnamese traditions and maintaining the good reputation of the family within the diaspora/community

In Vietnam, family big rituals, accompanied by various feasts,⁶ are social events designed to redistribute the wealth⁷ and share news from different parts of the family. Moreover, these events, together with other community/diaspora activities⁸ and occasional visits of the family in Vietnam, are perceived as ideal platforms to exhibit one's wealth and success (10 of 19 respondents). In one interview, a young couple complained that their parents insisted on organizing the *ăn hỏi* ceremony in Hotel Hilton,⁹ where the groom's father, a successful businessman, planned to rent a whole floor for the celebration. The reviewed couple perceived it as pure snobbishness. In the eyes of the parents, however, fancy organized events have other meanings as well. Ten of the nineteen parents explained that just as many business contracts are informal and, in many cases, the transactions are based on mutual trust, these fancy demonstrations of wealth may be capable of decreasing the transaction costs of their business activities within the diaspora. In the absence of written contracts, the existing wealth of the family may be a guarantee of doing safe business with the family.

In ten cases, the parents believe that part of obtaining trust among business partners is a presentation of harmony and success within the family. In this process, they try to demonstrate that there are no problems within the family/kin that might lead to financial troubles. Part of it involves extolling the children's success and assuring the business partners that the family enterprise will work with no problems. In our opinion, this may be the point where problems between the two generations begin. In order to present the growing child's success, the child is supposed to fit the first-generation moral standards, i.e., have a good education, a successful career, and proper behavior. Part of this may be imperative, albeit denied by the parents (13 out of 19 parents), of an ideal (i.e., co-ethnic) partner. The children's solid knowledge

⁶ Especially celebrations of the Lunar New Year, ancestor day, espousal (*ăn hỏi*), and weddings.

⁷ For example, the Vietnamese wedding is a socio-economic borrowing from the Chinese cultural environment, where the wedding has an economic function. In this tradition, the wedding should be organized by the parents, who invite as many friends as possible. The friends are expected to bring a small financial gift to the couple. The gifts are noted down in big red books. When the other side marries their children, the parents or the couple itself is expected to return a similar amount of money. If we estimate that a wedding may have as many as 1,000 visitors with an average gift of 3,000 Czech Crowns, the family may be able to collect a substantial amount of money that may help the new couple at the beginning of their shared life.

⁸ Such as annual meetings of the community, sport events organized by the local communities and countrymen organizations, or celebrations of various national festivals.

⁹ One of the most expensive hotels in the CR.

of the traditions and rituals themselves is considered part of the family's success that may help mitigate the risk of conflict in the family (10 out of 19 cases).

On the other hand, the members of the second-generation report only a superficial knowledge of the family rituals, little respect for the first-generation in the diaspora, and a strong tendency to select romantic/marital partners based on their own preferences (i.e., regardless of one's ethnicity). They also mention discomfort with participation in these rituals, possibly except for the celebration of the New Year. According to the majority of the respondents from the 1.5 and second-generations, the rites, feasts, and social gatherings were enjoyable during their early childhood, when they could play with other children from the diaspora. Later, however, the parents began to compare and discuss their children's success in school and behavior toward the other members of the community. In many cases (17 out of 19), the evaluation and criticism of the parents were considered a psychological burden. Over time, they have usually developed a certain aversion to participate in those events. In many cases (18 out of 19), they have begun to refuse, or at least hesitate, to participate in these events.

All the respondents reported that it is usually the behavior of the children towards the older members of the family or community that is strongly criticized by the other members of the community/diaspora. Problematic friends from the society at large, premature romantic relationships and poor performance in schools, or poor proficiency in Vietnamese were also strongly criticized by the members of the first-generation:

I don't like to go to these events because when they make some jokes that I don't understand, they think I am stupid or something. Sometimes they even say it out loud. [bitter smile] When I left, I heard them saying that I am "stupid" or something, like "stupid."¹⁰ I think it's the word. (May, female university student, 22 years old, born in the Czech Republic)

From the ongoing research, it seems that these events are used by parents to socialize the children into the diasporic socio-cultural environment, which the members of the second-generation respond to by creating their own identity.

Over time, the children develop various strategies as to how to avoid these events. Interestingly, the refusal to participate in these events is not considered especially problematic – if the absence does not jeopardize the good family reputation. Many children are also exempt from sport and cultural community/diaspora activities, usually if they are living in remote areas, or in case they have study duties. As the research reveals, the social events in the community/diaspora are actually moments when the members of the second-generation realize their otherness

¹⁰ Many parents and members of the first-generation call the children "factory chicken" (*gà công nghiệp*) - honest and stupid.

vis-à-vis the generation of their parents and spaces where the members of the 1.5 and second-generation articulate their own identity – usually against the diaspora, or at least vis-à-vis the first-generation in the diaspora.

This process of identification against the other members of the diaspora will be elaborated further in the section on discrimination and racism. But, at this point, we would like to discuss how problematic rituals and social events in the Vietnamese diaspora produce inter-generational conflicts. For example, the female respondents from the second-generation usually reported that the weddings are not their own celebrations (all 3 couples), but a social events of their parents that involves various burdens on them:

[...] when I was a kid, I dreamed about a wedding that looked like a Western-style wedding. But, when I participated in several weddings of my Vietnamese friends, I was disappointed. These were not their wedding parties, it was an activity of their parents. There were about 900-1000 people. They came to eat, chat and leave. Many of them had to stay in the hallway of the wedding venue because there were no seats for them. These weddings were paid by the parents. I know that Vietnamese people need to give the couple or the parents an amount of money, "*tiền mừng*," but, I do not like this. We do not want to invite lots of people who we do not know. And of course, we'll pay for our wedding party ourselves. (Thi, female, 28 years old, born in Germany, grew up in the Czech Republic)

Many parents also view weddings as burdensome events and occasionally agree on smaller wedding banquets that better suit the children's taste, especially in the case of daughters or younger siblings.

The occasional visits of the natal families in Vietnam are also frequently mentioned as stressful events by the young people in the diaspora. For the members of the first-generation (11 out of 19 cases), the visits (together with sending remittances) are part of fulfilling their filial duties toward aging parents, or the rest of the natal family/kin. The socialization of the children as members of the family/kin is considered part of the parents' filial duties, and these visits are ideal occasions to introduce one's children to the family. It is again important to successfully present the child as part of the broader family. For 13 of 19 parents, it is essential that the child is proficient in Vietnamese and exhibits a certain degree of socialization to the family, including an ability to participate in family rituals and show proper social behavior.

As the research has revealed, the members of the family in Vietnam usually complain about the strange behavior of the children, their inappropriate social habits, and a lack of respect from the children, who grow up in a different cultural environment. In the majority of cases, grandparents do not consider the children "proper" Vietnamese. The members of the second-generation, in contrast,

albeit usually warmly accepted by the family members, complain that the visits are moments when they are confronted with their otherness stemming from their socialization into the Czech socio-cultural milieu (13 out of 20). No matter how stressful those visits sometimes may be, the majority of the respondents of the second-generation consider the trips more as exotic trips to their cultural roots or returns to their childhood, rather than formal introductions to their broader families. The natal families also gradually accept the different behavior of the children and the children try to behave according to the Vietnamese standards. As one of the respondents puts it:

In Vietnam, I try to behave like a good Vietnamese boy, and in the Czech Republic, I behave like a Czech, especially among my peers out of the diaspora/community. (Anh, male, 32 years old, moved to the Czech Republic at the age of 13)

It is apparent from this statement that the visits do not have any long-lasting impact on integration into the main society. It is clear, however, that those visits in Vietnam and diasporic activities are sources of otherness from the diaspora/kin. It seems that those are the times when the members of the second-generation articulate their identity. Another powerful agent of their identity formation is the racial/xenophobic prejudices of the Czech people. In the following section, the process of identity formation of the 1.5 and second-generation will be explained as part of the discourse on otherness among the three main social groups: the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese CR, the rest of the diaspora, and the members of the society-at-large.

7. Discrimination and racism against Vietnamese in the CR

The respondents from both generational cohorts report various kinds of exclusions and otherness from the society at large. All the 11 respondents from the first generation, who were living in the CR during the 1990s, remember the xenophobic/racist behavior of Czech people. At that time, especially older and middle-aged people looked down on Vietnamese migrants, usually for their cultural differences, and imagined backwardness or poverty in Vietnam. The 1990s was also a period of time when the Czech security forces failed to protect the Vietnamese diaspora, not only against some racist subcultures, such as members of the skinhead movement attacking Vietnamese people for their racial differences, but also against various groups of organized crime, including the Vietnamese one (Nozina and Kraus 2020, 23).

The members of the 1.5 and second-generations also report various experiences with otherness and exclusion. It is apparent from our research that the amount of their experience with racism and various types of exclusion depended on the

place where they grew up. Not surprisingly, they reported more experience with racism, xenophobia, and exclusion from smaller cities and villages. Those who grew up in places where the Romani people live report the strongest experiences:

I faced racism, but it wasn't a problem for me, and I forgot it. When I was in kindergarten, I was not a problem because there were a lot of Gypsies, so they were the problem, not me. No one discriminated against me until I was in secondary school. There, some of my classmates asked me questions about my identity, but because I am different, I didn't care much. I am an introverted person, so I focus on what I want to know and what interests me. (Tuyen, male, 18-year-old, born in the Czech Republic)

Practically all the research respondents from the 1.5 and second-generation reported various forms of discrimination, exclusion, and othering from their peers, who always reminded them of their Asian physical appearance or cultural differences. It seems to be rather common that up to secondary school, the children were called bamboo people with yellow skin and slant-eyes or Chong lazy bones, who cannot perform well in sports. Vietnamese children were accused of eating dogs or being so poor that could eat only noodles. Racially connoted accidents in public transportation, clubs, and pubs were also not uncommon. A similar experience as the following Vietnamese blogger and writer was reported by almost every member of the 1.5 and second-generation:

It was not even a week ago, pregnant, I was using MRT in Prague. I was looking like a whale that was going to deliver twins. A man around thirty stared at me and just sat. After a while, a man wearing a bad suit and looking like bullshit that sold shit pots to elders says to his neighbor: "So and what, anyway they proliferate like rats, trash, slant-eyed." This happened at the moment when I was on my way to visit a friend of mine, the godmother of my book. At the moment, I was just simply too happy for this to ruin my day. Normally, I would react to them, and I would tell them something. Then I would go and relax at a kickbox class. But with my 7-month baby in my belly, I had to remain calm and silent. I can ridicule them all day, but when I return home, I report to my partner, and I cry. It is easy to say fuck those idiots. But it simply hurts. Not that much because of me, but because of the innocent baby. (Jirásková 2018, 232)

On the grounds of those encounters, many members of the second-generation have developed certain feelings of ostracism, which led to a sense of racial hierarchy in Czech society. Six of the twenty respondents explained that in their view, Czech society has the following racial preferences: foreigners from better economically developed countries (especially from the global west) are positively discriminated in society. At the top the racial hierarchy are the Czechs, followed by other foreigners from less economically developed countries such as Vietnamese,

Ukrainians and finally Romani. Some of the respondents (9 of 20), especially females, report that the attitudes of Czech people leads to their occasional feelings of inferiority that results in certain circles in their toady socialization to Czech society.

The majority of the respondents from the 1.5 and second-generation (18 of 20) report having had a Czech nanny who, together with their Czech education, influenced their identity to the degree that they tried to be completely the same as Czech people. Nevertheless, due to the various forms of exclusion and racial prejudices, all 20 respondents developed a sense of otherness. As a response to their feeling of otherness, they began to be more interested in the culture of their parents and tried to make friends with other young Vietnamese people living in the CR. All except for two other respondents,¹¹ reported that the first circle of building identity against the society-at-large began shortly before the time of pubescence, at the moment when they started to use social networks.¹² This period lasted until they started to study at a high school or university. They then again socialized more with Czech friends, but remained aware of their distinctness:

In my teenage years, I didn't think that I would have a relationship with Vietnamese. I only wanted to be with the westerners, because we grew up in the western environment. My sister and I, we were the only two Vietnamese in our school at that time. Teenagers have relationships with many different people, of course I would like to be the same. I would like to find a western guy [laughs]. At that time I didn't know much about Vietnamese guys. I also ended up in a relationship with a western boy. At that time, I was very western, I even did not feel like I was different. But I noticed that the westerners perceived me as Vietnamese. And if they had a choice, they would choose a western girl. It finally changed. At the university, there were more Vietnamese faces and people from different countries. But when I grew more mature, I didn't know who I was, a Vietnamese or a Westerner. Because when I talked to Westerners, they still saw me as Vietnamese. I had a feeling of inferiority. I was very sad, and there was a time I experienced depression. Because I really did not know who I was. When at home, my parents also told me that I was more Westerner than Vietnamese, and when I am outside (of the family) people say I am Vietnamese. (Thi, female, 28 years old, born in Germany, grew up in Czech Republic)

¹¹ Who identify themselves as part of the LGBT community and thus completely different from their peers.

¹² That, among others, helps them find more information and allowed them to communicate with other members of the second-generation in the Vietnamese diaspora, not only in the CR.

In this particular case, the girl tried to better understand Vietnamese culture and attend various cultural activities organized by members of the Vietnamese community/diaspora. Here, she met her fiancée, a 1.5 generation Vietnamese boy, who tried to promote Vietnamese culture among the Vietnamese and Czech people.

Interestingly enough, the members of 1.5 and especially the second-generation are considered as others also by the generation of their own parents, who consider them as "neither proper Vietnamese nor Westerners, commonly called *Tây ngố* or *gà công nghiệp*."¹³

In the past, most Vietnamese people, I mean the generation of my parents, said that I am "*Tây Ngố*" – this is kind of a Czech boy who is silly or a fool. We people from the second generation Vietnamese, are also considered "*Tây Ngố*", meaning those who are not artful or cunning in the same way as the first-generation Vietnamese. (Ha, male, 33 years old, born in the Czech Republic)

At the same time, the research revealed that many members of the 1.5 and second-generations do not have the best opinion of the generation of their parents. Seventeen respondents from the second-generation readily explained their distance from the generation of their parents. As a 25-year-old male puts it, the generation of their parents:

is stubborn and doesn't want to learn new things. They rely on the help of others and are not active. They have depended on others their whole lives, so it's fine for them to rely on others until the end of their life. And they listen only to the words of powerful men. They don't listen the other people's suggestions. That is why they make no effort in learning a little Czech, just to communicate with their own children. With the raising of their own children, they rely entirely on the Czech nanny. Moreover, they don't try to understand the child's character, but always compare their own child with children from other families. (Anh, male, 32 years old, moved to the Czech Republic at the age of 13)

The majority of the members of the 1.5 and second-generation report (17 out of 20) that under these conditions, they create their own identity. Ten of the people reported that their identity is not Vietnamese and not Czech. Seven of those people identify themselves more with the Czech cultural environment, two more with the Vietnamese cultural environment, and one as purely belonging to the Vietnamese socio-cultural milieu. All nineteen respondents reported using alternative cultural

¹³ Literary doltish westerner and chicken from glass test tube, two pejorative labels for stupid foolish and honest people from society-at-large, or for the members of the second generation who are too influenced by western culture and cannot fully understand "the sophisticated nuances" of Vietnamese behavior.

values to better negotiate their position in the other socio-cultural environment. They typically argue for the concept of Western individual rights while advocating their personal choice towards their parents, for example, in the free choice of their education, job career, and romantic partner. At the same time, however, they may argue for the traditional cohesion of the Vietnamese family, while requesting the parents' financial support during their university studies. It is apparent, from the above mentioned, that at least in half of the cases, the members of the 1.5 and second-generation developed an exclusive identity that may be based on their diasporic background, but that may be strongly influenced by internalization of Czech socio-cultural values. An analysis of the identity itself is already, however, beyond the scope of the chapter.

8. Conclusion

The research identified three main areas that are producing inter-generational conflicts in the Vietnamese diaspora living in the CR: the children's education/job career, choices of romantic/marital partners and the lack of knowledge on Vietnamese culture, social behaviour and moral values.

While the conflicts over the children's education and job career seem to be relatively mild, the fiercest disputed conflicts seem to be those over the romantic/marital partners of the 1.5 and second-generation. It is especially, however, the subjectivization of the young people into the Vietnamese socio-cultural milieu (in the form of conflicts over the second-generation's ability to follow Vietnamese traditions and represent the family in front of other members of the diaspora) that function as a means of otherness between the two generations.

This othering from the diaspora proves to be, along with the xenophobic/racist attitudes of society-at-large, the most powerful agents of identity formation among the young Vietnamese Czech. The identity is fluid and only loosely situated somewhere in between the Czech and Vietnamese socio-cultural milieu. At the same time, it would seem that the identity is already no longer transnational, or diasporic in the true sense. It may be a subcultural identity located at the edges of the Czech socio-cultural and Vietnamese diasporic domains, but it is apparent that this hybrid identity is in many cases exclusive.

As a result of the inter-generational conflicts within the diaspora and the racial prejudices or otherness from society-at-large, at least 50% of the respondents from the second-generation identify themselves as the others to both of the socio-cultural groups. The rest of the respondents seem to be forced to accept the undeniable fact that they are located in between the two cultures and identify themselves within the margins of both cultures. This exceptional status, either being so-called "*Tây ngố*" or "Bananas," no longer merely gives them a feeling of "uncomfortableness" as it was when they were teenagers. In their early adulthood, this unique socio-economic

status also produces a certain degree of emotional excitement, self-pride, and culturally relevant consciousness. These identities provide them with a unique emotional “freedom” allowing them to travel “in between” the two cultures whenever they wish.

It is also apparent that these conflicts usually lack the intensity of endangering either the cohesion of the transnational family or the further integration of the second-generation into society at large. The shared efforts of the two diasporic generations in maintaining family cohesion, struggling for mutual understanding and emotional needs (of the first and second-generation) to be accepted by the broader family/kin which keeps these conflicts on a relatively low emotional intensity. This, together with a certain degree of racism in the Czech and the difficult position of the 1.5 and second-generation in the job market keeps those generations rather close to their parents and their family system. During certain periods of building a distinct identity, members of the 1.5 and second-generation may identify more with either the Czech or Vietnamese socio-cultural values, instead of rejecting them. We will need further research to see how the identity is shaped and what it may look like. This chapter is an attempt to map out the main conflicts within the diaspora and show its possible ends and impacts.

On the theoretical level, the chapter demonstrates that the third space, as proposed by Homi Bhabha (1994), exists. It is a place of upward socio-economic mobility for first-generation Vietnamese migrants. It is also a space of socio-economic subjectivization of the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese. This goes against its original meaning, and we suggest approaching the concept of the third space more critically, as a place where illegality and socio-cultural or political separations work as additional means of economic, social, and cultural subjectivization. In this sense, we need to come up with a new concept that better describes the contemporary situation.

It seems to us that the 1.5 and second-generation Vietnamese are the first who refused the classical transnational identity and chose to adopt the identity of a people who do not belong to any particular culture or social entity. These people are in a stage when they require only freedom to live their own lives, without interference from others. As the world is becoming increasingly mobile, we should start to think about these identities of cultural non-belongings and how they are articulated.

In other words, we need to come up with a new concept to better describe the process of formation and nature of the 1.5 and second generation identity. It seems that the second-generation Vietnamese are the first who have rejected the classic transnational identity and have chosen to adopt an identity of people who do not belong to any particular culture or social entity. These people may be at a stage when they require only freedom to live their own lives, without interference from others. As the world is more and more mobile, we should start to think about these fluid identities and socio-cultural non-belongings that will appear more in the future.

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