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COLLECTING SLOVENIAN SCHOOL LORE VIA E-QUESTIONNAIRE: ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTED MATERIAL AND REVISION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

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Abstract: Although folklorists recognise the active role of children in intangible heritage, collecting and analysing children's lore and school lore has been a side issue in Slovenian folkloristics. Especially since the beginning of the new millennium, it seems that school lore has been put aside. In order to revive collecting of school lore, the Institute of Slovenian Ethology at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) organised riddle collecting in schools in 2015 and an e-collection during the 2018/2019 school year. The first collection was organised as part of interviews while the other collection was based on an e-questionnaire. This was sent to Slovenian elementary and high schools as well as to acquaintances in order to get as many responses as possible, i.e., using the snowball method. The article gives both an overview and a sketch of the results.

Keywords: collecting, folklore, pupils, school lore

Children's folklore collecting and research was usually predominantly focused on traditional stories, dances, proverbs, riddles, poetry, material culture, and customs, passed on orally from generation to generation (Sutton-Smith 1999: 4), as well as through activity (dance, games, material culture, etc.). Children's folklore was often seen as a pedagogical tool to help them learn social skills and values, and was traditionally considered to come from three sources: (1) texts written by adults for children; (2) activities that have lost their primary function in the world of adults and are transferred as children's lore; and (3) children's creativity (Stanonik 1984: 85). The presumption is somewhat narrow

from today's standpoint and overlooks many other sources and reasons behind complexity and creation in different children's folklore.

COLLECTING CHILDREN'S LORE IN SLOVENIA

Looking diachronically, Slovenian folkloristics started as the most folkloristics in Europe, with Romanticism in the nineteenth century and the subsequent rise in interest in 'peasant art'. The (usually organised) collecting of material was followed by published collections and analysis of the collected material. Serious research into children's lore began in Great Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century (see Grider 1999: 11), although with the spread of collecting and studying folklore it quickly expanded across Europe. In Slovenia, the focus was mainly a part of general collecting of folklore material. Large collecting actions were pioneered by Karel Štrekelj in 1868. Here the focus was mainly on folk songs and poems, although other material was also collected, including children's folklore (Kropej 2011). The collected children's folklore texts (riddles, proverbs, songs) were published in newspapers (*Učiteljski tovariš*, *Angeljček*) during the nineteenth century. The first collection of so-called school games was published by Ivan Mercina only at the end of the nineteenth century under the heading *Igre in pesmi za otroška zabavišča in ljudske* šole (Games and Songs for Children's Amusement and Public Schools, 1893), as a handbook of children's folk games. Other collections and descriptions followed in the twentieth century, mainly during the second half, especially at the end of the 1970s when modern fieldwork on children's folklore is said to have begun (Ramšak 2007: 34), the most obvious study being Kuret's 1979 survey of children's games. The most common areas of children's folklore to be researched were games (Kuret 1942, 1959, 1979, 1989; Medveščék 1984; Ramovš 1991; Cvetko 1996, 2000; Ramšak 2003; Sereinig 2003; Ferlež 2001, 2005), oral folklore (Stanonik 1984, 1992–1993; Babič 2015, 2021; Pisk & Šrimpf Vendramin 2021), dances (Ramovš 1980), and songs (Juvančič 2006; Terseglav 2006). The Institute of Slovenian Ethnology received, among other materials, copies of high school students' collection of Janez Dolenc (Dijaški arhiv Janeza Dolenca – DAJD). For 30 years Janez Dolenc encouraged and mentored his students in collecting folklore material from the villages in the north-western part of Slovenia. But the collected material was in the manner of "the stories of our grandparents, the knowledge of our ancestors, the stories that are disappearing" (Ivančič Kutin 2017), so it cannot be researched as school lore.

The collecting and research of children's folklore in the second half of the twentieth century mainly focused on traditional material in a Romanticist

manner, i.e., the objective was to preserve folklore from our ancestors that was disappearing quickly, material that gained some romantic value and was treated as a treasure from our grandparents. Therefore, even the material that was requested was generally connected with the past and the romantic etiquette (games, songs, fairy tales with, for example, nasty jokes or swearwords excluded). To receive more children's folklore, the researchers decided to connect kindergartens and schools in 1952/1953.[1] For that year the annual report (Letopis 1954) shows that the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology sent surveys to 33 high schools. The questions focused on old rituals and good storytellers. They received answers from 15 schools, which was 45.5% of the surveys. The concluding remark in the report is that it was obvious that surveys were returned from schools where teachers of the Slovenian language implemented the survey and explained the task clearly to students. The results were positive for the researchers and so they decided to contact schools with another survey on children's games (prepared by Niko Kuret). They sent 4,000 copies of the survey to 125 kindergartens and 1,145 primary schools. However, the result was minimal with only 17 schools answering, although Kuret gave quite a few lectures on the topic in schools and on the radio at the time (Letopis 1954: 332). The commentary at the end was regretful, because the same actions brought better results in other countries. Kuret thought that perhaps persisting with the surveys would pay off in time, although there would have to be reconsideration of the survey structure.

The 1954 annual report (Letopis 1955) says that response to the surveys has practically stopped, leading to the obvious conclusion that cooperation with schools and kindergartens was poor and prompting the Institute to get in contact with children's magazines such as *Pionirski list*, which published a call for descriptions of children's games (February and March 1954). They received answers from 34 primary schools and 20 lower gymnasiums as well as individual answers, and gathered 957 games. After that, the reports on cooperating with schools stopped, but occasional cooperation with *Pionirski list* continued. Only in 1984 did Marija Stanonik publish the first scientific article generally discussing children's folklore, in which she focused mainly on verbal lore and analysed the recognition of folklore among high school children in 1995 (Stanonik 1995).

This short historical overview on collecting children's folklore material shows that cooperation with schools has not been very successful, and reveals a lack of ambition in schools on this subject.

CONTEMPORARY ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS OF COLLECTING AND STUDYING CHILDREN'S LORE

Folkloristic research follows research trends of the time and highlights topics that are visible but not currently important in society. In contrast to the previous focus on collecting, which was in general children's lore and the material gained from their (grand)parents, contemporary focus changed, reflecting how children's folklore was shifting rather than disappearing in the modern world (McMahon & Sutton-Smith 1999: 295). 'School lore' became a recognised term in Slovenian folklore research with the focus shifting to new folklore, i.e., material that is not known to older generations but lives among schoolchildren.

As folklore in general is a very changeable term today (for example, folk songs vs. memes), the definition of children's folklore has also changed with time. It is almost impossible to give one single definition of children's lore. Folklorists today are more concerned with the living performance of the material, its modifications, particular settings, functional and aesthetic character (Sutton-Smith 1999: 4). However, it is possible to say that children's folklore is primarily about children, and specifically school folklore is about schoolchildren and the material that circulates among them. School is an institution with particular restrictions, but with the prevailing communication being between children. The material that they use to communicate is generally restricted to children and is not passed on to them by their grandparents (for example, nonsense joking questions, references to movies, jokes, even some stories, etc.). Therefore, for the purposes of this article, children's folklore includes all the units that are transmitted between children themselves, as material that is transmitted between members of the young generation (although we cannot exclude the important role of the adults in this process as having close relationships with children). This transmission is especially visible among schoolchildren, who transmit lore in schools: in corridors, in classrooms, in front of the school buildings, during school breaks and during classes.

An important feature of school lore is that it is not the folklore of the youngest children, it is the folklore of school-aged children. This raises the important question of age as school systems vary by country: when does schooling start, what is the continuity of the education system, what is the expected minimal level of education in society, etc. Primary school in Slovenia starts at the age of 6 and lasts 9 years; it continues with high school, which lasts from 3 to 5 years (depending on the curriculum), so youngsters generally finish high school at the age of 19. In the general perception high school is the minimum education that children should get, although only primary school is compulsory. Children are considered minors up to the age of 18. This means that if we take the emic

concept, school lore should include the period up to the end of high school and include not only children, but also teenagers.

The working definition of school lore would therefore be: material that circles among children and teenagers in (or near or around) school during study time and during leisure moments and socialising, not excluding also moments that are 'stolen' during class (chatting, writing notes, etc.).

METHODS AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN ETHNOGRAPHIC WORK WITH CHILDREN

The ethnographic techniques usually used to approach children are quite traditional: interviews, diaries, surveys and questionnaires, observation and experiments – the most complete and richest analysis can be made using a multimethod approach (Fine 1999: 121), i.e., multimodal ethnographic study, including audio and video recording and photography.

Ethnography among children always raises many issues, and the ethics of the research techniques used must inevitably fulfil three criteria: (1) no physical, social, or psychological harm must be done to the subject; (2) the subject must not be deceived by the researcher, unless such a deception is an integral and necessary part of the research; (3) subjects must give informed consent as to the nature of their participation, with the freedom to withdraw at any point they choose (ibid.). The question of age is an ethical issue because children have not reached the age at which they can give their own consent and because of the dynamics of role relationships between adults and children (Fine 1999: 122).

Another ethical problem is that of confidentiality and attribution: when information is unique, attribution could harm the informant, while on the other hand children deserve credit and possible reward for their creations (Fine 1999: 125). Probably the most ethically justified stance is to allow the informants to choose how and where they are identified, and to have these decisions approved by their parents or guardians.

In conducting research with children, the ethical problems are more complicated because (especially small) children may not have the competence to foresee what is best for them (ibid.), while on the other hand reaching parents or guardians is often difficult. Today the vast area of ethics as it relates to the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy is regulated in Europe by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Directive 2002/58/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 2002,[2] and research must be approved by the state ethics committee.

CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCES IN COLLECTING SCHOOL LORE IN SLOVENIA

All the above was and still is under consideration in Slovenian folklore research. The first question of method in the contemporary world is even wider, considering that the multimodal approach includes even more techniques, while schoolchildren do not have much leisure time. The question of ethics seems to be solved bearing in mind the rules, although on the other hand children are much less approachable than before: ethnographic work must be approved by parents, the school, and often even an ethical commission. In the following, the article will focus on two contemporary collecting actions of school lore, the first based on interviews, the second on an e-survey:

(1) Interviewing children is a common technique for collecting folklore. It is usually accomplished as a straightforward conversation: the children are, either individually or as a group, asked to explain their traditions, or they are given topics, genres, etc., to talk about (Fine 1999: 123).

(2) A survey "is essentially a structured interview given to a large number of individuals" (Fine 1999: 126). The predicted basic advantages of the survey are that one can collect plenty of data quickly, although as is seen from the history of Slovenian connections with schools this is not necessarily the case. Fine (ibid.) claims as one of the advantages that "depending on the circumstances, it can be done with minimal effort". Here my comments would be that this effort is relative: firstly, we must understand the possible circumstantial difficulties of the survey if we want to get proper material; secondly, the interviewees' efforts in filling in the survey might be greater than answering questions raised in 'live' communication (although structured e-surveys enable relatively easy statistical analysis).

Collecting of school lore riddles using interviews (2015)

Collecting school lore began with my research on the use of folklore riddles among schoolchildren in 2015 (it was not supported by the Ministry of Education or by the Institute of Education). At the time, I conducted limited research in three primary schools in Ljubljana. The interviewed children were from 8 to 15 years old (3rd–9th grade). The children's names were not taken, rather their ages, genders and schools were recorded, meaning that anonymity was considered total. At the time contacting parents was not necessary for such fieldwork, although a teacher was present throughout the process.

Interviews were conducted in class, with all children from that class attending. Collecting was structured as an artificially triggered folklore event. The children were seated in a kind of circle (informally on tables and chairs); my short introduction led them to understand what I would like to hear from them, and I then asked them about the riddles that they tell each other. I soon realised that asking children about riddles would not get me very far, so I asked instead about jokes that start with a question (i.e., joking questions). At that moment one riddle or joke led to another, one joke reminded other children of another. These primary school children were a very rich source of joking material and the collection gained 303 different joking questions and 3 true riddles (and even these were told as jokes, for example "What is dirty when it is white? The blackboard). The fieldwork not only produced material, but also showed the contemporary evolution of the genre, i.e., the most productive form of folklore riddle is the joking question, while the true riddle is mainly considered authorial (Babič 2021). It was also clear that younger children (somewhere up to 10 years old) mainly asked nonsense questions and told Little Johnny jokes, while older children asked joking questions either about their siblings or about physical issues (a dying brother, periods, etc.). They also told Little Johnny jokes or jokes that are also found among adults, i.e., jokes about blondes or gender in general and ethnic jokes.

One interesting joke was told by a 10-year-old boy on the topic on holocaust ("Hitler and a Jew play chess in the gas chamber – who is going to win? The Jew, because he has the home advantage"). Obviously, this joking question represents a subject from among the adult topics. It was obvious that none of the children, not even the boy telling the joke, got the punchline; the joke was heard from adults and passed on as a kind of nonsense question. Children laughed for the sake of laughing, but to them the answer was nonsensical. This case shows on the one hand the circulation of material between generations, and on the other the re-purposing of a unit in a very different context.

Collecting school lore using the e-questionnaire (2018/2019)

In the 2018/2019 school year the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology ZRC SAZU decided on a more ambitious programme of collecting school lore. The wish was to survey all Slovenian ethnic areas among different age groups from 10 (when children are supposed to be capable of independently completing a survey) to 19 (when students finish high school education). The main goal was to get as many contemporary school lore units as possible using an approach from within the students' known world, i.e., the known technology of the Internet,

using an online form. The survey was put online in as simple form as possible using Google Forms, with open questions asked such that the children could give as short an answer as possible (according to experience, longer answers discourage children from engaging with surveys). Although folklorists really appreciate long answers and descriptions, we had to acknowledge that these are more possible in live conversation, where the role of the folklorist is to guide the discussion. Surveys use fixed questions, and the structured input of the interviewee is greater in that they transcribe the answers, inevitably leading to input in order to structure, and perhaps even in some way censor the answers. Such a process might also take much more energy than a live discussion. Considering that the survey was online, there was a strong argument to make it even quicker to complete.

The Ministry of Education and Sport and the Institute of Education refused to support the collecting action, leading us to approach children using the snowball method via their parents. An e-mail with an attached link to the survey was sent to Slovenian primary and high schools with a request to forward the survey to parents, who would pass it on to children. The survey was also sent to our friends and colleagues with the request that their children complete the survey. The reason that parents were the first to receive the survey was ethical issues and the GDPR restrictions: children could not be contacted directly, only via their parents. The survey was anonymous with only gender, year of birth, residence, and school level (primary school and high school, the latter being divided into high school occupational profile and gymnasium as a general high school programme) noted. The data was used only for the analytical categorisation of the material. The ethics issue was not officially systematically solved, i.e., it was not attached to the survey. Consent related to the e-survey would be another bureaucratic step that would probably have discouraged most children. Parents were supposed to give the survey to their children if they consented to their participation.

ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

The survey produced poor results, with only 68 completed forms. The number was low, but nevertheless, every completed form was like a treasure to us. Forty (58.8%) surveys were completed by women, 28 (41.2%) by men, with most informants coming from Ljubljana and born in 2006. There were 53 (77.9%) completed surveys from primary schools, 6 (8.8%) from high schools, and 9 (13.2%) from gymnasiums.

The survey consisted of 12 questions, some of them included an illustrative example of the material. The following is a summary of the questions and responses.

1. The first question was on the knowledge of riddles and on what occasions riddles were asked. Only a few children wrote a riddle, the most given were short yes/no answers (21 answers, i.e., 31%). The time when children riddle is usually during school breaks and "when they are bored", for example, when travelling in a car. When asked about droodles, only 9 (13.2%) children answered that they know about them, although none were recorded in the survey.

2. The question on proverbs gave more answers with material. The proverbs recorded were some of the best-known in Slovenian. The most common ones recorded were: 'An apple does not fall far from the tree'; 'A donkey goes onto the ice only once'; 'He who digs a hole for another will fall into it himself'. To the question of where the children had heard these proverbs, the answers were home, school, television. The answers included some other maxims such as 'Never regret anything', and 'Expect the unexpected'.

3. Modifications to proverbs and antiproverbs were described as funny proverbs. Most are known antiproverbs, usually used in humorous situations (He who flies low, falls high; He who digs a hole for another is a gravedigger). The children also wrote some new modifications to proverbs, such as 'Better a car on the street than a bike in a garage', which follows the Slovenian proverb pattern of 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'. Among the material were also proper proverbs, such as 'He who keeps his tongue behind his teeth will starve the bread', or sayings like 'First true, second false'. Unfortunately, there is no context of use, only the written units, so it is not possible to reconstruct the humorous part of these written forms.

4. The question on jokes was the most productive in the survey. It resulted in most answers, as well as descriptions and explanations. The time for jokes was when children were bored and during school breaks, as with riddles. Most written jokes were Little Johnny, Pičme and Počme (a word game that ends with physical contact), or nonsense jokes.

5. There were joking answers to normal questions, such as 'What time is it? The same as yesterday at this time of day'. These units are a part of

everyday speech and of humorous communication. Therefore, it is not surprising that the answers included jokes (*Koliko je 100+100? – 200. – Tvoje gate grejo v mesto* (What is 100+100? – 200. – Your pants are going to town)). The written units showed diversity and creativity in the answers, but at the same time it seems that the answers were relatively fixed and therefore can be fully understood as folklore material.

6. The sixth question was on citations from movies that produce language formulas used as short forms in communication between children. The citations are from the best-known Hollywood or Slovenian movies, such as *The Lord of the Rings* (You shall not pass!), *Johnny English* (No, he is mine), *Terminator* (I'll be back), *Star Wars* (May the force be with you); *Kekec* (Good luck, Kekec) *Mi gremo po svoje* (A s' ti tud' not' padu? (Did you also fall into it?)), etc. The answers included some other famous (quasi) citations, such as 'Ta noč ni bila moj dan' (This night is not my day), which was supposed to be by Kliton Bozgo, an Albanian football player who played for Slovenian teams.

   An important note is that citations from foreign movies are usually written and spoken in English (and Bozgo's quasi citation is in Serbo-Croat). Slovenian movies are only quoted in Slovenian. One of the reasons for this is that foreign movies are subtitled rather than dubbed; in addition, foreign-language films bring added value and expressiveness in their brevity – it seems that saying it in the original adds to the theatricality.

7. The question on swearwords highlighted three different facts: 1) as a folklore genre, swearwords are still under huge (self-)censorship (12 answers, i.e., 17% said that a student does not use swearwords); 2) swearwords are mainly in three languages, i.e., English (shit, fuck), Serbo-Croat (jebem ti mater), and Slovenian (pizda) (there were also a few examples from Italian (porka madona); 3) most contemporary swearwords are from sexual lexis. The children also sued euphemisms as swearwords (jebelacesta, pipo baudo, porkiš).

8. With the question on nightmares we tried to touch upon universal children's fears. The nightmares described related to forgotten homework, freezing in front of the whole class, killers, etc. Among children's fears were spiders, snakes, witches, darkness, ghosts, demons, all of which are quite universal. The only exceptions in the collected material seem

to be clowns and serial killers, as portrayed in horror movies, i.e., from contemporary media.

9. The question on urban horror legends aimed to track urban stories. The children did not write the stories; generally, they answered that they either did not know any or they just used key words to describe the main plot: a fire starter, a person kidnapping children, two men threatening children, a neighbour who killed her husband and burned him in her stove. The question was not fruitful because of the elliptical answers: the key words gave us an idea of the stories, although they did not collect any of the stories themselves.

10. The question on superstition showed a very low rate of superstition among the children. The superstitions they did describe are quite general cultural ones (a black cat crossing the street, Friday 13th); some described their lucky objects, like necklaces, amulets, etc. Children also included some pre-bedtime rituals in their answers to this question, like going to the bathroom.

11. The answers to the question on hobbies that tried to identify the contemporary concept of hobbies showed that children today generally associate hobbies with institutional activities (music school, dances, sport, etc.). None of the children said that they had hobbies like collecting stamps, stickers, or napkins, reading, board games, etc. Although we did not receive answers about non-institutional hobbies, we still know that they exist. Nevertheless, it is obvious that hobbies are understood as structured free time activities rather than as having an intense interest in something that is realised in the child's free time.

12. The last question tried to understand festivity in the family circle and in the children's lives in general and how it influences their relationships; the answers generally spoke about birthdays, Christmas, New Year, Easter. Christmas and Easter were described as family holidays, while birthdays and New Year were also celebrated among friends. The rituals were not described in detail; rather culinary data was given, such as for birthday, Christmas, and Easter dishes.

Ultimately the survey was partly successful: not only did few answers come back, but it was also obvious that the questions were weak. Although at first sight it might seem that collecting folklore material using a survey is easier

(Fine 1999), it transpires that a survey is actually a slippery road. A survey can be sent to a wider public, but good answers are not guaranteed. Already the first question on riddles showed that participants were giving answers with as little effort as possible. In addition to that, the trend with other answers was that they were short, even elliptical. Part of the reason was probably also that completing the survey was not encouraged by teachers or other mentors, meaning that encouragement to write more and give better answers was also not present. Despite the fact that most of the material in the archive was collected as the disappearing narratives of our ancestors, only contemporary material was collected from schoolchildren in 2015 with the fieldwork on riddles in schools and with the survey mentioned above. Therefore, they both present a novelty in Slovenian folklore studies. Both methods of collecting showed some changes in the use and function(ing) of children's folklore in society. Riddling in Slovenian is not a popular activity, and therefore riddles started to change their function to become more humorous. Joking questions prevail also among the school population, with the punchline gaining an important position in this communication. This also becomes obvious in the section on joking answers, and humour is noticeable in modifications to proverbs that support more sleep or greater inactivity. Written jokes are in many cases linked with school life, such as jokes about Little Johnny, and quite often also jokes about blondes, Chuck Norris, and among younger schoolchildren nonsense jokes. These units are mainly used during school breaks or in moments when children are bored.

The question on swearwords showed that these units are still borderline obscene school lore, and the options to collect them were limited (Fine 1999: 124), although the survey was anonymous and not ethically unacceptable. The importance of self-censorship was obviously high, while on the other hand the survey showed that children know swearwords in the same manner as adults.

Citations from movies showed the importance of the media in language and folklore creation – some citations have become so generally used that they are on the way to becoming part of folklore material despite the source being known. The influence of the media is also shown through the question about fears: murderers and clowns from horror movies are feared images. Otherwise fears seem to be universal: insects, snakes, paranormal phenomena, etc. However, superstition does not seem to be very active among schoolchildren despite some adopting rituals and amulets in everyday life.

Questions about hobbies and family festivals offered some particular pictures: hobbies are conceptually linked with institutional activities and education, while free time activities were rarely mentioned (skating, reading books, collecting objects, baking, wood carving, hanging out with friends, etc.). Festivities are also an important part of schoolchildren's lore with mainly birthdays

(with friends and cake), New Year, Christmas, and Easter being celebrated. The last two are exclusively family festivals while in addition to birthdays New Year is also celebrated with friends.

Unfortunately, the response to the request to send memes and droodles to the Institute's e-mail address was very poor. We received only five memes. This can be explained by a lack of mentoring: children and youngsters by themselves will not send this material in. There was also no reward for sending this material, as in, for example, the Estonian case of collecting school lore (Voolaid 2007), meaning that motivation was extremely low. It seems that the only way to get school e-lore is to follow the children's social media accounts (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat) in order to see the published memes, jokes, and responses. The amount of material there would probably be uncontrollable, although on the other hand, as these are considered public spaces, the issue of ethics would be less important.

CONCLUSION

Folklore material became of interest in the period of historical romanticism and with it also the collecting of the material stemming from the background wish to preserve folk knowledge and show the aesthetic value of folk art. The main focus was on material from elderly people – material that is being lost with the dying of the generations. With the industrial revolution, children became separated from the working world and gradually accrued more and more markers as a distinct subcultural group (Sutton-Smith 1999: 19; Turk Niskač 2021), giving rise to McMahon and Sutton-Smith's statement that childhood became more verbal as "an outcome of their own sociolinguistic training" as well as "a response also to the greater importance of these kinds of materials in modern childhood" (McMahon & Sutton-Smith 1999: 296). This is why the trend of collecting children's folklore focuses on the verbal level in general (favouring collecting texts over rituals or activities).

Contemporary collecting focuses more on the material that lives among schoolchildren today. Folklorists try to record units that circulate among schoolchildren. The material is termed school lore, a term that narrows the material down to place and age. The contemporary collecting of school lore raises many questions about the approach, as well as the limits of approach: when would we like schoolchildren to speak up; would it be better that they are in a group; is it better to work with them individually; is it better to have a personal approach and observe the situation, or would we get more and better material if the children are behind a 'wall' of anonymity provided by a survey; would

a printed survey give better results than an e-survey? Neither the Slovenian survey nor this article gives answers to these questions. For sure a multimodal approach is the best, but then folklorists should limit collecting to smaller places. Nevertheless, all approaches demand careful thought on the structure of questions, considering the age of the interviewees and acceptable ethical approaches to collecting.

In collecting school lore we must consider that the rhetoric of children is as "relatively passive experimental subjects who learn how to relate their peers and their teachers, they go through physical, emotional, intellectual growth and become adolescents" (Sutton-Smith 1999: 4). In this sense, we must acknowledge that certain material is typical for certain ages (for example, nonsense riddles among children around 8–10 years old). If we want to record this material, children should get the chance to talk about their world (Stanonik 1984), and not only about traditionally perceived folklore genres. To approach them, researchers must ensure that children understand the questions asked of them, especially if there is no mentoring when completing the survey. This problem was exposed in the Slovenian case, where a lack of encouragement resulted in short elliptical answers.

Another question that is always raised regarding collecting children's lore is ethics, which was encountered in the interviews and in giving out the survey – the question of consent to use the material as well as the use of personal data. In Slovenia the laws on this topic are strict, and the GDPR restrictions limit ethnographic work. On the other hand parents must be informed about collecting, which for e-surveys presents an extra obstacle.

Collecting such material has been successful in some countries (Voolaid 2007, 2012; Hiiemäe 2018) and has yielded plenty of units that folklorists can use to interpret the picture of their conceptualisation, although in our case we cannot talk about success here. In Slovenia collaborating with schools has never given any good results. The answers to the question 'why' would be probably various and not very simple. This illustrates not only the unsupportive manner of most schools but is also a reflexion of the social attitude towards (intangible) heritage. During the socialist period it was not cherished because of the emphasis on progress and industry, degrading the rural world. This is a situation that is reflected in contemporary attitudes, with some folklore officially recognised as 'national treasure', while in general people rarely think of it in this manner. This is why most teachers see no point in collecting crumbs from the world of children, despite the fact that school lore shows us a great deal about society, permanence, progress, and children's way of thinking.

In conclusion, my remark on the Slovenian case would be that we must simply try harder, or even in a different way, to better survey children's folklore

(even if we receive no support from the Ministry, the Institute of Education, or schools). With the developments in the contemporary world of folkloristics we will have to find a new methodological approach to collecting. The old methods seem to bring older units, while most of the contemporary units are to be collected differently, including on the Internet. At the same time, it seems that group interviews give the best results in the current context. Surveys seem to be an easier way to reach a wider public, but it became obvious that the results were poor when using surveys to collect school lore without mentors to encourage children to complete the surveys. Considering the Internet and children's lore, the problem of unavailability became huge: with all the internet communicating platforms and closed groups, most material goes by unnoticed by adults, and nor do folklorists have access to it (or access is strictly limited). The question that arises is how to make this material available.

One way or another we should continue collecting contemporary material, because in 20 years' time every unit could be a treasure for research.

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NOTES

[1] The Commission of Slovenian Ethnology was established in 1947. In 1951 it was reorganised into the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology. Both bodies were established under the Yugoslavian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

[2] See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32002L0058, last accessed on 3 May 2022.

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