

**Migrant children experiences of school:  
A case study of Iranian children in Trondheim, Norway**

---

Rozita Mirsadeghi

**NTNU**

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management

Norwegian Center for Child Research

Thesis for Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies

Trondheim, spring 2013





To my dear and loving brother, Reza

Forever, and ever you will stay in my heart and will remain etched in my mind



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to express my respect and appreciation to those who helped, directly or indirectly, with the development of this thesis.

I wish to thank, first and foremost, all the children who devoted their time and actively contributed through the period of my fieldwork. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences. Without your help and active engagement, the goals and objectives of this study would not have been achieved. Many thanks go to all the parents for allowing their children to take part in this research. I am also thankful for the kind cooperation and assistance of the staff in the school where my participant observation took place.

Furthermore, I owe my sincerest gratitude and deep appreciation to my wonderful supervisor, Professor Vebjørng Tingstad who has supported me throughout my thesis with her excellent supervision, intellectual guidance, and invaluable comments. This thesis would not have been possible without her encouragement, wisdom, feedback, and support. I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to learn from her and have her as my supervisor. Thank you so much Professor Tingstad, for your professional, dedicated, and caring nature. You are the best teacher I have ever had.

I gratefully thank all the staff and lecturers of the Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB), especially Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt, Professor Randi Dyblie Nilsen, Associate Professor Tatek Abebe, Professor Ellen Schrupf, and Senior Executive Officer Line Hellem, for their guidance, tuition, and assistance throughout my study period.

I would also like to thank all my Iranian friends in Trondheim particularly Sonia, Monireh, Fatemeh, who always spent time listening to me, even when I was just complaining. Thank you for all the support and encouragement you gave me. You have been like a second family to me.

I also wish to thank all my fellow students with whom I had lots of fun and in particular to my dear friend Yulia.

I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to my family in Iran, to my dear parents and my loving brother, Ramin. I cannot thank you enough for all the support and love you have given. Your support has always provided me with motivation for all my efforts.

Above all, my deepest expression of gratitude goes to my dear husband, Kourosh, and my lovely son, Nami. Without your emotional support, understanding and love this thesis would not have been completed. Thank you so much for being patients with me. I love you.

## **ABSTRACT**

Children's experiences of migration are largely shaped by their experiences of schools in the host society. The present study aims to explore experiences of 15 Iranian immigrant children between the ages of 8-18 living in Trondheim, Norway. More specifically the study seeks to address challenges and difficulties that children face in the host country's schools, the factors posing such challenges, and the ways that the children negotiated their everyday lives at school. The social studies of children and childhood, and structuration theory have provided a theoretical framework based on which this study has been conducted. Given this, an attempt has been made to recognize children as active agents in their experiences of migration, as well as a social group influenced and restricted by the structural conditions surrounding them. Furthermore, the study tries to explore the experiences of migrant children from the perspective of inclusion\ exclusion.

This is a child-focus research, hence, a qualitative research approach, particularly, the ethnography method is used in the process of data collection. Consequently, participant observations, focus group discussion, and in depth semi-structured interviews have been chosen to capture the school experiences of the individuals in detail.

The study has found that the feeling of the exclusion has been the most common challenge faced by the participants. Such a feeling has been aroused due to a variety of reasons, such as feeling of isolation on arrival, experiences of bullying or peer rejection, experiences with being stereotyped, and separation from peers due to taking mother tongue classes. Furthermore, the findings of the study have highlighted three underlying factors behind inclusion/ exclusion experiences of the migrant children that can be grouped as effects of un/familiarity with the host language, role of the parents, and the role of the teachers and the schools.

Comparing three different types of schools in Trondheim, it was concluded that the schools with large number of migrant children are more successful in absorption and inclusion of their pupils. Study findings also confirm the importance of friendships on the migrant children's experiences of school. Having intimate relationships enable children to cope better with their challenges and difficulties. In addition, playing and games as means of communication mediator have crucial roles in establishing friendly relations among migrant children, and thus their better inclusion and adjustment to the new situation.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENT .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY .....	1
1.2 IMMIGRATION .....	3
1.3 TERMINOLOGY EXPLANATION .....	4
1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT .....	4
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....	6
1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY .....	7
1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: STUDY CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	11
2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF IRANIAN MIGRATION .....	11
2.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF IRANIAN MIGRATION TO NORWAY .....	15
2.4 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF IRANIAN IMMIGRANTS.....	18
<b>CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	21
3.2 THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL STUDIES OF CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD.....	21
3.3 APPROACHES WITHIN CHILDHOOD STUDIES .....	23
3.4 AGENCY / STRUCTURE .....	26
3.5 STRUCTURATION THEORY .....	27
3.6 INCLUSION / EXCLUSION .....	31
3.7 CHILDREN’S PEER CULTURE.....	33
3.8 FRIENDSHIP.....	36
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	39
4.2 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY .....	39



4.3 METHODS USED FOR COLLECTING DATA .....	40
4.3.1 <i>Participant Observation</i> .....	41
4.3.2 <i>Focus Group Discussion</i> .....	42
4.3.3 <i>In- Depth Semi-Structure Interview</i> .....	43
4.3.4 <i>Narrative Interview</i> .....	44
4.4 ACCESS AND RECRUITMENT OF INFORMANTS .....	45
4.5 DATA TRANSCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS .....	46
4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	47
4.6.1 <i>Informed Consent</i> .....	47
4.6.2 <i>Confidentiality</i> .....	48
4.6.3 <i>Consequences</i> .....	48
4.6.4 <i>The Role of the Researcher</i> .....	48
4.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	49
<b>CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION .....</b>	<b>53</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	53
5.2 CHILDREN’S CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES .....	55
5.2.1 <i>The Challenges of Isolation and Frustration on Arrival</i> .....	56
5.2.2 <i>Experiences of Peer Rejection</i> .....	57
5.2.3 <i>The Challenges of Being Stereotyped</i> .....	62
5.2.4 <i>The Challenge of Having Mother Tongue Lesson (Morsmål)</i> .....	65
5.2.5 <i>Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction</i> .....	68
5.3 UNDERLYING REASONS FOR EXCLUSION EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT STUDENTS .....	73
5.3.1 <i>Language as a Key to Enter a New Community</i> .....	73
5.3.2 <i>Role of Parents in Inclusion/Exclusion of Migrant Children</i> .....	76
5.3.3 <i>Role of Schools, Teachers, and Inclusion Policies</i> .....	80
5.4 COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCHOOLS .....	84
5.4.1 <i>Implementation of Inclusion Policies</i> .....	85
5.4.2 <i>Identity Matching</i> .....	88
5.5 CHILDREN’S PEER INTERACTIONS IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE SETTING .....	92
5.5.1 <i>Importance and Functions of Friendship</i> .....	92
5.5.2 <i>Befriending Strategies/ Migrant Cultural Bubble</i> .....	94
5.5.3 <i>The Development of Peer Interaction through Activities</i> .....	97

5.5.4 Gender Matters- Game, Play, Football .....	100
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>105</b>
6.1 RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSION .....	105
6.2 THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY .....	107
6.3 SOME SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	110
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>APPENDIXES .....</b>	<b>123</b>
APPENDIX 1: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDELINES.....	123
APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF CONFIRMATION.....	126
APPENDIX 3: PARENTS’ INFORMATION & INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	127
APPENDIX 4: CHILDREN’ INFORMATION & INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	129

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

(AID)	Norwegian Ministry of Work and Integration
(IMDi)	Directorate of Integration and Diversity
(IOM)	International Organization for Migration
(MoP)	Iran Ministry of Petroleum
(NAFO)	National Centre for Multicultural Education
(NIOC)	National Iranian Oil Company
(NTNU)	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
(OECD)	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
(SOPEMI)	Continuous Reporting System on Migration (French acronym)
(UDI)	Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
(UN)	United Nation
(UNCRC)	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
(UNHCR)	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

My childhood was full of memories of movement from one city to another because of my father's job, who was an employee of customhouse. When I grew up, if somebody asked me where I am from, she/he would pose a challenge to me. As I had not lived in a city for a long period, I could not find a definite answer. This situation can be described as follows: "People may refer to themselves by describing what country they live in, what city or town they come from" (Hauge, 2007, p. 1). However, it is only one part of the story; the most important feather of these sudden movements was the difficulties and challenges that I had to deal with. As James Deegan, argue: "to be and have friends is a fundamental human interest and concern". For children, friendships and friends in school are even more important than their success and learning (Deegan, 1996, p.1). For me, forsaking old friends and making new friends, has been a very challenging experience that I faced in my childhood. Of course, in many aspects my internal migration experiences are not comparable with those children who have moved to the other countries. The lack of their familiarity with a new language and the behavioral codes of the new society probably impose them much more difficulties and challenges than I faced during my childhood.

Despite of all the differences between my childhood experiences and international migrants, I feel that having common sense and more importantly being a master student in the childhood studies are in fact the main reasons, which make me focus on this issue. It seems important to know how children deal with new situations when they as strangers enter to a different country where almost everything is absolutely unfamiliar to them. How they adapt themselves to changes quickly while they do not know the language and there is significant cultural differences between their homeland and the host country. How they cope with the challenges, which they face with and what the impacts of these significant challenges in their lives are.

Furthermore, the importance of this issue for me is not limited only to my childhood. As an international immigrant with numerous concerns about myself, my family and particularly my only child, living here has taught me that it is not easy to be an immigrant. Regardless of being able to speak the language of the host country very well, having high education, a well-paid job, and having good social status, one may encounter many challenges. It can be true even for those who choose to leave their country by their own will, and not necessarily because of political, economical, or social situations. One has to prove his/her abilities to the

others only because of being an immigrant. Children may run into more serious difficulties, since we usually expect them to be more vulnerable, they have no choice, and have to follow their parent's decisions. Many parents like me choose to live abroad because they think that their children will have better situations and more opportunities in their future life. Living in a free and well-developed country such as Norway may make me feel more comfortable, or at least I may worry less about my child's future. Nevertheless, there can be lots of new concerns and anxieties. Sometimes I wonder if we have the right decision in choosing to live abroad.

When I arrived in Norway, my mind was filled with a myriad of questions and concerns. I was really worried about how my three year-old son can adjust himself to his new life and deal with possible challenges. I was wondering whether he can make good friends and feel welcome in the new environment, since friendship could play an important role in social and emotional development of children (Ferrer & Fugate, 2007). Our children are often growing up while they are deprived of grandparents or other relatives' affection. They are suspended between two different cultures; they are totally confused between two different social as well as cultural values and norms. I came here with all these concerns. Since living in Norway, I have observed or heard about the children who face with different problems or suffer from what the parents interpret as isolation. In addition, reviewing other studies about immigrants have intensified my concerns and made me think that this subject may be a valuable topic for the investigation.

According to Ali Sahebi (cited in: Azimi, 2007), Iranians historically have never been satisfied immigrants due to the intense emotional interest to the homeland. They do not go through the processes of immigration very well because of their looking back on their old days with a certain amount of nostalgia. They tend to stay in their own past and culture rather than looking forward and trying to be absorbed in the culture of the host society. This does not mean that Iranians are not good citizens, but acceptance of this geographical movement has always been difficult for them. It is argued that returning to Iran has always been one of the main concerns for a majority of Iranians. This can turn into a big barrier for the cultural adaption to the new society, especially when the cultural differences is high. This cultural heterogeneity makes children more vulnerable. Due to the first generation's failure to establish a logical communication with the host community, children- the second generation migrants- encounter more difficulties (Azimi, 2007).

These concerns can demonstrate only one side of the coin, from the adult's point of view. However, what are the children's own experiences and interpretations of being an immigrant child? I think they deserve careful consideration. Their opinions should be heard, because they may not have the same feelings and ideas. They may be very happy and satisfied with living here as an immigrant child. In fact, this is the most important concern in my study, which I am trying to investigate and explore.

## **1.2 Immigration**

The topic of migration and its advantages and disadvantages is not a new phenomenon and is not something unique related to a particular time period and specific place. Humans have migrated across the world throughout history due to various reasons, such as finding new lands, learning new ways of farming, escaping from hunger and wars, enjoying more religious and political liberty, greater economic opportunities, or just curiosity and exploring new things (Barter, 2002; Lazzerini, 2005). Indeed, limitation or negative factors in the community of origin and opportunities or positive factors available in destination might enforce or attract people to migrate (Lee, 1966; Anarfi et al. 2009).

Everett S. Lee (1966) defined migration "as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence". This definition is very broad and not confined to a specific type, reason, or group. In this definition, no distinction between voluntary and involuntary act of migration, no restriction on the moving distance, and no differentiation between internal- and international nature of it can be found (Lee, 1966, p. 49). The United Nation (UN) defines human migration as "The movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi permanent residence, usually across a political boundary". Regarding this, there are many types of migration including urbanisation, family reunification, impelled or reluctant migration, labour migration, student migration, forced migration, return migration, chain migration and seasonal migration (cited in: Kimberley & Claydon, 2012, p. 1).

I am not going to go into details of each type of migration, but historically prior to 1980s, attentions were focused on internal migration which is a movement within national borders including rural-rural, urban-rural and urban-urban migrating and mostly from rural to urban area toward urbanization (Skeldon, 2006). According to Anarfi et al. besides the importance of migrant's agency in deciding to migrate, other factors such as imbalance in resources, facilities and income level as structural elements are powerful causes of internal immigration

(Anarfi et al. 2009). Since 1980s, attentions have shifted towards international migration from developing countries into developed countries, due to some reasons such as decline in the birth rate that resulted in a shortage of labor forces and high standard of living in the country of destination (Skeldon, 2006).

In this study, the term immigration refers to international immigration and an ‘immigrant child’ includes both immigrants’ children who were born abroad as well as those who were born in Norway, in both cases with two foreign-born parents.

In order to clarify the above-mentioned definition some of the most common terms that are used in this study will be explained as below.

### **1.3 Terminology Explanation**

**Child:** *Every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable under the child majority is attained earlier (UNCRC).*

**Immigrants:** *Persons who are born abroad to two foreign-born parents, and who have moved to Norway, are defined as immigrants (Statistics Norway, 2011).*

**Norwegian-born to immigrant parents:** *Those born in Norway with two immigrant parents are defined as Norwegian-born to immigrant parents (Statistics Norway, 2011). This definition is very broad and involves a wide range of reasons for migration including labor migration, family reunification, refugees, and study (ibid).*

**Asylum seeker:** *Person who on his or her own initiative, and without prior notification, asks the authorities for protection and recognition as a refugee, the person is called an asylum seeker until a decision has been made on the application (UDI, 2006).*

**Refugee:** *in the legal sense, the term “refugee” applies to resettlement refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted asylum. In connection with refugee assistance in Norway, the term “refugee” is used for resettlement refugees and persons who, following an application for asylum, have been granted asylum, protection, or residence on humanitarian grounds (UDI, 2006)*

### **1.4 Problem Statement**

Human migration has always been and is still a specific phenomenon among different communities, since the situation of both sides of the transaction undergoes some



transformation, i.e. both the country that its people migrate in the hope of a better tomorrow and the country that is chosen as destination (Khosroshahi, 2007).

Nowadays, many national and international institutions and treaties support different needs and rights of children including migration. For example, UNCRC defends the rights of children in this regard; under Article 10 and 11, migration is one of the fundamental rights for every child.

Article 10: *“States Parties shall respect the right of the child and his or her parents to leave any countries, including their own, and to enter their own country”*.

Article 11: *“States Parties shall take measures to combat the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad”*.

On this basis, every year many children around the world leave their home, and reside in a foreign country in the hope of a better life. As an example, I can refer to a new wave of migration in recent decades from Middle East countries to the West as a result of political tensions and pressures (Ní Laoire et al. 2011). Parts of this specific group are Iranian children who have moved to Norway, whom the main focus of this study is dedicated to. These movements would bring its own challenges and difficulties for both adults and children. Children of immigrant families may share many difficulties concerning adapting to the new environments (Komarov, 2004).

Furthermore, one of the basic rights of children including migrant children is education, which is emphasized in Article 28 of UNCRC.

Article 28: *“States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity”*.

Emphasis on equality means that programs and policies should be designed in such a way that all children including immigrants to be able to absorb in nation’s schools (Reynolds, 2008). However, giving children equal opportunities does not mean that they really enjoy these opportunities, since inherent differences among migrant and native children such as language, physical appearance (e.g. hair, facial features, skin color) and cultural differences may act as barriers that prevent children from gaining equal rights.

In sum, a defining characteristic of contemporary life style is ‘mobility’. Children may perceive mobility in different ways in their lives. For migrant children, some challenges might follow. They therefore find themselves confronted by a new tricky situation and living condition. They should adapt to new school system, learn new language or knowledge (Ní Laoire et al. 2011). Migrant children require rebuilding their identity to feel happy or comfortable in their new situation, they also need to establish new relationships, which are possible in the light of support, sympathy, and understanding (Ibid). Although policies, national and international laws support immigrant children and their families, they may face various challenges in some area such as: “finding new friends; dealing with loss and loneliness; adjusting to a new teacher and new school system; adjusting to a new cultural environment and racism or anti-immigration sentiments” (Reynolds, 2008, p.5). What they have experienced and how they perceive their situations, is the main subject, which this study attempts to address.

### **1.5 Research Questions and Purpose of the Study**

This study makes an effort to investigate the experiences of some Iranian migrant children in the school setting. The major concern is to find out what challenges and difficulties exist for them in order to be integrated into Norwegian society, particularly, with regard to friendship building. What causes such challenges and to explore how migrant children deal with the problems in the new society will be touch upon, as well. The main research question that the study seeks to answer is:

#### ***What are experiences of the Iranian migrant children in schools in Trondheim/ Norway?***

Finding proper answers to the main question, requires getting answers to a series of more detailed questions such as:

- What do children like or dislike regarding their school?
- How is their relationship with their peers, teachers, and the other school staff?
- What kind of behaviors do these children expect from their peers and teachers?
- What strategies do children use to deal with their challenges?
- What kind of strategies do teachers and the other school staff use to help these children to overcome their difficulties in order to be equal in value to the school community?

These research questions can be answered through the following particular objectives:

- To find out difficulties and challenges that children may face with in the school setting, particularly in building up the friendships
- To explore most common reasons behind such challenges and difficulties
- To understand children's satisfaction or dissatisfaction of being involved in the new environment
- To examine the role of the school in creating/solving the challenges
- To find out the possible differences in the experiences between the Norwegian-born and foreign-born children

### **1.6 Justification of the Study**

Contemporary migration is different from earlier types of human movements. As a result of modern communication and transportation, people travel easier and faster (Mohammadi et al. 2006). Consequently, there are around 214 million international migrants worldwide today, which reach to 3.1% percentage of the world's population. A significant number of them are children (IOM, 2010). The increased number of the immigrants, and new patterns of immigration, on the other hand offer some challenges and create a major worry for governments and scholars so that 'the problem is getting out of control'. Hence, in order to control the negative effects of this mass migration, immediate actions on different levels such as physical, mental health and social service seem necessary (Mohammadi et al. 2006).

Consequently, many studies have been conducted in the field of migrant children. Each study has approached the problem from different side of view and has led to different results. A quite large number of them have examined features of immigrant children in the domain of social and cultural psychology, education, health care, and social services (Mohammadi et al. 2006). For example, from the psychological point of view, friendship is very important contributor to psychological well-being of adolescents, whereby close friendship with peers positively lead to self-esteem and negatively link to depression risk (Chan and Birman, 2009). Study of prevalence of psychiatric disorders in Iranian immigrant children in the UK have shown that they seem to suffer from psychological problems more in comparison with the average of their peers in Tehran/Iran (Mohammadi et al. 2006). Furthermore, from social researchers' point of view, close friendships may provide a favorable environment for young people that help them achieve a healthy growth and greater educational results (Vaquera & Kao, 2008).

Despite of a large number of studies, which were addressing immigrant children in the areas of psychology, sociology, health, etc, there is not much research done in the field of the childhood studies. (Particularly, there is not any research about Iranian immigrant children living in Norway). According to Allison James and Alan Prout (1997):

*“There must be theoretical space for both the construction of childhood as an institution and the activity of children within, and upon, the constraints and possibilities that the institutional level creates”*

(James and Prout, 1997 p. 27 in Dar and Cox, 2011)

James and Prout’s argument emphasizes on children’s agency and their active participation in meaning construction. They are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives (Deegan, 1996). Therefore, their actions, negotiation, and challenges, in relation to one other within their social institutions are very important and worthy of serious study. Regarding this, it seems essential to the researchers to conduct further studies about immigrant children, which is based on considering them as social actors in their own lives and within their communities, since they actively participate in shaping their experiences of immigration (Christopoulou & Rydin, 2004).

As mentioned above, not much is known about the Iranian children immigrants in Norway. My desire was to fill the gap in this context, although it may not shed much light on the issue, and further studies will be necessary in future. I would like to investigate how Iranian children express their memories and experiences of migration in Norwegian society and how they represent their social relationships in mainstream school. I am highly hopeful that my study, as one of the very first researches about Iranian children in Norway, can make some contribution to enhance the variety of available researches and stimulate further research in this area.

### **1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

This study is structured as follows: Chapter one presents a brief introduction to the study, including sub-topics as problem statement, terminology explanation, research questions and purpose of the study, as well as justification and organization of the study. Chapter two gives an overview of the Iranian migration. First, it takes a look at the historical background of Iranian migration in general and specifically in Norway. Then, it presents demographic characteristics of Iranian immigrants in Norway. Chapter three pursues a comprehensive

discussion of theoretical and conceptual perspectives that influence the direction of the study. The main concepts include friendship, peer culture, agency/ structure as well as exclusion/ inclusion. In addition, the main theoretical framework, in this study is based on the social studies of children and childhood, and Structuration Theory. Chapter four presents the methodological framework of the study. It attempts to explain and justify the use of qualitative research approach and the role of the researcher in this regard. Furthermore, it focuses on some strategies to gain access and recruitment of the informants, data analysis, methods used in collecting data, limitations of the study and some ethical considerations. Chapter five presents the analysis of the data collected and discusses the findings. It identifies the major challenges faced by the study participants, tries to discuss the underlying causes of such challenges, and presents children's negotiations of their everyday lives at school. Lastly, the sixth chapter provides a brief recapitulation of the whole study and a few concluding considerations. In addition, an attempt has been made to relate the empirical findings to the theoretical perspectives, introduced in chapter three. It presents a summary of the main findings as well as some suggestions and recommendation.



## **CHAPTER 2: STUDY CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The primary concern in this chapter is to describe a historical perspective of emigration from Iran to abroad, particularly to the western countries, with regard to reasons and time classification. Here, a descriptive review of the migration to Norway, the country where this study has been done, is the focus of attention. Then some demographic profiles of Iranian migration are addressed.

### **2.2 Historical Background of Iranian Migration**

Migration is deeply rooted in the Iranian history and date back to AD 936 when the Arabs invaded and conquered Persia (former name of Iran until 1934, which was changed to Iran as a result of Reza Shah's modernization reforms). At that time, Parses (Persians) who were the followers of Zoroastrianism, were forced to flee to western India. Because of accepting to be Muslim, they were in danger and killed. Another phase of migration has happened after establishing Bahá'í Faith in the mid-19th century in Iran whose followers faced persecution and had to leave their home and take refuge in Ottoman Empire (Hakimzadeh, 2006).

Iranian diplomatic relationship with Europe began in the early seventeenth century when a group of Iranians travelled to France in order to have an official visit. Nevertheless, it lasted until the early 19th century that ordinary people became acquainted with western culture (Alyasan, 2000). In order to identify the situation of modern Iranian migration, I think that it is worthy to take a brief review at a series of historical incidents affecting the processes of emigration from Iran.

First of all, military conflict between Persia and Russia (1804-1813) came to a dramatic end for Iran, in which the Russians defeated Persian army and this led to the signing of a peace treaty (Golestan), whereby Persia had to recognize Russian sovereignty over some parts of Iranian territory (Alyasan, 2000; Wikipedia, 2012). Afterward, Persian governors realized the importance of technical excellence. Consequently, some Iranian students were sent to Europe to learn modern technology (Ashraf, 1997). A number of them chose to live abroad for the rest of their lives (Kamalkhani, 1988). Those returned home, occupied important positions in the government and tried to follow methods and ways that European countries had already passed. The expansion of the western values and ideas, which was highly supported by some newspapers of the time, moved the country towards modernization. It was a movement that led to Iranian Constitutional Revolution in 1905-1910 (Alyasan, 2000), with the objectives of

democratic liberty and autonomous development. Although, the Constitutional Revolution failed due to contradictions that arose, such as clash between modernity/secular demands and traditionalist thinking in the shadow of clerical power (Afary, 1996), but it was the beginning of a series of transformations towards Western modernization. For example, during the Pahlavi dynasty, Reza Shah (1925-1941) created a series of socio-economic changes such as establishment of the modern and western style of educations, facilities, administrations, and military (Abrahamian, 2008). During the reign of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979), modernization and urbanization's process developed rapidly, which led to the growth of a new and broad middle class with a modern life-style. Traditional economy and its replacement by modern method, eventually led to weakening of the religious institutions and those who support them financially, like Bazar (kamali 1998 in: Alyasan, 2000). Besides, the resumption of the oil production after Second World War and the revenue earned from exporting the oil, improved the economical status of the country and created sudden and significant changes in the society. These changes, led to the transition from traditional to a modern society in which many higher-class and middle-class families tended to send their children overseas for higher education. The main purpose behind this was to ensure that when their children returned home, they could hold secure social, political, and economical positions (Hakimzadeh, 2006).

It should be mentioned that the 'modernity', which was introduced in the Pahlavi era in Iran, was not the same with the 'modernity' in the West. In Iran, Shah had tried to modernize the country by introducing a 'cultural revolution', while it did not keep pace with the economic modernity. For example, Shah attempted to modernize the countryside without providing modern services for agricultural production. Whereas, modernity in the countryside in the West started by mechanization and economical revolution. Hence, despite all positive and important changes that occurred during the Pahlavi's reign, which provided a new way of life, many Iranian were not satisfied with the semi-modernity of the Pahlavi's era (Alyasan, 2000). Moreover, at that time radical religious groups did not accept those significant reforms. This can be considered as one the causes for the Islamic revaluation in 1979, a revolution that created many significant changes in the society and has become the main reason for emigration of many Iranians to the other countries including Norway. Indeed, Islamic revolution can be considered as the beginning of a new wave of the immigration, which did not exist before.



Thus, to classify Iranians' migration by the period and reasons for the migration, it can be mentioned that before the Islamic revolution in 1979, migration to Western countries mainly was because of education, since there was a great demand for skilled and high educated people in Iran. Accordingly, Iranian emigration to European countries should not be regarded as labor migration by means of "as the movement of people from one country to another for the purpose of employment" (IOM, 2011)<sup>1</sup>. Western European countries such as England, West Germany, France, and also North American countries have been the main destination for Iranian emigrants, where they usually could complete their high-level studies. Some of them remained abroad, got married and established a business there through their professional educations. However, a significant number of them returned home and stayed for a while in Iran, but later they left Iran again due to dissatisfaction with the existing conditions. For example, working conditions for those who were willing to provide useful services to their homeland were not satisfying (Kamalkhani, 1988).

Indeed, desire for education is inseparable part of the Iranian culture. In the past rural or urban lower classes tried to have religious education in order to promote their social class. But in the recent time, having modern secular education improved a person's prestige and social status (Kamalkhani, 1988). However, during and after Islamic revolution in 1979, the reasons for the emigration changed.

According to Ahmadi (1995 cited in Alyasan, 2000, p. 10), the emigration of Iranians during and after the foundation of Islamic republic of Iran in 1979 can be categorized in four periods. The first group includes those people who left the country in the initial phase of the revolution in 1978. These upper classes were related to the monarchy regime, owners of the fundamental and important industries, investors and had owned massive capital. The second group left Iran when the clergy came to power in 1979 and they therefore lost their hope that imperial army could take the control and win. Some members of the minority ethnic and religious groups such as Bahá'í, being harassed by the new government, fit into this category. The migration of the third group happened in the summer of 1981 after impeached and removal of Bani Sadr (Iran's first president after Islamic regime) by the ruling clergy. This group consists of activists of various political parties such as "socialist, liberal democrat and even Islamic groups and parties, which were not in line with new regime" (Alyasan, 2000, p. 10). The

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/what-we-do/labour-migration.html> (retrieved 22.01.2011)

fourth wave of migration started around 1984 after the intensification of the conflict between Iran and Iraq, (Iran-Iraq's war during 1980-1988). This group is mainly made up of young men who avoid being involved in the military service and its lateral pressures (Alyasan, 2000). In addition, many young women and their families fled the country due to gender restrictions, introduced by the Islamic regime such as forced veiling and their exclusion of many academic disciplines and government jobs (Hakimzadeh, 2006).

Iranian migrants during and after the revolution mainly consist of a significant number of well educated, high skilled and professionals. Emigration of these groups accelerated the rate of 'brain drain', a term that defined as the emigration of high educated, skilled human capital from a country for seeking a better opportunities in a foreign country. According to the 2000 census of the Iranian Studies Group, "more than one in four Iranian Americans over the age of 25, hold a graduate degree or above, the highest rate among 67 ethnic groups" (Hakimzadeh, 2006)<sup>2</sup>. A large number of them consider their departure as temporary movement, in other words, they locked the doors of their homes and only took up some baggage, because they hoped that the new government would be overthrown soon. However, after passing relatively long time they have lost their hope to return home permanently. Consequently, both many of these groups and their relatives in Iran decided to live abroad (Ibid).

Another wave of emigration has occurred since 1995, including two very distinct groups. First group, as the same as the pervious groups consisted of highly skilled professional, such as university professors and researchers who in the continuation of the earlier tendency left Iran and settled in western countries. The second group includes 'working-class migrants' and 'economic refugees'. Economic refugees according to the Investopedia refers to "A person who leaves their home country for a new country, in search of better job prospects and higher living standards"<sup>3</sup>. They left the country, because it was hard to establish a high quality living conditions inside the country due to the economical downturn, and they moved to abroad to escape poverty with the hope of having better income. Indeed, in this period some shift emerged in the pattern of immigration from upper and middle classes immigration to lower classes in the society (Chambers & Ganesan, 2005; Investopedia). These groups did not have high education and their skills were not applicable compared to the previous ones.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=424>(retrieved 17.01.2012)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/economicrefugee.asp#axzz1lcGFArxS> (retrieved 06.02.2012).

Generally speaking, the wave of immigration from 1995 occurred due to economical crises, a reduction in the employment opportunities, and an increase in the unemployment rate. Worsening human rights situations, and conflict between the reformist and conservative parties intensified it. The distinctive feature of this wave is to increase the overall number of asylum applications in Western European countries. Only in 2001, there have been 300 % increases in asylum applications in Britain (Hakimzadeh, 2006).

With the increase in the rate of asylum applications and migration rate, European Union countries increased their restrictions for asylum seeker; i.e. not everyone is permitted to get a refugee claim. Therefore, Iranians who are not granted refugee status often go to other countries remain illegally in the country where they have applied for refugee status, or they may return to Iran (ibid). In fact, for these groups, leaving the country was not easy, because sometimes they had to choose illegal ways to fled. For example, many chose to be smuggled out of the country from Turkey's border. Some other converted their religion from Islam to Christianity that legitimizes applying for refugee status, since changing religion from Islam to another faith is regarded as an act of apostasy and deserving severe punishment (Hakimzadeh, 2006). Nowadays, some of them returned to the traditional way of emigration, i.e. education, which is rooted in the Persian values and culture. For many Iranians, education is the only way to depart the country that they love, but they cannot stand with existing pressures. Some of the informants in this study fall into this category. Hence, by increasing domestic difficulties in the country, the flood of immigrants to the West is growing every year.

### **2.3 Historical Background of Iranian Migration to Norway**

The First Iranian migrants resided in Norway during 1966-70. At first, they were very few but after 1984, there has been a significant increase. Zahra Kamalkhani categorized Iranian migration to Norway into three periods: the first period started before 1979 and continued shortly after Islamic revolution in 1980, the second period lasted from 1980 until 1984 and the third period from 1984 to 1986 (Kamalkhani, 1988). According to Alyasan, a new wave of migration to Norway occurred during 1986-1994, with the assistance of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in Iran's neighboring countries such as Turkey and Pakistan (Alyasan, 2000). Statistical review illustrates that the annual average of immigration to Norway was in its highest level during the period of 1986-1990 (see table 3; Immigration, by country. 1966-2010, Statistics Norway, 2011)<sup>4</sup>. However, after that, the process of

---

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ssb.no/innvutv\\_en/arkiv/tab-2011-05-05-03-en.html](http://www.ssb.no/innvutv_en/arkiv/tab-2011-05-05-03-en.html)

migration to Norway slowed down due to changes in the Norwegian immigration policies. In this period, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) introduced several restrictive asylum policy measures.

Iranians who came to Norway before and the early years after Islamic revolution include members of religious minority groups (particularly Bahá'ís and small group of Christians), businessmen, and those who had a Norwegian spouse. They came directly from Iran or from other countries, mainly from England. Most Iranians who married to a Norwegian were mostly students in England, where they were either studying or working. Some other Iranian married to Norwegians used to work as employees in the oil industry in Tehran-Iran.

As I mentioned earlier, socio-economic changes inside Iran were the leading causes of migration in this period. Closure of industrial facilities, which occurred due to long-term industrial strikes as well as disorders and closure of academic institutions led to migration of significant number of highly educated and semi-skilled population. They mostly returned to the countries that had been before. Some of them later moved to Norway (Kamalkhani, 1988). According to Kamalkhani, these groups should not be considered as refugees but as immigrants, since they were mainly students or spouses of the Norwegians. They moved abroad voluntarily and they did not want to stay permanently, but they changed their mind due to political crisis in Iran (Kamalkhani 198; Alyasan, 2000).

Conversely, the later groups of Iranian mainly belonged in the category of refugees and their number rose dramatically compared to the earlier immigrants. They were more heterogeneous and including different ethnic minorities (such as Kurds and Turks) or religious minorities (such as Bahá'ís), and “mainly Shia Muslim such as young dodgers and political activists. They left the country because they were somehow in conflict with the Islamic republic of Iran” (Alyasan, 2000, p. 12). Unlike previous groups, they were less educated; some had academic education but were mostly high school graduated, had no familiarity with European culture or foreign languages like English, and majority of them had never been abroad before. Most of Iranians who arrived in Norway during 1984-94 were refugees who came here by assistance of UNHCR or with the help of the smugglers. They usually went to Iran's neighboring countries like Turkey, stayed there for a while, and then travelled to Norway through UNHCR or through a mediator who smuggled them into other countries such as

Norway. Consequently, many Iranian who arrived in Norway in this period did not have legal resident permit unlike the previous groups of the immigrants (Alyasan, 2000).

Based on my own experiences, I can say that despite the previous migration flows of asylum seekers, currently a new wave of migration from Iran to Norway is ongoing, which has started since 2000. In 2000, small groups of Iranian engineers were sent to Norway by Iran's Ministry of Petroleum (MoP) and followed by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, to be trained mostly at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. They have been sent to Norway as master or PhD students. The aim behind this cooperation was that these students would return to Iran after their graduation and work as professionals in the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) or as university professors. In fact, majority of them did not return home. They arrived in Norway with their families or came alone and their families joined them later. They stayed here for several years. During their educations, their children grew up here and started to go to school, they completed their education and got job in Norway. Therefore, many of them decided to stay here for the rest of their lives. This flow of migration coincided with a series of social, economical, political issues that happened in Iran, and in turn accelerated the migratory stream of Iranian students to Norway. Economical factors such as severe shortage of job opportunities and high rate of unemployment as well as human rights violations, social discrimination, intellectual suppression, together with the lack of civil, political, and social freedom, which has been increased during the presidencies of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, have been considered highly effective in rising the emigration of the students and specialists (Hamseda, 2009). Since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election in 2005, there has been a 20-30 % increase in the applications for the USA or European countries residence permit (Hakimzadeh, 2006). It deserves to be mentioned that during Ahmadinejad's presidency, the rush to depart the country significantly increased not only to the western countries, but also to the other countries such as Australia, New Zealand and even to Malaysia, Dubai, Hungary, Czech Republic, Ukraine, etc.

Consequently, for many Iranians education is the only way to escape from the existing and increasing pressures inside the country. The Internet provides a very efficient tool for young people to search for better opportunities outside Iran. As a result, nowadays many young people move to a foreign country like Norway to study. However, unlike the first group of

Iranian students, which I discussed earlier, they do not intend to return home again. Only in 2010, 68 Iranian students (totally 139 people with their families) arrived in Norway (Statistics Norway, Table 1). In the next section, Iranian immigration in general and to Norway in particular, will be stated in terms of the statistics.

## **2.4 Demographic Characteristics of Iranian Immigrants**

The exact number of Iranian migrants living abroad is not known, but it is estimated to be around four to five million people (Press TV 2010; Esfandiari, 2004). They spread all over the world mostly in the North America and some Western European countries such as Norway. According to Statistics Norway, Norway's total population at the beginning of 2011 estimated to the number of 4 920 305, of which 600 922 of them are immigrants, which means 12.2 % of Norway's population are immigrants. This consists of (500 500) immigrants and (100 422) Norwegian-born to the immigrant parents (Statistics Norway, 2011)<sup>5</sup>.

Classified based on the country of origin, Iranians are the ninth largest immigrant group in Norway at the beginning of 2010, after Polish, Swedish, Pakistani, Iraqis, Somalis, German, Vietnamese and Danish (Henriksen et al. 2011). During the period of 1990-2010 the number of 10 537 Iranian moved to Norway, of which 293 people came here as labor migration, 6 674 as refugees, 2 378 by the reason of family reunification with refugees, 313 for training, 872 people by family reunification with students, and 7 resided by other reasons ( see table 2; Immigrations by reason for immigration and citizenship, Statistics Norway, 2011)<sup>6</sup>.

Statistics indicate the growing trend of Iranians population in Norway, as average annual number of Iranian arrivals in Norway in 1966-1970 was the number of 27, and it increased to the number of 533 in 2010 (see table 3; Immigration, by country. 1966-2010, statistics Norway, 2011)<sup>7</sup>. These statistics indicate that taking refuge and family reunification are the main reasons for immigration of Iranians to Norway. Indeed, crisis and unrests around the globe as push factors are motivating or forcing people to leave their own countries to seek for security and better quality of life. Norway is one of the popular destinations, because of its rigid economy and public social supports. Every year lots of people around the world including Iranian apply for asylum or refugee status in Norway.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ssb.no/english/> (retrieved 08.01.2011)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ssb.no/innvgrunn\\_en/arkiv/tab-2011-08-25-02-en.html](http://www.ssb.no/innvgrunn_en/arkiv/tab-2011-08-25-02-en.html)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ssb.no/innvutv\\_en/arkiv/tab-2011-05-05-03-en.html](http://www.ssb.no/innvutv_en/arkiv/tab-2011-05-05-03-en.html)

At the end of 2010, UNHCR estimated that there were 68 791 Iranian refugees and 16 065 asylum seeker in the world (UNHCR, 2011). During 2010, UNHCR and different governments received 19 004 new asylum applications or refugee status from Iranians, of which 429 applications were submitted to Norwegian directorate of immigration (UDI) (Iranian Refugees' Alliance, 2011). Norway is ranked ninth among eleven main destination countries for asylum seekers from Iran. The other countries that receive the most asylum applications by Iranians are United Kingdom, Turkey/UNHCR (Turkey has the role of intermediary), Germany, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, the USA, Austria, Cyprus, and Canada (Iranian Refugees' Alliance, 2011).

Statistics Norway has different definition of the people with refugee status including asylum seekers, resettlement refugees, family reunification, and accompanying person, marriage establishment, and unspecified (see table 1 Different definitions of persons with refugee status, Statistics Norway, 2011)<sup>8</sup>. Iranian settled in different parts of Norway mainly in Oslo 5521, Bærum 896, Trondheim 786, Bergen 703, Stavanger 552, Fredrikstad 399, Kristiansand 384, and Asker 295 (see table10; selected municipalities, Statistics Norway, 2011)<sup>9</sup>.

In the next chapter, I will present the main concepts and the theoretical perspectives on the basis of which this study has developed.

---

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/01/10/flyktninger\\_en/arkiv/tab-2011-08-25-01-en.html](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/01/10/flyktninger_en/arkiv/tab-2011-08-25-01-en.html)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/01/10/innvbef\\_en/arkiv/tab-2011-04-28-10-en.html](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/01/10/innvbef_en/arkiv/tab-2011-04-28-10-en.html)





## **CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Theory and practice goes hand in hand, hence the role of theory is very important in any research study. Strauss & Corbin (1990) argue that theory helps us to make sense of our data and enable us to understand and distinguish between relevant and not relevant issues (cited in: Nilsen, 2005). In qualitative research interviewing there is an emphasis on the interviewer's skill, creativity and "personal judgment" of the kinds of the methods and techniques to use and when. Hence, interview can be considered as a craft and interviewer as a craftsman. C.Wrights Mills argues that, social research is "intellectual craftsmanship" which expertise in the use of relevant methods and theories are very important. To be a good craftsman, we should "let theory and method again become part of the practice of a craft" (cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 82-87).

This chapter attempts to present the key concepts and theories influencing the direction of the study. Based on the research questions and the aim of the study, some theoretical concepts such as friendship and peer culture need to be clarified. Moreover, the main theoretical perspective that has guided my study is the social studies of children and childhood that recognize children as competent social actors with agency (James and James, 2004). In this respect, a historical overview, different approaches within childhood studies, and the relationships between agency and structure seems worthy of mention. Particular attention will also be given to structuration theory to look at the interplay between the structures of a society and the human agents within it. An attempt has been made to find out how individual persons exercise their agency and how they are influenced by the structural conditions in which they live and interact with (Giddens, 1984). Furthermore, this study tries to explore the experiences of the migrant children from the perspective of 'inclusion', that is how they perceive social exclusion/ inclusion in the school settings.

### **3.2 The Emergence of Social Studies of children and Childhood**

There are different perspectives about the notions of children and childhood. Different disciplines, particularly psychology and sociology have contributed to contemporary understandings of childhood. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, children and childhood attracted a lot of attention, and many studies carried out in this regard. Jean Piaget's theory of stage development has been very influential in constructing the concept of childhood over time. According to him, all children everywhere develop through "a series of predetermined stages

which lead towards the eventually achievement of logical competence” (James and Prout, 1990, p. 11). In Piaget’s theory, in fact, there were biological factors which lay the bases of childhood. These biological facts were used to explain the social facts of childhood without ever considering cultural differences. In such an account, children were regarded as helpless, immature, and dependent (James and Prout, 1990). However, James and Prout argue, although “the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture. It is these facts which may vary and which can be said make of childhood a social institution” (1990:7). It means culture provides huge kind of variation which influence not only the children’s growing up but the ways children and childhood are understood. By culture, I mean a ‘way of life’, which make sense to people in a particular society (Williams 1961, 1989 in: Kehily, 2004), as well as a ‘form of action’- it is not only something that individuals have, it is also what they do (Kehily and Swann 2003 in Kehily, 2004 p. 9). In this sense, childhood is not fixed and universal, but rather a cultural product, and therefore varies across place and time (Kehily, 2004).

In the 1950s-1970s, the model of socialization theory became the dominant paradigm for studying children. Socialization is often seen as a very functional model. It is trying to explain how societies continue, and how children internalize society’s norms and values and learn to become adult members in a particular society in which they live (Woodhead & Montgomery 2003; Adler & Adler 1998). In this theory, children’s position is still very passive. They are seen as immature, incompetent, dependent, and irrational beings. The socialization concept in this sense is the process in which children become mature, rational, competent, independent and social adult. Children receive the adult’s culture, and this culture indeed shapes the child development. In this model, the family and the school as socializing agents are the key figures in shaping children in particular ways (James and Prout, 1997).

In such a perspective, socialization is seen only from the adult perspective, and children were on the margin and their voices were not heard. Hence, a new way of looking at children and childhood was required, a new way to give children a voice, to acknowledge children’s agency, to understand their world from their own perspectives (James and Prout, 1997).

Then, in the 1970s, a new paradigm emerged, a paradigm, which is the base of what we know today about childhood studies. Social studies of children and childhood very much have learned from previous established mainstream researches, by criticizing concept of development and socialization. Unlike the traditional ways of thinking about children and

childhood, which involved looking children as incomplete adults, the emergent paradigm had an active view of children. It says children are not passive, but rather active in the construction of their own lives; they have social relationship and a peer culture (Woodhead & Montgomery 2003; James and Prout 1990) and as Sutton-Smith argues, their peer interaction “is not a preparation for life, it is life itself” (Adler and Adler, 1998 p.7). The emergent paradigm says that ‘children’s relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right’, independent from adults’ concerns and perspectives (James and Prout, 1990 p.8). In addition, contrary to the development and socialization models that looked at childhood from the perspective of understanding adulthood, childhood represents a socially constructed category, and not only adults, but also children themselves participate to this construction (Qvortrup, 1990 in: Adler and Adler, 1998). Hence, we need to understand the children’s world from their own perspective, because it might be quite different from how the adult see.

### **3.3 Approaches within Childhood Studies**

James and Prout (1990, 1997) set out a new approach to the study of children and childhood, named ‘the new paradigm’. Their arguments illustrate a need to move beyond ‘psychologically-based models’, which see childhood as a period of development towards looking at children as active agents who are able to construct the structures and processes around them (cited in: Morrow, 2008 p.50). The emergence of the new paradigm made big shift in the way of studying children and childhood, and it was very effective in the foundation of childhood studies.

Many researchers, in fact, contributed to the emergence of the social studies of children and childhood. They worked to place children in the center of attention, to be studied in their own rights, and not as appendices to the social world of adults (Alanen, 2004). James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) identified four approaches of theorizing childhood and understanding children, and related these to the ways in which children are conceptualized in research, which include the socially constructed child, the social structural child, the tribal child, and the minority group child. These four approaches, then, can be split into two pair: social structural and socially constructed approaches (James et al. 1998 p.32).

The socially constructed child focuses on the ‘variable content of childhood’ (James et al. 1998 in: Morrow, 2008 , p. 51). This approach views childhood as a social category, which is socially constructed and rooted in specific social, historical, and cultural contexts. In this respect, it is opposed to the positivist approach that believes children are shaped by natural

social forces, and sees childhood as a natural and universal category (Jenks 1996; James et al. 1998 p.32; Kjørholt 2004). In the framework of socially constructed child approach, childhood is not considered just as a biological stage of development and children are not considered as human becomings, rather acknowledge them as human beings on its own rights. Then, instead of emphasizing on child future orientation, it is focusing on the present life of the children. According to social constructionist approach, children live in a world of meaning which is constructed by themselves and through interacting with adults (James et al. 1998 p.32).

The tribal child is a view that emphasize on differences between children and adults and celebrate children's relative autonomy and child-child relationships. This view asserts that children social actions are structured, but unfamiliar to adults (Morrow, 2008 ). As Opie and Opie argue (1977), "the children's world is to be seen as not unaffected by, but nevertheless artfully insulated from the world of adults; it is to be understood as an independent place with its own folklore, rituals, rules and normative constraints. This is the world of the schoolyard, the playground, the club, and the gang" (cited in James et al. 1998, p.29). Under this approach, children are not passive recipients of a culture created by adults; they are not becomings, rather they are human beings who are active agents in their own rights with culture (James and Prout, 1990).

The minority group child looks at children as a group who has a minority status, and has very little power in the society. As a group, they have been subjected to discrimination and marginalization just like women, some ethnic minority and migrants, which has a demand to be heard. The minority group child seeks to challenge existing power relations between adults and children instead of confirming it (James et al. 1998). To have a minority status does not necessarily refer to the quantitative sense in the society, because there might be even more children in the society than adults. But In terms of power, they are considered as those who have the least power. "The key point is thus that they collectively, as a category is denied rights and opportunities that are at the disposition of the corresponding power groups" (Qvortrup 1987, p, 9).

The social structural child starts, with the assumption that "children are not pathological or incomplete; they form a group, a body of social actors, and as citizens they have needs and rights" (James et al. 1998, p.32). They are seen as a universal category with specific universal features, which is determined by their society. Indeed, children live within the social

structures and society creates particular kind of condition for children (ibid). In this approach, children are constant characteristics and component of all societies. Regarding this, Corsaro argues that childhood is a temporary period for children themselves, but for the society, it is a permanent category or structural form, which always exists and never disappeared even though children or its members change (Corsaro, 2000). It means childhood is permanent even though each individual child lives childhood in the biographical sense, but childhood as a social phenomenon is not supposed to come into existence and continues as a social structure in society. As a social structural form, childhood is an integrated part in the society and constitutes a category that children are its members.

Nevertheless, childhood is also not just a permanent phenomenon. We should be aware that childhood is changing historically and politically and all these material, social, and political changes affect the way that childhood is constituted. We should consider how the different social structures affect children's lives (Ansell, 2005). Therefore, while studying children, they should not be considered independent from the various contexts where they live in. Then we can study childhood in relation to other social macro phenomenon that childhood belongs and interacts with for example, social class, race, gender, ethnicity, etc (James et al. 1998).

As James et al. argue, four above mentioned approaches could be seen "within a set of dualism: structure and agency, voluntarism and determinism, identity and difference, continuity and change, global and local, change and continuity, universal and particular" (1998: 199). In other words, these approaches are not isolated, rather they "combine elements across boundaries in understanding children" (ibid: 26).

Within the social studies of children and childhood, this study has made an attempt to understand children as social actors and active agents in their own rights, as qualified research participants with particular social skills, and as a social group with specific needs and rights who are restricted by structures and practices of adults (Morrow, 2008 ). Indeed, combining elements from all four categories provides me with a background to this study. In other words, this study will look at Iranian migrant children as competent social actors who are able to exercise their agency in order to adapt themselves to the Norwegian schools. Furthermore, it will attempt to explore the effects of the existing structures of the host society on my informants' experiences of migration.

### 3.4 Agency / Structure

Agency and structure are connected to each other. Agency is connected to the structure of the society. Jens Qvortrup (1987) has argued most intensively about the necessity of structural perspective on childhood. He mainly focuses on macro structure. From the structural position, structures are regulating people's lives. Within this line of thinking, one should be aware of who have the power to control the resources and who do not have such a power. Most of the resources are indeed available for the adults who make decision about children and about the way that they live. Qvortrup says children as a minority group are in a unique position that have very little power in society. He discusses about, "the minority group par excellence: it is they who provide the minority paradigm for other minority groups, in that the latter are stigmatized as children" (Qvortrup 1987:11). Therefore, to be stigmatized as a child is a sort of underscoring the lower positions. However, the important thing about children is the type of adult they will become and the process of becoming those adult. As a result, there is emphasis on the children's growing-up process and their position as 'becomings' rather than 'beings' (Qvortrup, 1994 cited in: Moran-Ellis, 2010).

Leena Alanen and Berry Mayall take a slightly different view than Qvortrup. They take account of social structure while at the same time taking into consideration the children's own agency. They emphasize on generation as a relational concept, arguing for the notion of generational structure and looking at "social structure as a system of relationships among social positions" (Porpora 1998 in Alanen 2001:19). Leena Alanen argues "the notion of a generational structure or order refers to a complex set of social processes through which people become (are constructed as) 'children' while other people become (are constructed as) 'adults' (...). "Construction involves agency (of children and adults); it is best understood as a practical and even material process, and needs to be studied as a practice or set of practices (Alanen, 2001, pp. 20-21). Alanen argues that children have agency, and their agency can be focused like adults' agency. However, this raises some questions, for example, what kind of practices make a child, child? And what set of practices make an adult, adult? Furthermore, what is the interconnection between agency and structure? Are people free to act as they will, or are people formed and controlled by structure? How are social structures determining and governing people's lives?

Many scholars in social sciences are struggling to theorize and grasp fruitfully the recursive relations between both agency and structure, both active actor and power and control. This is because the relationship between agency and structure seems the most important theoretical

issue within the social sciences, that there is no escape from that. Colin Hay (1995) argues, “Every time we construct, however tentatively, a notion of social, political, or economic causality we appeal, whether explicitly or (more likely) implicitly, to ideas about structure and agency” (cited in McAnulla, 2005, p. 2). As discussed earlier, from a structural position, human being is relatively passive and the structure seems as a series of external factors that determine the community members’ lives. In other words, in this approach agency disappears (James et al. 1998). Nevertheless, if we study empirically, we might see very complex relationships between agency and structure, between an everyday life level and a structural/societal level (Giddens, 1984). Therefore, to find the answers to above questions, it is worth mentioning the famous British sociologist Anthony Giddens, who has made efforts to overcome the dichotomy between agency and structure in his theory of structuration.

### **3.5 Structuration Theory**

The structuration theory developed by Anthony Giddens has tried to move beyond the structure/agency dualism. According to him, structure and agency are not two distinct phenomena; rather they are two sides of the same coin, which are internally related and mutually dependent on each other (Giddens, 1984).

Giddens argues, “The basic domain of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experiences of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time. Human social activities (...) are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible” (Giddens 1984:2). As we see, the important point in Giddens’ theorizing is social practices, which are ordered across time and space. Therefore, what we do as an agent is within some frames, within frames of space and certain time schedule.

Giddens points out to the balance between agency (action) and structure as the duality of structure in the sense that social action is possible through social structures, and at the same time social structures created by social actions (Giddens, 1984). Regarding this, structure exists only through agency and the activities of human actors. The human agents have structures between them (which are defined as rule and resources), that facilitating or constraining their actions. These actions, in turn, can result in the reconstruction of the structures /rules and resources. Then, the rule and resources in turn, will affect the future

action (McAnulla, 2005). Thus, the created structures both enable and open up new possibilities, yet they also constrain and limit individuals to behave in certain ways (Tucker, 1998).

Giddens believes that individuals are purposive and knowledgeable agents who are highly conscious about the conditions and consequences of what they do in their day-to-day lives and their reasons for doing it. Therefore, they can participate in highly complex social interactions (Tucker, 1998; Rose 1998; Giddens 1984). At the same time, individual actions are embedded in social context (Giddens 1984, p. 258). For Giddens, “actions are ‘situated practices’ which connect the person and social structure. Structures are not external to human action, but are integrally involved in the everyday practices, which bind time and space together in ever-new combinations. Structures organize the social action, but they do not exist outside of social practices. This is basis of Giddens’s argument about duality of structure” (Tucker, 1998, pp. 84-85). In other words, Giddens placed the time and space at the center of social analysis and this means that individuals are not separate from the social structures that they actively recreate. Therefore, social structures are both the condition and the results of the activities that people do; there cannot be one without the other (ibid).

Even though the structuration theory appears as a useful approach in understanding social phenomenon, it has received some criticisms. For example, Hay (1995) criticizes Giddens’s conceptualisation of structure, and argues that there are problems with Giddens statement by saying that structure cannot exist independently of the knowledge that actors have about their day-to-day activity. The problem here is that many people would argue that the powers and tendencies of structures could exist independent of agents’ awareness of them (cited in McAnulla, 2005). Furthermore, Margaret Archer (1995) criticizes Giddens’ conflationary approach and argues for the analytic distinction of structure and agency. According to Archer, agency and structure are irreducible to each other and are separable by definition because each of them has unique set of powers and properties (McAnulla, 2005).

To understand the interplay between structure and agency, Nick Lee’s concept of independency-dependency offers a useful concept to bridge the relationship between these two concepts. Lee has been discussing the Qvortrup’s argument and criticizing the dichotomy of children as ‘human becomings’ and adults as ‘human beings’. He has pointed out characteristics of the human being, which “is, or should be, stable, complete, self-possessed and self-controlling, capable of independent thought and action, an independence that merits respect”. At the same time, he has referred to characteristics of the human becoming “as



changeable and incomplete and lacks the self-possession and self-control that would allow it the independence of thought and action that merits respect” (Lee, 2001, p. 5). In Lee’s view, the distinction between human being and human becoming is that between the complete and independent person and the incomplete and dependent person (ibid).

Furthermore, within the historical perspective, Lee describes the growth of the division between two kinds of humans: adults and children. He talks about “standard adult which is understood to have all properties of an independent human beings and children are understood to have all the properties of human becomings” (Lee, 2001, pp. 5-6). Given this, childhood is as period of investment for the future of the state, a future that states are eager to control for their purposes and ambitions. So children must be protected from any impurity that may reduce the investment return. Consequently, this view lead to exertion of strict control over children and isolation of them from the wider society and this eventually makes children weak, vulnerable, and dependent (ibid).

However, Lee argues that there are changing ways of thinking and acting, the new ways of constructing both adult and children. It is clear that both adults and children have dependencies to some extent. No adults are completely independent of others; they need assistance from other people in their daily lives due to the circumstances in which they live. Children are also dependent, they are physically weak, and so in the need of support and protection; they are often economically dependent on the adults because of being fed, clothed, and provided shelter. They are dependent on their parents or other adults to make important decisions for them, as well. Hence, both adults and children can move in and out of dependency. This might be because the societies these days are different from what they use to be, as we have entered an age of uncertainty that the lives of adults became more flexible and adulthood became less stable and less complete. For example, through technical mediation, new technology, internet, etc, children are much more competent than their own parents. Concerning the migrant children, I would say that many children learn a new language more quickly and easily than their own parents do. Hence, in some situations, adults can be less competent, and children can be more mature. Therefore, it does not necessarily need to think of human being as a standard adult, and human becoming as deviant. In this situation, both “children and adults can be moved in and out of competence, in and out of maturity, and in and out of the social inclusion that these characteristics afford” (Lee 1998:474). In such situation, states are experiencing a decline in their autonomy and their power to control and plan for children as future success of the states (Castells 1997 in Lee

2001). The reductions in states' power give children an "identity as dependents that can be held in independents of states" (ibid: 22). Children might be changed according to the situation. In fact, "Changing contexts changes children's potential for social and economic action and participation" (Lee, 2001, p. 56).

As we see, Lee criticizes the line of thinking, in which children are only viewed as incomplete and dependent beings, or only viewed as complete and independent beings. In this way, he tries to bridge the relationship between agency and structure.

From the previous discussion on the social studies of children and childhood and review of different approaches, I found that Giddens's structuration theory, which focuses on the mutual constitution of structure and agency, despite its limitation, might be the best-fit approach to my exploration of migrant children's experiences in the school setting.

The main concern in the social studies of children and childhood is how we are theorizing children and childhood. As Leena Alanen argues, most of the new and corrective research on children indeed have concentrated "directly on 'real' children, their activities and experiences, understandings, knowledge and meanings" (Alanen, 2004, p. 4). Children's functions in their social world, contribute in the social life, and they participate in the construction of the events around them. Therefore their relationships and negotiations within themselves and with the world that they live in should be in the center of attention (ibid). On the other hand, "particular childhoods are produced through particular institutions, ranging from global political-economic structures to families and communities" (Ansell, 2005, p.22). Hence, Instead of studying children apart from their context, there is need to investigate how social structures can affect children's lives from their perspectives, and how children, as active agents, form their societies and shape relationships with their environment and wider social structures. Children live their everyday lives within the social structures and they are influenced by the attitudes and structural conditions in their environment (ibid).

As Giddens (1984) argues, social structures have both enabling and constraining effects on individuals' lives. Being a migrant child is a structural condition that can have big impacts on the lives of children. Child's family economic structure and political structure of host society such as child rights, education, and migration policies, as part of wider social structure affect the experiences of migrant children.

In terms of this study, there are both constraints and possibilities that migrant children are meeting up in their lives when they exercise their agency. When constraining structures limit children, they may not have many opportunities to resist. Nevertheless, children might act in a way that they are resisting the constraints, rather than just complying with the expectations and the constraints. Regarding this, some questions raise here; how the structure of Norwegian society constrains migrant children and shapes their practices and how it can open up possibilities for them. On the other hand, how migrant children exercise agency under existing social structures and how they, can create and recreate social structures and actively shape the world they live in. Whether my informants, as individuals, are free to act independently of structure of Norwegian society and make their own free choices, or they live in a situation in which structure is the predominant factor that determine or limit their actions and decisions. Based on Lee's (2001) concept of independency-dependency, I argue that migrant children can not only be viewed as incomplete and dependent becoming that are influenced and determined by the structures around them; or only viewed as complete and independent beings that are able to act or make decisions independently.

### **3.6 Inclusion / Exclusion**

Devine and Kelly argue that to understand the context of children's social relation in school, we should address the experience of inclusion /exclusion in peer relations and concepts of sameness/difference (Devine & Kelly, 2006). Inclusion and exclusion are directly connected to each other. If thought of as a continuum, at one end of this continuum is the exclusion and at the other end is inclusion (Kearney, 2011). This study makes an attempt to explore the experiences of the migrant children from the perspective of 'inclusion'. To put it another way, it is aimed at figuring out how they perceive social exclusion / inclusion in the school settings.

The concept of 'social exclusion' has become one of the most important issues for debate in social policy in Europe. Despite this, there is still a substantial lack of clarity as to what the concept means. In the 1970s, the term used to refer to disabled individuals who were excluded from equal participation in community (Klasen, 1998). However, in the recent years its application has been expanded as a central attention of 'social policy'. Different authors have their own way of looking at the issue. For example, Graham Room (1995) uses a right-based approach to define the term. According to him, social exclusion means "denial or non-realization of civil, political, and social rights of citizenship" (cited in: Klasen, 2001, pp. 414-415). Amartya Sen (1992) defined the term based on capacity approach, and "sees social exclusion as the failure of the people to have access to critical capabilities relating to their

integration into society". With regard to children, the term can be defined as children's deprivation of equal participation in society and recognition by the society (cited in: Klasen, 2001, p. 414-418).

At the other end of the continuum is the inclusion, which Wainscot et al. (2006) has introduced as an "elusive concept, meaning different things to different people, and varying in its execution from place to place" (cited in Reynolds, 2008 p.7). In the school setting, inclusion refers to "the right to quality education for all (...), inclusion is about access, participation, and achievement of all students, with special emphasis on those who are at greater risk of being excluded or marginalized for various reasons" (Blanco & Takemoto 2006, p.56). Doreen Lawrence talks about the school curriculum, which should respond to each individual child's background, and to give them self-esteem to be proud of who they are (cited in: Richardson & Wood, 2000, p.v). Her statements illustrate the need for inclusive education and inclusive school.

In fact, the concept of an inclusive education is not well defined. However, its main characteristic is providing high quality education for all pupils. This is based on the ideas of non-discrimination and equal opportunity. Moreover, an inclusive school is "characterized by mutual listening and respect – among staff, between staff and pupils and among pupils" (Richardson & Wood, 2000:5; Reynolds, 2008). In an inclusive school, the curriculum needs to be organized in such a way that creates a welcoming and accepting atmosphere and respects the diversity, all needs, and identities of its students. Thus, in such multicultural setting, students from different background will have equal opportunities and equal right to participation, and also they are able to introduce, maintain, and develop their "cultural identity" (Richardson & Wood, 2000:5; Reynolds, 2008).

On the other hand, inclusion strategies can be problematic and complex. Some critics argue that if we put all students together to achieve the above-mentioned inclusion goals, indeed we overlook the needs of particular groups. Thus, students are forced to assimilate to school, while inclusion means that the school should adapt itself to diverse group of students (Wainscot, 1999 in Reynolds, 2008).

Migrant children as a minority group can be an example of those at higher risk of exclusion. Social life of migrant children is associated with a variety of experiences of being 'excluded' or 'different' that they have to cope with. Since they are different from native students, they can be particularly vulnerable to exclusion that they are willing to deal with (Christopoulou &

Rydin, 2004). In order to be included in mainstream school, migrant children require conforming to social rules such as exploring new world, having to understand new code of behavior, and mastering the language of host society etc. Fear of being exposed to unknown issues, often put children in a position that they prefer to refuse their past as well as push them forward to discover new world (Christopoulou & Rydin, 2004). Therefore, school structure should be organized in such ways that could take full responsibility for diversity of their learners (Clark et al. 1999).

Furthermore, the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion deals with the concepts of 'normality' and 'otherness'. It means the norms and expectations structure the social interaction within the context. Hence, interaction of children in school can be related to the experience of difference ('otherness and 'sameness'), in their communication with other peers. It can be influenced by different variables such as ethnicity, class, gender, age, and sexuality. For example, in a multicultural school setting, migrant children as a minority ethnic group may be considered as those who are outside this norm and perceive as 'other'. Children's experiences of being stereotyped and labeled as 'different' can be as an example of this (Devine and Kelly, 2006). Based on the topic and the research questions, the main focus will be upon ethnicity and gender as variables of the analysis.

### **3.7 Children's Peer Culture**

Studying the social worlds of children has attracted the attention of researchers on the children's racialized attitudes and the extent to which these affect both the way and the amount of children's interaction with each other in multiethnic classrooms. This means that, children's social relationships can be fully understood only by studying and understanding of children's culture (Devine & Kelly, 2006). Corsaro defined peer culture as "a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers" (Corsaro and Eder 1990:197; Corsaro 2009: 301). This definition illustrate that the concept of peer culture varies from the concept of peer group. Children are members of their own peer groups yet they also collectively create their own peer cultures.

Indeed, there has been a major change in children's worlds in many parts of the world in the sense that childhood is institutionalized. Children, thus, are spending considerable time with playmates in organized playgrounds and childcare centers. Through these institutions and by interacting with the peers, children produce for the first time in a series of peer cultures in which, knowledge, attitude and practices of childhood turn into the knowledge and practices

required for adulthood. Several studies in France, Italy, and Norway document how very young children not only create and embellish a routine of peer culture among them, but also challenge adult authority (Corsaro, 2005; Corsaro, 2009; Corsaro & Eder, 1990).

Corsaro has studied children's peer interactions in the context of daycare centers in Italy and the USA. He and his colleague found that children developed several play routines (i.e., little chair routine) that all of the children participate in them with varying degrees. They also saw that the routines provide children a sense of control over their environment and teachers' authority. Corsaro argues "the simple participant structure of play routines corresponds to a central value of peer culture: doing things together". In his view, children are capable of producing a peer culture on their own from very early in their life. Children produce and take part in a range of peer cultures, which are influenced by social circumstances and different setting such as neighborhoods, schools, city streets, villages, etc (2005:140).

In addition, children's peer cultures are not isolated from the adult world, and are not sort of tribal childhood posed by James et al. (1998), rather children's and adult's cultures are interwoven in complex ways across time and space (Corsaro, 2009). Children do not simply imitate and consume adults' culture. They actively produce culture through appropriation of information from adults' culture. This is a creative appropriation because it causes the generation and extension of peer culture and at the same time contributes to the reproduction and expansion of the adult culture. This process of creative appropriation is called as '*interpretive reproduction*' (Corsaro, 2005; 2009) and it is in line with the notion of a duality of structure developed by Giddens (1984), which has been extensively discussed in the previous sections. Giddens argued that "structural properties of social system are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). This means that *interpretive reproduction* sees "social structure as both constraining and enabling" (ibid). This process is interpretive because children do not merely internalize the culture of the adults, in fact, they are at the center of societal preservation and its change (Corsaro, 2009).

According to interpretive perspective, "children discover a world endowed with meaning and help to shape and share in their own developmental experiences through their participation in everyday cultural routines" (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p.199). Based on this approach, children interact and negotiate with others. They create understandings that become the social knowledge and by which they enter into a social relationship. The importance of this concept

is that unlike traditional child sciences, children are active agents in their own development as well as agents in their locality and in society (Qvortrup, 1998).

Another example of research on peer interaction can be referred to Gunvor Løkken study of toddlers in Norwegian day care centers (barnehage) in Trondheim. Løkken found many interesting and meaningful ways that very young age children communicate with each other. Children at an early age do not speak so much, but they really interact with each other through what she called the *typical social style of toddlers* (Løkken, 2000a). They are running, jumping, trampling, twisting, bouncing, romping and shouting, falling ostentatiously, laughing ostentatiously, and through these stylish ways, they construct games, rituals, or routines, and promote peer culture, peer relations, and peer society (Løkken, 2000b, pp. 531-2). Løkken provides example of 'Glee-concert', that is described a group behavior which "is interpreted as the children's making music together, with no adult 'conductor' present" (Løkken, 2000b, p. 531).

A similar study made by Randi Dyblie Nilsen, to develop the concept of 'we-ness' is another example. Nilsen, wanted to grasp children's perspective and to recognize the ways in which they construct their social relations. She did participant observation of child-child interaction in Norwegian day care center, and found an "undergrowth of spontaneously created groups, where the children repeatedly constructed social relationships with one another" (Nilsen, 2005, p. 122). She found a strong dynamic in this social action among the children, in which they seem to use variety ways of establishing this social relation. For example, they could share their knowledge, interests, secrets, and objects, they could engage in play or other activities, they could use their bodies or voices (i.e. talking, making up rhymes), they could quarrel, argue, and break the rules and regulations initiated by adults. The term 'we-ness' refers to an intimate relationship, with the meaning of 'we are together' and 'we are friend' (Nilsen, 2005, pp. 122-123). But, it is a dynamic and fluid relationship; depending on the situation this definitions might change. The established relation might be broken and then reestablished again. Different we-nesses are part of everyday life and they are not permanent relationships. Children establish we-ness when they are seating together right now, but next moment this we-ness might be changed (Nilsen, 2005). As Nilsen says, "there is a movement between (...) inclusion and exclusion in groups of we-ness" (ibid: 123).

To sum up, I would like to refer to Corsaro' argument about two central themes that continuously appear in peer cultures: Children make continuous efforts to gain and increase

control over their lives, and try to share the control with other children (Corsaro, 2005; 2009:302). Corsaro argues that the wide varieties of peer routines are in line with these two features of peer cultures across historical time and in different places in the world (Qvortrup et al. 2009). Through these routines and activities of peer culture, children start to talk about and develop friendships. In fact, friendships and social participations are main elements of peer culture through childhood (Corsaro & Eder, 1990). They will be discussed in more detail below.

### **3.8 Friendship**

My study is aimed at analyzing children's school experiences, and focusing on what children are actually doing in different kinds of everyday situations. In doing this, we might look at how children are participating in cultural practices such as play and friendship. We should be aware that everyday life and culture necessarily connect to the place where children are i.e. on the playground, home, school, neighborhood, etc.

Research into children's perspectives on the issue of friendship as a social relation has increased in recent years (Nilsen, 2005). Friendship is a basic, certain type of social relation. However, to understand its formation, dynamic, and terminations requires broader structural knowledge of its development in other social areas (Foot et al. 1995). Philosophers describe friendship "as an ideal or idealistic social relationship". Ann Elisabeth Auhagen (1996) defined the term as "a dyadic, personal, and informal social relationship". Regarding this, friendship is a mutual relation between at least two people (friends), and it has its own characteristics. For example, it is a 'voluntary' act whereby people are free to choose, configure, and continue their relationship. It has 'time perspective', which has both past, and future aspects, and it stimulates 'positive emotion' among people (Auhagen, 1996, pp. 230-233).

As I discussed earlier, children's culture is identified by both inclusionary and exclusionary factors, which can be developed by a range of rules and regulations (Devine & Kelly, 2006). These rules and regulations are introduced and understood by children themselves and are illustrated through friendships patterns. Within friendship, children both explore their own identity and recognize the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, position, and intimacy of their school lives (Devine & Kelly, 2006). Hence, to build on the perspective of children and



to acknowledge the manners they created social relationships, the dynamics of their interactions should be taken into account (Nilsen, 2005).

Corsaro's work about friendship in day-care settings documented that children "are actors on a number of stages they are friend and foe, they are doing things together, but sometimes in conflict, which is quite normal for human beings and not necessarily worrying" (Qvortrup, 1998, p. 319). To him, friendship among children is a 'collective and cultural process' (Nilsen, 2005, p. 124), so, children's social interactions with their peers can differ widely from culture to culture (Gaskins, 2006). In line with this, Suzanne Gaskins, argues that friendships "can be re-conceptualized as a culturally specific form of providing children with close daily social interaction with other children rather than a unique, and presumed universal, social construct"(2006: 301). She, therefore, underlined the importance of context and cultural diversity, in which friendships appear and grow (Gaskins, 2006; Corsaro, 2009). Friendship has a particular social meaning in children's peer group, and different social factors contribute to its occurrence. To children, friends mean entertainment, a sense of belonging and identity foundation (Adler and Adler, 1998). What it is like to be or have a friend and the concept of friendship is embedded in the children's peer culture (Corsaro & Eder, 1990). Children interact with their peers, and in this way, they learn how to adjust their social bonds based on their personal needs and demands of the social context. They also learn that often, they are not immediately be accepted by their peers, rather it is essential for them convince others of their merit as a playmate or friend. However, it cannot be regarded as something that necessarily happen easily. Sometime children must accept to be excluded from peers or do not have friends (Corsaro, 1985).

In this chapter, I have presented the theoretical framework, which my study is based upon as well as the key concepts that are relevant to the topic of my research study. The next chapter aims to present the various methods used in the study to understand, and explore the experiences of Iranian migrant children at school in Trondheim, Norway.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Many authors have written about what methodology is and refers to, for example, David Silverman states, “A methodology refers to the choices we make about the cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc in planning and executing a research study” (2005:15). Furthermore, Connolly and Ennew express that a methodology is “The body of theory that determines what should be researched and what research techniques are appropriate” (1996:141). Therefore, a methodology deals with the processes used by researchers to study a phenomenon. Methods, on the other hand, are particular research techniques, which may include quantitative techniques like statistical correlations as well as qualitative techniques like observation, interviewing, and audio/tape recording. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques are more or less useful. However, depending upon what we are trying to achieve, we should choose techniques that are appropriate to our selected research topic and the used theories and methodologies (Silverman, 2005).

As this specific study aims to obtain a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the migrant children in the school setting, the qualitative methods seems more appropriate in answering the research questions. For this purpose, the study employed a range of qualitative methods, including participant observation, focus group discussion, and in-depth interviews. This chapter is therefore concerned with the description and justification of the qualitative research approach, methods used in collecting the data, access and recruitment of the informants, transcription and analysis of the data, and some methodological considerations such as the ethical issues and the limitations of the study.

### **4.2 Qualitative Methodology**

Qualitative research interview, as a research method, is now increasingly used in many disciplines, such as education, psychology, anthropology, sociology, etc. It is a specific form of conversation, through which knowledge is constructed socially in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In other words, it “attempts to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation” (ibid:1). Based on Mishler (1986), interview is not only data gathering, but it is a situation where partners meet and talk to each other, and through sharing viewpoints and listening they jointly construct meaning (cited in: Gudmundsdottir, 1996). The qualitative research interview focuses on the

subject's experience of theme, to understand the everyday life themes from the actor's own perspectives. This mode of interviewing is inspired by phenomenological philosophy, which focuses on understanding social phenomena from the subjects' own perspective, with this assumption that 'important reality is what people perceive it to be' (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 26). Hence, the present study has employed a qualitative approach as it focuses on the children's lived experiences of immigration in school context.

As James et al. (1998) argue ethnography is a useful qualitative approach in the studies of children and understanding the world of childhood. Ethnography is a "research process based on fieldwork using a variety of research techniques [participant observation and/or relatively informal conversations as the main ones], but including engagement in the lives of those being studied over an extended period of time" (Davies 2008, p. 3; Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, p. 3). Therefore, in order to make the data collection, this study has used ethnographic research methods to answer the research questions.

This study employed a multiple research methods to improve the overall quality of the study and the validity of the findings. The choice of multiple methods has been influenced by this idea that "Using more than one method will open up several perspectives for promoting quality in qualitative research compared to a single methods study" (Flick, 2007, p.54). In exploring the experiences of the Iranian migrant children at schools, data obtained by different methods may complement each other and can result in bringing forth some delicate issues which may be ignored.

#### **4.3 Methods Used for Collecting Data**

Different data collection methods were used in this study including participant observation, focus group discussion, narrative and in-depth semi-structure interviews with informants. The data were collected over a period of three months- October 2011- December 2011. In all, 12 girls and 3 boys were interviewed for the study. In order to pinpoint the reasons why the boy participants are fewer than the girls, it should be mentioned that the number of the Iranian migrant girls at school is more, and besides, the boys were less willing to participate in the study. All interview discussions, and even almost all informal conversations carried on with children under observation at school were voice-recorded, and later transcribed and translated into English.

### 4.3.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation can be used as a practical method to collect valuable data from children (Fine & Sandstorm, 1988). Hanne Warming (2005) states that participant observation is an ethnographically inspired method that its objective is to learn about ‘the other’ (those we are observing), through participation in their daily lives. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) also refer to participant observation as “research that involves social interaction between the researcher and the informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected” (cited in: Fine & Sandstorm, 1988 p.12). Given this, participant observation is a qualitative method that has considerable potential for listening to children (Warming, 2005). In this study, the purpose of listening is to give children a voice regarding their understanding of their daily life as migrant students. As I mentioned in the theory chapter giving voice to children is a part of the childhood research paradigm (James et al. 1998; Warming, 2005).

Given to the above mentioned methods, as a starting point, I used participant observation as a data collection method, which is necessary for understanding the context of data (Ennew, 2009). It seemed to me a useful way to explore lived experiences of migrant children, which might not be accessible through interview. It could help me to find the position of immigrant children among their classmates. As the nature of participant observation requires that the researcher gain access to the research field (Fine & Sandstorm, 1988), I established contact with one of the schools that consists of a large number of foreign students. It is worthy of note that Trondheim has five receiving schools for newly arrived immigrant students, three receiving schools at primary level (Kattem, Saupstad, Ila) and two receiving schools at secondary level (Huseby and Rosenborg) (from the website of Trondheim municipality)<sup>10</sup>. In these schools, there are separate classes (Mottak) which provide intensive training in Norwegian. After arrival, immigrant students should attend these reception classes for 6 months to two years. After learning the Norwegian language, then they will be transferred to ordinary Norwegian classes (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981; UDI). According to the school principal (the school that I attended as an observer), 23% of the school students were foreigners, therefore, it could be considered as a multicultural school. From now on, I will use the term ‘reception/ receiving school’ for these schools to differentiate between these schools, regular Norwegian schools, and English international school. Immigrant students should stay

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.trondheim.kommune.no/skole/minoritetsprak/> retrieved 17.02.2013

at receiving or reception schools as long as they learn Norwegian language well enough. Then they can continue in the schools near their houses (Anders, 2006). I would like to compare the experiences of the children in these three types of schools to detect the possible differences in each school.

I tried to attend the school two or three times per week over a period of two months-from the end of September to the end of November. I used to sit the classrooms and followed the children in the playtimes. Sometimes, I watched their play and sometimes even joined them in their games, helped them to climb the rope, spin around a bar or walk with walking sticks. Sometimes, we walked and talked together in the schoolyard. Other times I observed them from a distance. I sat on a bench in the schoolyard or I stood on the stair landing and from the staircase window watched them carefully. From the staircase windows, I could see all the schoolyard and I was able to keep an eye on the subjects when they were walking, playing, and chatting. I stopped the observations (in the end of november) since they did not seem to lead me to obtain further useful information. While doing the observations, I carried on a lot of informal conversations with the children, which provided me with unique information.

#### **4.3.2 Focus Group Discussion**

The group interview “is characterized by a non-directive style of interviewing, where the primer concern is to encourage a variety of viewpoints on the topic in focus for the group” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 150). The purpose of the focus group is to allow the participants to bring different perspectives to an issue. Focus group interview is a valuable research method for exploratory research. This is because the lively interaction among individuals may pose more spontaneous expressive and emotional viewpoints than in individual interviews. Especially, when we are researching sensitive or taboo subjects, the group interaction may facilitates self-expression of individual viewpoints that usually are not accessible via individual interviews (ibid).

As this study is an exploratory research, a reason given for using focus group was based on this idea that the “dynamic of group discussion often brings out feelings and experiences that might not have been articulated in a one-to-one interview” (Kitchin & Tate, 2000, p.215). In this way, I could encourage the participants to take part in the discussion, talk freely about the topic without fear, and bring out their personal experiences and feelings that in a one-to-one interaction might not be possible. Hence, a focus group guideline was developed with a list of

the main questions or themes to be covered in the session. It also helped to keep the session on track (see Appendix 1).

According to Kvale and Brinkmann, a good interview question should lead to knowledge production and promote a good interview interaction. Thus, the question should be simple, short, and free of academic language. A good question motivates interviewees to continue conversation and talk about their experiences and feeling (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Indeed, “open questions provided the fullest answers” (Ibid, p. 134). Therefore, I designed some open-ended question to encourage full and meaningful answers.

The interview session was conducted in my house with three participants, a 17-year-old boy, and two 16 and 18 year-old girls. The interview session was supposed to be held with four participants, one of whom withdrew to take part in the session one day before the interview’s appointment. The session lasted approximately an hour and a half. As a moderator, I tried to facilitate discussion, keep the discussion focused on the major issues, keep time, and ask appropriate follow-up questions in order to obtain participants’ cooperation. In addition, I attempted to remain as neutral as possible. However, despite my effort to give the same opportunity to all participants, one of them was not very active. He was silent or his answers were too short or repeated words just said by others. Therefore, it appeared that another interview with him was required in order to get more information about the research topic. As a result, I asked him to meet me separately for a second interview.

I ended the interview session by asking the questions if they want to change or add something to their previous statements, or if there were something that they would like to share but forgot to say during the interview session.

#### **4.3.3 In- Depth Semi-Structure Interview**

Research interviews can be conducted with varying degrees of structure, from well-structured interviews that follow a sequence of standard and formulated questions, to open interviews that focus on specific themes, but without a predetermined sequence and formulated questions (Kvale, 1996). A semi-structured interview “is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.27). Rather, it is a qualitative method of research that is designed to have a list of interview questions prepared in advance. However, such questions are only partially prepared in advance. It means that they must be adequately open so that the subsequent questions cannot be scheduled in advance, but must be largely

improvised by the interviewer in a careful and theorized way. Given this, in such semi-structured interviews, most of the participants' answers cannot be predicted beforehand. Rather, this is a joint production of knowledge by the interviewer and the interviewee. Therefore, designing and conducting a successful semi-structured interview requires thoughtful planning and preparation, as well as creativity in the interview session (Wengraf, 2001).

The semi-structured interviews provided me with in-depth information on how the school experiences of Iranian children in Norway are. Therefore, based on the participants' age, and duration of their stay in Norway, several interview guides (in Persian) were prepared including a number of questions and themes. However, as Kvale (1996) states, it is crucial to encourage an openness to change of sequence and form of questions in order to follow up the responses given by the participants. This interview method helped me to listen and understand the participants' school experiences from their own point of view.

Most of the interviews were conducted in Persian (native language of participants and me), and hence understanding each other very well. Only one participant was unable to talk Persian, which is official language of Iran. This is because she never went to school in Iran. She spoke local language of their parents at home. She understood me but was unable to respond, therefore, I asked someone to translate for me. I always did my best for all the participants to feel comfortable, therefore, based on participant's decision, the interviews were conducted in different places such as school, library, my place, and the interviewees' homes.

#### **4.3.4 Narrative Interview**

Narrative interview is a particular form of semi-structured interview. The interviewee will be asking to tell a story, produce a narrative of some sort about all or a part of their own life experience (Wengraf, 2001). "By telling, people recall what has happened, put experience into sequence, find possible explanations for it, and play with the chain of events that shapes individual and social life" (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000, p. 58). In such interviews, the role of interviewer is to encourage and stimulate the interviewee to talk about their important life events and social context. Interviewers can help narrators to continue their stories with their silence, nods or questioning. In this way, interviewer is a co-producer of the narrative. Nevertheless, the interviewer should play the role of a listener more and avoid interrupting



participants. However, sometimes asking questions might be fruitful due to clarification of a meaning or encouraging the interviewees to continue their stories (Kvale& Brinkmann, 2009).

In a narrative interview, research questions need to be broad and open-ended in everyday language to allow the interviewees freedom to express their own story in more depth (Elliott, 2005). Open-ended questions allow the interviewer to investigate, seeking the why and how and engage the interviewee based on their personality (Stewart, 2009). Interviewer then continues the session by asking subsequent questions in order to clarify the main features in their stories. Indeed, as mentioned earlier “open questions provided the fullest answers” (Kvale& Brinkmann, 2009, p. 134).

In this study, narrative interview has been used as a pilot interview to get more insight about the topic of research as well as inspiration to develop my ideas about the research objectives and questions. In this interview, an 18-year-old girl narrated part of her own memories of different schools in Norway. She recalled her experiences from the past- 11 years ago when she came to Norway for the first time- to the present. Conducting this interview has been very helpful both in terms of taking inspiration to improve research objectives and questions as well as in providing valuable and unique information regarding the issue under the study.

#### **4.4 Access and Recruitment of Informants**

In order to obtain permission for school observation, I provided the followings: a letter of confirmation from the university to confirm my student status (appendix 2), an information letter about myself, study goals and objectives including an informed consent form for children as well as parents of children who participated or being observed in this study (appendix 3 and 4). In order to get parents’ consents, first, I obtained verbal permission from the parents through phone conversations, then they received and signed the forms of informed consent send by the school. Furthermore, during the observation period, I established contact with some Iranians, whom I knew in Trondheim.

Accordingly, the total number of the participants increased to fifteen- twelve girls and three boys. Four of the informants were born in Norway and the others came to Norway between the age of five to fifteen years old. I chose the participants from both Norwegian-born and foreign-born children groups, in order to find possible differences in the experiences of these two groups. Out of the total number of participants, six were selected among my acquaintances, three were students under observation at school, and the rest were selected through snowball sampling and common friends. Due to the small number of the available

Iranian migrant children in Trondheim, I did not confine the participant's properties to a specific gender or age group. Their ages ranged from 8-18 years. Out of the total number interviewed, concerning the age, they can be divided as follows: 3 aged 8, 2 aged 10, 2 aged 15, 3 were 16 year-olds and five other participants were aged 9, 11, 14, 17 and 18, respectively. However, it does not mean that I simply accepted the ones I got. In fact, many children of friends or acquaintances were available, but I would prefer to select my participants among those whom I did not have previous familiarity with, as well as among children from different family situations and backgrounds.

#### **4.5 Data Transcription and Analysis**

This is a qualitative study on the school experiences of migrant children in Norway. Field notes from my observation and transcription of audio recordings produced the material for analysis. Data was analyzed to get an in-depth knowledge about experiences of Iranian immigrant children at school. The main objective of the data analysis is to move from raw data to meaningful understanding of what is going on within the data. This understanding is built through a process that involves discovering, exploration, and learning themes that run through the raw data, and interpreting the meaning of those themes on the research questions (Wangari, 2011). It should be noted that analysis does not necessarily occur after completing the data collection, but it occurs more or less simultaneously with the drafting process and includes referring to patterns, themes, and groupings in the data (Wangari, 2011).

Analysis in this study started with transcribing the audio-recorded interviews into text format. According to Kvale & Brinkmann, "A transcript is a translation from one narrative mode-oral discourse-into another narrative mode-written discourse" (2009: 178). I listened to audio-records several times, and read through the text from the observation fieldnotes over and over again to obtain a deeper understanding of my informants' school experiences. As I had a large amount of voice-recording time, transcribing of interview material became very tiresome and time consuming. However, I took advantage of the time I spent on this process. This is because as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue, researchers who take time to transcribe their own interviews will learn more about the interview style. They will also reawaken the social and emotional aspects of the interview situation, and in this way, they will already begin to analyze the meaning of what has been said. After word-by-word transcription of the interviews, they were read again and again to check for similarities and differences in order to uncover the main concepts and themes. After this, they were categorized and color coded with considering the research aims and questions. The analyzing process done along with reading,

re-reading and overviewing the relevant literature. Overviewing and the use of the relevant resources improved the data structures. Thus, data was sorted out and classified over and over again, to capture as Wangari states “the fullness of the experiences and actions studied” (2011: 25), and to create a meaningful story about the school experiences of my informants.

#### **4.6 Ethical Considerations**

The interaction of interviewer and interviewee is saturated with ethical issues (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Ethical issues are at the centre of attention specifically in research involving children (Alderson & Morrow 2004; Abebe 2008), particularly in terms of informed consent and confidentiality (Punch, 2002). Ethics in research with children relates to, “the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair” (Sieber, 1993 in Morrow, 2008, p. 52). Children should be protected from those factors that have harmful effect on them, both during the investigation, or as a result of investigation (Morrow and Richards, 1996). Kvale & Brinkmann argue that the ethical issues go beyond the live interview situation; it goes through the entire process of an interview inquiry. Consequently, potential ethical concerns should be taken into account from the beginning of an interview research to the final stage (2009:61-62)

Ethical awareness can also be considered as the main difference between the research with children and research with adults. This is because of an inherent and greater power imbalance between adult researcher and the child participants. Punch states, “The adult researchers have the power to determine which data from the children to include and how to interpret” (2002:329). It means that the adults are very likely to impose their power and viewpoints over the children. This kind of imbalance of power in relationships between adult researchers and child participants exists in all stages of a research inquiry. Hence, in order to protect the participants’ interests and welfare, following principles, which are at the foundation of ethics guidelines, should take into consideration that includes informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, and the role of researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). They will be explained in more detail below.

##### **4.6.1 Informed Consent**

Informed consent means that someone voluntary agree to participate in a research project. It is researchers’ duty to inform participants about the objectives of the study and the main features of the project, as well as potential benefits and possible risks of participation. Participants should be informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time for

whatever reason and without explanation. They also should be assured of the confidentiality of the research data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In this study, I tried to apply the above-mentioned principles. My participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to explore children's experiences in Norwegian schools. They became aware of the outline and the nature of the study, as well as their rights to voluntary participation, withdrawal of study, privacy, and confidentiality. Furthermore, particular permission to voice-record was asked.

#### **4.6.2 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality means to prevent the disclosure of private information that identifies the participants. Therefore, researchers need to be cautious about the participant's privacy (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I assured my participants that their personal information will be kept private, and their anonymity will be respected. Since I had previous familiarity with some of the informants, it was very important to assure them that the information will remain secure and not be revealed. After data transcription, the data was kept securely with restricted access on a password-protected computer to protect the identities of the informants.

#### **4.6.3 Consequences**

Researchers have ethical obligations to take into consideration the consequences of the study, possible harms, and benefits. They must attempt to minimize risks of participation and maximize the quality of information they produce (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This research study is somehow related to the friendship experiences of immigrant children. It can be considered more or less a stressful experience because of reminding children of hurtful experiences that they had in the past. Hence, I was very careful not to pose the questions which may put the participant under pressure. Since I had already done a pilot interview before, I could anticipate and minimize its potential harms. Accordingly, I made an effort to avoid hurting children by asking questions that revive painful memories. Inspired by Leech (2002), if it was necessary to ask a sensitive question, I would include it in the middle or toward the end of the interview, and in an indirect way.

#### **4.6.4 The Role of the Researcher**

According to Kvale & Brinkmann, the quality of a scientific knowledge so much depends upon researcher's "integrity, his or her knowledge, experiences, honesty, and fairness". This is because the interviewer is the main instrument to gain knowledge. Researchers have a responsibility to take account of moral issues in practice, which is beyond the abstract moral

guidelines (2009: 74). On the other hand, the role of researchers is the production and publishing of valid knowledge. All these together may cause ethical violation. Having interpersonal interaction between interviewer and interviewee, which is the inherent nature of qualitative interview, might lead to the production of important knowledge. However, on the other hand, the interviewer may very closely identify with their participants that they do not keep a 'professional distance'. Researchers' personal friendship with their participants and show of empathy may become a means to get into areas of participant's life where they were not invited. Consequently, participants may share experiences and feeling that they later regret having disclosed or they would rather to keep them secret. It is meant to circumvent principles of informed consent, which should be maintained in a scientific study. Therefore, the role of the researcher is very important in a qualitative research study, and it is more crucial when participants are children (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 75). This is because children are more vulnerable and have marginalized position in adult society (Punch, 2002). Accordingly, in asking and stimulating the questions, I did not put pressure on the participants to gain their response; rather I tried to make participants feel relaxed and comfortable by talking about what they were perfectly willing to share. When they seemed hesitant towards answering a question, I gave them a little time to think about whether they were willing to answer or not. I also avoided stimulating strong emotional bonds in order to get the maximum results.

#### **4.7 Limitations of the Study**

As Martin Heidegger (1962) argues, researchers cannot collect data with "totally blank slate", which means that we always carry our knowledge, experiences, values and theoretical background and these affect our interpretation of the data (cited in: Gudmundsdottir, 1996). This problem becomes more highlighted if the researcher is close to the issue. Researchers who work in their own culture, may carry lots of preassumption due to the familiarity with the issue of study. They do not have the 'critical distance' from what they study, and this deprives them from observing very important points (Mc Cracken, 1998, p.22).

In my study, I was very close to the issue and it would have its advantages and disadvantages. As we were from the same country, we shared a lot in common. A shared language and culture may prevent misunderstanding each other, on the other hand, there might be a risk of influences of my prejudice. In order to avoid this problem, I had to step back and 'create a critical awareness' and be very careful about this familiarity. Based on McCracken, the most important way to create distance is the selection of informants. Researchers should select

'perfect strangers' who are unknown to the interviewer and other informants. Therefore, I made an attempt to choose unknown informants from different age groups, gender and status whom I did not know and the ones with no specific knowledge about the topic of the study and me (Mc Cracken, 1998). I was hoping the snowball sampling might help in finding non-familiar participants. However, they were not always easily accessible. Some children who did not know me refused to participate in the study. This might be due to the participants' age as many of them were teenagers. Consequently, nine out of fifteen participants were selected among the strangers.

It would be very acceptable that children refused to participate, but it seemed a bit strange to me if parents refused to allow their child to participate in this specific interview topic. Among my participants, the parents of one child were very meticulous about their child. They were very skeptical about the study and me; therefore, I had to explain a lot to obtain their consent. They said they did not have any problem with the observation, but they wanted the child interview to be done in their presence. They were worried that the interview might hurt their child, since she had already overcome her challenges of adjusting to the new society. Finally, I could obtain their permission after I assured them of not asking any harmful questions. This caused me to rethink about my introductory presentation. As an Iranian, I know that some Iranians are very suspicious towards people they do not know very well. Therefore, I realized the significance of introduction is very important. Afterward, I tried to be more careful and chose more informal and friendlier way to get parents' permission. For example, instead of using mediator such as school, I called them directly or I met them in their workplaces. Fortunately, this experience was not repeated about the other parents.

Another restriction of this study was limitation on the number of male participants. Only three out of fifteen participants were boys, as mentioned before. This is because boys were less available and less willing to participate in the study. It restricted the comparison between boys and girls experiences, because the sample was relatively small to draw fixed conclusions.

In addition, there were some limitations in getting access to the school observation. In fact, according to my initial plan, it lasted too long from my first contact with the school principal in June 2011 till I could start the observations at the end of September. This happened due to pragmatic reasons like long summer holiday and also the lack of enough Iranian students in the beginning of the school year. Indeed, there was only one Iranian student at the beginning of the school year. Two other students joined the school no sooner than the end of September.

The next chapter presents analysis and discusses the research findings made from the observations and the interviews, as described in the methodology chapter.





## CHAPTER 5: Data Analysis and Interpretation

### 5.1 Introduction

“The process of migration is a process of change, for migrants as well as host and home societies” (IOM, 2008, p. 14). In this process, both the migrants and the host societies are affected by the changes whereby immigrants are exposed to a new culture and environment, and host community become more diverse and heterogeneous. However, the important issue to be raised here is that how societies handle these changes, and how immigrants manage their migration experiences of new environments. The answer lies hidden in the process of ‘integration’, by which these changes and diversities can be managed (ibid).

Integration of migrants is a vague term that is perceived differently in various contexts. It broadly refers to processes by which immigrants become part of the new community (IOM, 2008). The term uses in programs that generally follow the instructions on the successful integration of immigrant and minority groups in every sphere of life in community (Archambault, 2011). Integration indeed is a mutual process, through which both migrants and host societies are influenced, and in some sense must adapt to a new situation (IOM, 2008).

Integration and inclusion are two sides of the same coin. Therefore, it is very important for the children of the immigrants to be included and integrated into their new host society. This is something that the children who participated in the study would like to happen faster. Here are some excerpts from my informants’ interviews that somehow indicate their willingness for inclusion and integration in new environment.

For example, Nora an 11-year old girl, who arrived in Trondheim / Norway one year ago, expressed her desire toward rapid integration into school and totality of the society through learning. In response to my question of “*if she were the school principal, what would she change in her school that foreign students feel more comfortable*” said:

*That, every child in reception class (Mottak) would be able to choose a child from normal class (the same grade), and they go to the Mottak class for a few weeks and help newcomer children...Therefore, reception children can learn faster, they learn the language faster and can go to the normal class faster, and this will be beneficial for them.*

Similarly, Mahan, A 15-year-old girl, who started school just 2 months before the interview, thinks that in order to make a good progress, she should enter Norwegian regular classes as soon as possible. She said:

*I'd like to learn everything fast...it is not good to stay in the receiving class (Mottak) for a long time, it is boring, and also you cannot learn the Norwegian language properly, because each child speaks Norwegian with an accent of their native language such as Thai, Arabic, Eritrean.*

Negin a fourteen year-old girl, who arrived in Trondheim around four years ago, also mentioned that she does not like to be excluded from the mainstream classroom. For her, receiving extra care and attention from the teachers means to be different and it might bring up feelings of stigma and discrimination, which is a barrier to inclusion and integration.

*When I started attending the reception class, teachers were looking at me as a newcomer. They were extra ordinary kind. They cared too much. And this made me feel weak about myself. It was ok, but, I oppose the teacher's being too much around you. Because other children think, you are not a normal girl. They think you are a weak girl who needs extra support from the teachers. Here (in a Norwegian school) in grade eight my teachers look at me as a normal student. As someone who is the same as other students. This is good...I don't want to be different.*

Nevertheless, the process of integration to a new environment is not easy, and despite all the effort being made, immigrant children still face some difficulties of adjusting to the new environment. Addressing the challenges encountered by the children participated in this study as well as underlying factors behind their challenges are usually the main focus. At the same time, despite of the fact that the adaptation process is a challenging experience, migrant children may perceive this from a positive angle. For example, feeling of freedom, security, and hope for more opportunities in future life are some examples that lead to children's satisfaction with the new environment.

Children's experiences of migration indeed are greatly influenced by their experiences of the host-society educational systems (Ackers & Stalford, 2004; Reynolds, 2008). In this regard, implementing a policy of inclusion appears to create opportunities for developments of friendships and social acceptance and serving for the integration of migrant children in their new communities. Hence, it seems important to address the Norwegian government's

educational policies towards integration and inclusion of the migrant children. Migrant children as active agents contribute to the process of integration in schools. Thus, this study is aiming to address the role of children in structuring their everyday life, and the strategies would they adapt to communicate appropriately with their peers.

In this chapter, I will present information obtained from informants who participated in the study and my own interpretation of the material. Due to a wide range of age of the participants (8-18 years old) as well as their different dates of arrival in Norway (2000-2011), I would say that each individual has unique experiences that cannot be generalized to all migrant children. Although, I have mostly tried to mention those experiences that the participants have expressed repeatedly.

## **5.2 Children's Challenges and Difficulties**

It is a fact that all immigrants encounter some challenges regarding adjusting to a new environment, no matter where they come from or what skills and experiences they carry with them. It can be learning language of the new society or becoming familiar with norms, values, and costumes of the host society (NYU, 2009). Since children are more vulnerable, the difficulties and challenges they face in a new society may become more intense. Further, any child may face some challenges in a new school, but the challenges may become more difficult when the child is new in the country as well (Reynolds, 2008). Hence, adjustment to a new environment, new school, new culture, and a new language, can present unique challenges for the immigrant children (McCarthy, 1998).

Based on the information obtained from the empirical data, feeling of exclusion was the most common and difficult challenge that children experienced during their time living in Norway. In the 'theory chapter', I extensively spoke about the concept of exclusion, which is defined as children's deprivation of equal participation in society and being recognized by the society. Children as citizens have the right to benefit from the community services and capabilities. However, social exclusion directly violates children's rights and their capabilities (Klasen, 2001).

My informants expressed their feelings of exclusion in multiple ways, as they touched upon the issue from a variety of angles. For example, they referred to the feeling of isolation, on arrival, pointing out the experiences of bullying or rejection in Norwegian schools. They complained about the stereotypical attitudes of Norwegians towards foreigners and also raised

the issue of having mother tongue lessons as one of their challenges in schools. I briefly describe some of them that were mentioned most by the participants under study.

### **5.2.1 The Challenges of Isolation and Frustration on Arrival**

Many authors have written on ‘negative social and psychological’ difficulties that immigrants face in the new environments. Regardless of whether it is voluntary or forced, moving to a new society can be accompanied by a sense of loss of primary community, kinship ties, social networks and generally “the loss of taken for granted sources and systems of meaning” (Sonn, 2002, p. 2). The impacts of these losses can cause migrant children to feel very isolated on their arrival. Furthermore, migrant students due to their lack of language proficiency have difficulty in forming friendships and therefore, they are more likely to be isolated and have such feeling of exclusion (Reynolds, 2008). Some examples from my field observations and interviews highlighting my informants’ feeling of isolation on arrival are presenting below.

*The first day of school was not good at all. You couldn’t talk with them (other students). In the beginning, it was very difficult. After one week, it became a bit better, but it was still very difficult. It was difficult to understand what the teacher would say, what your friends (means classmates) said, what they were talking about, what they meant by that, it was really hard. I wanted to cry but I could not, because if I cried, and somebody asked for the reason, I did not know what to say. All other children in the class had a friend but I was alone. I was really alone. I was in a very bad mood, now I feel a bit better. It is so. I, cannot do anything about that. [Mahan, 15 year-old girl, arrived 2 months before the interview]*

Three months later, when I was chatting with her on facebook she told me that she was upset over the loss of her friendship and kinship ties in the home country. She said that she missed her best friend (Sanaz) in Iran. She tried to call her, but no one answered the phone. She also talked about her grandfather that how much she loves him and how much she missed him.

*Sanaz (her best friend in Iran), ohhh (pity), Sanaz, I’ve missed her so much. I could not call her from here. I call her but I do not know why they do not pick up the phone...I’ve missed my grandpa. He was my best friend. I love him even more than I love my own father.*

Nora also talked about a birthday party that she was invited in the first months of her attendance in the class:

*As long as I was not Kyra’s close friend, it was very difficult for me... It was Ida’s birthday party... everybody came with his or her best friend ... I was the only person on that birthday*

*party that did not have any close friend. It was very hard because, everybody was sitting next to a friend, all were together. [Nora, 11 year-old girl, arrived one year before the interview]*

The causes of such challenges will be explained further in the next section

### **5.2.2 Experiences of Peer Rejection**

Feeling of being ignored, rejected, neglected, overlooked, bullied, and mocked were some of distressing experiences that described by many of the participants. Steven Asher (1990) argues, there are two forms of negative relationships among peers in relation to migrant children ‘active rejection’ and ‘passive neglection’ (cited in: Reynolds, 2008, p. 18). An active form of rejection includes bullying, teasing or ridiculing, and passive form is known as ‘silent treatment’ or ‘being ignored’. The differences between active and passive forms of behaviors lie in behavioral intentions. It means the migrant students are prone to isolation and to be left out, either intentionally or unintentionally (Flaten, 2012; Asher 1990). In fact, there are several psychological basis of child rejection, but addressing them is not within the scope of this study.

Children’s interviews and observations showed evidence of both active rejection and passive neglection in the schools in Norway. Here are some quotes from participants’ interviews about the experience of ignorance:

*They did not see me, meaning they did not care about me or they did not welcome me in their gathering. In general, they did not like to be with me. I mean they did not talk to me or invite me to be with them. If I asked about something, they just answered shortly and left me. [Neda, 15 year-old girl, arrived 10 years before the interview]*

*It was very difficult to be one of them and played with them, they did not like to invite me in their activities. For example when we played dodgeball, they did not even give me the ball or beat me with the ball to be forced to go off the game (she laughed with sadness). I was there but they ignored me, as if I were not playing. [Shabnam, 18 years-old girl, arrived 11 years before the interview]*

*They do not care about you at all. They are only with their own friends. They are not like us Iranians. They do not come to you and not talk with you to get familiar with you. [Mahan, 15 year-old girl, arrived 2 months before the interview]*

Another informant in response to my question of “*if she has ever tried to communicate with her classmates,*” said:

*Yes, I did, but they don't have any reaction; it seems as if I don't exist at all. It seems that they don't see me at all. [Elham, 10 year-old girl, arrived 3 months before the interview]*

As mentioned earlier, active rejection can be manifested in a variety of forms that include bullying, teasing, or ridiculing (Flaten, 2012). Olweus had defined bullying or victimization as follows: “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Olweus, 1996, p. 265). Negative actions refer to a situation when someone deliberately imposes harm or inconvenience on someone else. The term ‘bullying’ can be used when there is an inequality or imbalance of power between students, in which case the victims often have difficulty defending themselves. Bullying can be done by a single person or by a group of individuals. Everyone also can be target of bullying, both an individual person and a group of people (Olweus, 1993).

There are different types of bullying such as verbal actions that includes threatening, teasing, taunting, and name-calling; physical bullying includes damage to the body or property of a person; and social or relational bullying includes relationship-damaging behaviors like excluding someone from a group on purpose or embarrassing someone in public (Olweus, 1993; U.S.Department of Health and Services). We should also differentiate between direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying occurs when one or a group of students directly attack the others, but indirect bullying is characterized by intentional exclusion from a group (Olweus, 1993).

There is no doubt that bullying and harassment among schoolchildren is not a new phenomenon and not specified in the context of this study. As most of the literature shows, bullying has traditionally been and continues to be ignored, or deemed as a normal behavior for child development (Elias et al. 2003). It was only until the 1970s, that it attracted the attention of the public and research as a “problem”. Scandinavian countries like Norway were pioneers in this field. However, for several years, just mass media, teachers, and parents were concerned about the subject of bully/ victim in Norway. Norwegian school authorities got involved in this issue in late 1982 when a Norwegian newspaper reported news on suicide of three schoolboys as a result of intense bullying by peers. This incident eventually led to initiation of a nationwide campaign against bullying in schools by Norwegian Ministry of

Education in 1983. It was then that efforts were made to study the issue systematically (Olweus, 1993).

Addressing the negative consequences of bullying such as loss of self-esteem and having negative view on themselves and situation is not the focus of this study (Olweus, 1996). I just would like to refer to a number of experiences mentioned by the study participants with the aim of understanding how they perceived experiences of bullying and victimization in Norwegian schools. My participants spoke up about their own experience and about what they have seen or heard to others. Here are some examples of their expression that reveal existence of different type of bullying in schools, both directly and indirectly.

Shima, an eight-year-old girl, who was born in Trondheim, claimed that she and two other girls (an Arab and a Chinese girl) had the experience of being ridiculed by some boys in school. The boys told them that they looked like turd because of their different skin and hair color.

Sara also talked about her mocking experience just because of her foreign background. She explained how other children tried to tease her.

*At school, all children said, “you are an Iranian, hehehe” (Means they made a mock of her). I had already said to all that I was born in Norway, but they said, “you are an Iranian”. “You look different; your skin looks different; you can’t speak Norwegian well like us”, because at that time I didn’t know all the (Norwegian) words. I was in the first grade and in any sentence the children used; there was a word that I didn’t understand its meaning. They said why I didn’t go to English school because of being a foreigner... for example, when they wanted to play with boys; they said these games were only for Norwegians. [Sara, 8-year-old-girl, born in Trondheim]*

Shabnam also strongly criticized the Norwegian students’ behavior toward foreigners.

*After reception school, I was transferred to a Norwegian school, and there, I was being harassed very much. Because its environment was Norwegian and there were not any foreigners there. Children bullied me... for example; they said my hair looks like a horse’s tail. Then, I remember getting annoyed because of my close friend (Adina from Ethiopia), because she was a black skinned girl. Children said to her that her face looked like shit because she was black... when we talked and made a small mistake, they said, “oh, she is foreigner and she does not know anything”. I remember they threw snow at us; they threw us*

*and poured the snow on us with their feet. When we walked, they walked behind us and spat on us (She cried with a loud voice, paused) I do not have any problem with them now but it is very difficult when you are a child. (She continued crying). They tortured a child. They didn't invite me to their birthday parties and then asked me why I didn't go. Then they said, 'oh, yes, you were not invited'. (They questioned deliberately even if they knew that she was not invited). They enjoyed teasing me. I just was with Adina... we changed our school and went to English international school. I did not experience bullying in English school but, Adina got bullied in international school...When Adina left (went back to her country), my mom thought I would die, but I think when Adina left it became much better for me...I remember my friends in English international school said why I was friend with Adina since she was black and she did know anything. They believed that black people were wired and stupid. [Shabnam, 18 years-old girl, arrived 11 years before the interview]*

In the example above, it seems that there exists a hierarchy of groups that are harassed. Children with dark skin appear to face more severe challenges due to their extreme differences in appearance as well as negative stereotypical beliefs about the black.

Some participants claimed that they had not been bullied themselves, but several times observed how other foreign students had being bullied. As an instance, Nasim explained how the children were harassing a Muslim girl by removing her scarf or taking pictures while she did not like those taking pictures of her. Nasim also described how a serious fight occurred at school because a Norwegian boy said 'Cacao' to a black-skinned boy.

All the experiences mentioned above somehow indicate the importance of ethnic background and skin or hair colour in a multicultural setting. Here a question arises: how children understand and conceptualize the notion of being Norwegian and Norwegian-ness in a multi-ethnic and multi-coloured setting (Rysst, 2012). For more than fifty years, Norway and other Scandinavian countries have adopted anti-racist policies, and have developed racial liberal welfare states that have advocated equality as equity. The Norwegian conceptualization of equality focuses on cultural values that imply both 'equality as sameness and equality as equity' considering basic dimensions such as class, gender, and race (Rysst, 2012, p. 1). In line with this idea of equality, migrants from non-western countries, represent the opposite of sameness, at least in terms of appearance (ibid).



There are several perspectives on Norwegian and Norwegian-ness. For example, the Norwegian sociologists Anders Vassenden (2011), identifies four discursive oppositions of Norwegian –ness and not Norwegian-ness that need to be kept apart and distinguished between: 1) civic aspects (citizenship), 2) cultural aspects, 3) ethnic/racial aspects, 4) whiteness/non-whiteness (Vassenden, 2011p. 734; Rysst, 2012).

Furthermore, based on 50 histories of young people of foreign background, Brit Lynnebakke and Kathrine Fangen (2011) found that whiteness is very important for being labeled Norwegian. Their study indicates that ‘origin and cultural practices’ are deemed to be the most important component of the Norwegian-ness, and only ethnic Norwegians who have white parents are considered as fully Norwegian. It means that having Norwegian citizenship is not as significant as ethnic origin (cited in: Rysst, 2012, p. 5).

However, we cannot overlook one aspect of being different and that sometimes being different can come with some popularity. The following conversation with Sara is an example of this:

*I like my hair. My Norwegian friend says, “You are very, very beautiful, I want to be like you, because you can speak different languages, you are also beautiful. You are different from all the rest”.... I like to be different, then they respect me more, they see me more. They can see me better when I have different hair or skin color.*

In addition, some of my participants noted that being bullied has nothing to do with being foreigners. Facing bullying may be a result of a weird behavior, no matter the person is foreigner or native. For example, Poya, a 10-year old boy who arrived four years ago, mentioned there is bullying in his school, but it is not towards foreign children. There is a Norwegian boy in his class that other kids have been making fun of, because he sometimes wears bad clothes (for example he wears socks with huge holes in them) or he smells bad.

Anyway, being bullied is painful for all but it may be more harmful for foreign children because they simultaneously have to encounter numerous difficulties and challenges. In addition, migrant children may be more vulnerable to harassment because they have so many obvious differences.

### **5.2.3 The Challenges of Being Stereotyped**

Another challenge raised by the study participants was stereotypical view of Norwegians towards migrants. “Stereotypes can be conceptualized – on the macro level – as societal ideologies” as well as “on a micro level of analysis – as individual negative attitudes toward other individuals and other groups”. Social scientists use different terminologies when referring to this complex phenomenon such as “ethnocentrism, nationalism, xenophobia, racism, and nativism” (Heckmann, 2008, p. 30). In any case, the words ‘stereotype’ and ‘stereotyping’ have been accompanied by a negative meaning and ‘expressed as prejudice’. According to Allport (1954), stereotypes can be either positive or negative. In both forms, stereotypes classify people, justify exaggerated beliefs, and validate discriminatory thoughts. “Stereotyping is a process of labeling or categorization”, which “negates differentiated opinion, generalizes a category, and portrays a specific image of a category or a group” (cited in Saran & Diaz, 2010, p. 3).

Reynolds (2008) argues that stereotypes or generalization of a common behavior for a group of people is risky because indeed, a group is composed of distinct individuals. Reynolds study of UK schools revealed that the lack of understanding the needs and backgrounds of migrant students led to stereotypical view and generalization about them based on their ethnic, race, religious, or migrant identity.

In the context of this study, stereotypical view of some Norwegians regarding foreigners was one of the upsetting issues to some children. They blame Norwegians for not having enough information about their country of origin. As an Iranian, I know that majority of Iranian, especially those who choose to migrate from Iran, are very upset about the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran. A reason is that the revolution and the subsequent war with Iraq resulted in taking some steps backward in many aspects. They always talk about this important issue no matter where they. They are not satisfied with their current situation, since Iran was a respected country in the not-too-distant past, before Islamic revolution in 1979. Islamic revolution, and new government’s policies has changed the face of Iran to an underdeveloped country. Iranians claim that they deserve much more than this as one of the oldest civilizations in the world, and as a rich country, which is the holder of the major oil and gas resources. As Behnaz Jalali (2005) argues, generally speaking, most Iranians are proud of their ethnicity and cultural identity. Therefore, it is possible if the children of immigrant families, despite being born or living here for several years, are sensitive to the stereotypes and about what others might act or think about them and their country of origin.

There are many different ways that people stereotype others. Here are some examples of them:

*They have stereotypical thinking about us. For example, they thought that we are miserable people and nothing. As an example, that teacher in (X) school (a regular Norwegian school) asked me that; "Shabnam do you really want to return to Iran?" I said; "yes"... For example, she asked me "do you have TV in Iran? Do you live underground? Or is your country like Afghanistan? Is your houses made by stone?" She (teacher) asked me all these things and when I went home, I asked my mother whether we are like the others or just we have special situation. My mother told me that; "no, it is not like this". I clearly do remember that my teacher asked me these kinds of questions. [Shabnam, 18 years-old girl, arrived 11 years before the interview]*

Arezo a 16-year-old girl who was born and grew up in Trondheim mentioned a different type of stereotype that could be due to the lack of knowledge or curiosity about foreigners like stereotypical views on people's religion. For example, Norwegians generally think all Iranians are Muslims. She raised the matter of the relationship between stereotypes among people and in the general discourse. Media seem to have huge impacts on the formation of public opinion, and in increasing the public knowledge. The media attempts as well as extensive public awareness strategies can be powerful methods to combat stereotypes about foreigners (NYU, 2012)

*It is strange to me, why people think that we (Iranian) are Muslims, while they see I don't have hijab; my mother doesn't have hijab; we shake hand, etc. But they still have something in their mind and they think that we are Muslims but do not say that...Those who know me for a while, for example three months, know that I am not Muslim, but during these three months, they thought that I am Muslim. [Arezo, 16-year-old-girl, born in Trondheim]*

Nora's experience also pointed to the media's influence on public attitudes towards Iranian immigrants. She mentioned that she prefer to be a Norwegian because of people's negative impression of Iran. In response to my question about *whether she had ever liked to be a Norwegian*, she said:

*Yes... because others look at our country a bit bad, for example some people say that Nora comes from Iran, it may be (she paused), it hurt me... for example when I say that I came from Iran, others say "phhh". (She made a sound with her mouth means others ridiculed her)...*

*elections in Iran, (and) killing people caused that people here think that there is a war in Iran, and all people are killing each other [she refers to the presidential election in 2009, which led to widespread protests inside Iran]. [Nora, 11 year-old girl, arrived one year before the interview]*

Negin also had a similar experience in this regard and she said:

*I have very bad feeling when my classmates talk about Iran. [Negin 14-year-old-girl, arrived around four years before the interview]*

Rozhin faced another type of negative stereotype. She claimed that some children in her first school in Norway ██████████ believed that all foreigners are thieves.

*(In my second school) I could find just one friend who was Polish, because Norwegians did not like to be friend with foreigners...they thought that all foreigners are thieves... yes, they said directly (that foreigners are thieves). [Rozhin, 16-year-old girl, arrived two years before the interview]*

While they felt that they were being stereotyped, most of the informants had a very stereotypical view of the native Norwegians. They stereotyped Norwegians as very unsocial people, who have unfriendly behavior toward foreigners even with each other. While they believe that Iranians are very social and friendly people. For example:

*Norwegians are very unsocial...we (Iranians) are very friendly and intimate but they (Norwegians) are not like us. [Nasim, 16-year-old-girl, arrived 2 years ago]*

*Norwegian friends are not like Iranians. They do not come to you to talk... they are not very social. [Peiman a 17-year-old-boy, arrived 12 years ago]*

*You know they (Norwegians) are not very social. They are very cold people. [Negin 14-year-old-girl, arrived around four years before the interview]*

In short, increase in migration and demographic changes often generate fear of strangers among the previous inhabitants. Consequently, people who have acquired long-term resident may easily have negative stereotype about new arrivals. This fear and stereotypes can have very harmful effects on social cohesion (NYU, 2012), and subsequently on the integration of migrants into new society.

#### **5.2.4 The Challenge of Having Mother Tongue Lesson (Morsmål)**

Proficiency in the language of instruction is very essential for children of migrants, for whom the language of instruction is not their native language, because language is a communication medium for knowledge transmission (Ball, 2011). In the next section, I will extensively address the importance of fluency in the national language as one of the underlying factors in exclusion/ inclusion of migrant children. However, here a question arises as how children can reach the proficiency level in the host country language as a second language (McCarthy, 1998).

There has been some debate over how migrant children can master the language of host community. Some European scholars have demonstrated that “first language acquisition supports the learning of second or additional languages” (Ball, 2011, p. 16). It means that if children have an opportunity to develop their mother tongue, they will be able to learn and master the second language easier. So, the first step for learning a second language is mastering their own native language (McCarthy, 1998).

With respect to linguistic minorities in Norway, one of the main principles of the language education policy in Norway is the “inclusion of all linguistic and cultural groups in society” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2003-2004, p. 5). In order to accomplish this, and according to the Norwegian Education Act, students with a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami “have the right to adapt education in Norwegian until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to attend the regular instruction of the school. If necessary, such pupils are entitled to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both” (SOPEMI, 2010–2011, p. 53). In fact, there has been a shift in language education policy, so that until some years ago, all minority language or bilingual students had a right to educate in their native language. But now the students can only receive instruction in their mother tongues if they have not acquired enough competence in Norwegian to participate in regular classes. The purpose of having mother tongue lessons is to help students of minority origin to gradually integrate into the Norwegian schools and society through improving their language skills. Children of migrants have the right to study their own mother tongue as a specialization both at primary and secondary level. However, it will stop when the teacher determines that the student has learned enough Norwegian language to continue her/his studies in regular classes (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2003-2004). It should be noted, “Mother-tongue teaching may come in addition to the normal school day and may take place at another school than the one the pupil normally attends” (UDI, 2009).

Interview with the principal of the receiving school in Trondheim, where I conducted my observations, revealed that students from the grade 1 to 4 would have the possibility to learn to read and write their native tongue. From year 5 upward, the mother tongue teacher just helps children to develop their Norwegian skills and solve their Norwegian language problems. Indeed, students who have not fluency in Norwegian language might not understand the lessons taught by the teacher. Having an extra (mother tongue) teacher who translates the lessons into her/his native language, creates equal opportunity for immigrant children to develop their abilities on equal terms.

In addition to what has been already said, the informants themselves expressed another positive aspects of the mother tongue lesson that having this lesson especially on their arrival, could give them the opportunity to be with children and teachers who have similar race and language. This could help them to improve both their language skill and somehow filling the gap of isolation on arrival.

*For me mother tongue lesson was the sweetest thing whereby I could be with other friends like me. [Shabnam, in receiving school]*

*I remember having very good memories of mother tongue lesson, because I was with Iranian children... When the school became empty, and all children left the school, we (Iranian students) played hide and seek. [Neda, 15 year-old girl, arrived 10 years ago]*

*They gave me mother tongue lesson very late. It was very good to start mother tongue lesson. The days that I have mother tongue are the best days of my school days. This is very good to be able to talk with someone in your native language. [Mahan, 15 year-old girl, arrived 2 months before the interview]*

The public policy of Norway is to promote and respect fundamental rights of all children including migrant children. These policies seem very good in theory, as it respects rights of “minority children to learn about and practice their own language” [Article 30, UNCRC] as well as their rights “to education on the basis of equal opportunity” [Article 28, UNCRC]. However, at the same time, practically it may be different as in the case of this study, raises the question of exclusion. My informants did not always have such a positive opinion about mother tongue lesson. In some respects, having mother tongue lesson was a little problematic, since it excluded them from other classmates. As I mentioned earlier, children would like to be included in the class; they do not want to be separated from other students; they do not

want to attract others' extra attention; they just want to be a normal student just like other classmates. However, providing this lesson sometimes act in the opposite direction, causes the separation of immigrant children from the rest, and consequently creates a sense of exclusion. Here are some quotes from the informants' interviews:

*I hated mother tongue lesson. It was an agonizing thing for me, because it made me separate from the rest. For example, they (her classmates) asked me why I was going to stay at school after finishing the school day. And I had to explain the reason, because I had mother tongue lesson. It (Having mother tongue lesson) means "that you are second language". I didn't like it at all. [Shabnam in Norwegian regular school]*

*Having mother tongue lesson means, you practice Farsi, means trying not to forgot Farsi. This is totally wrong because it really makes us isolated from the rest of the children. [Neda, 15 year-old girl, arrived 10 years ago]*

In addition, children may not look into this matter from the angle of exclusion or difference, but it can be a bit problematic, since it disturbs their daily routines. Here are some quotes from the conversation with Poya, a 9-year-old boy who arrived around four years ago:

*Rozita: what is your opinion about your mother tongue lesson?*

*Poya: smiling*

*Rozita: do you like it?*

*Poya: yeah, (while smiling and it seems to me he is not sure about that). Sometimes I don't like to go (to the mother tongue classes) but now it is ok for me. It used to be on Tuesdays, the days that Erik (Norwegian friend) came to our place or I went to his place. But often I kept forgetting my class, because my mother tongue teacher used to come to school after school hours. But now it is better as she comes during the school hours.*

*I have this lesson during the school hours and I have to go out from the class, but sometime, not always, I wouldn't like to go out. [Negin 14-year-old-girl, arrived around four years before the interview]*

In addition to what has been already said about the mother tongue lesson, school attendance as an observer revealed another aspect of this course, which is about the location of the

classroom. To clarify this I will refer to some of my field notes during classroom observations:

*Nora had mother tongue class (morsmål). I got permission from the teacher to join the class. There were some small tables and chairs outside the classroom in the school hallway. They chose one of tables and sat. I sat next to them. I asked the teacher whether the class location is here. She answered: “Yes, in fact, there is not particular place for the mother tongue classes, since the number of student is very few. We should find somewhere quiet to sit. Sometimes we use library but today another group has occupied the library”.*

*Then I became separated and sat behind a table away from them to write my notes, while I was watching them. I noticed Nora constantly looking around her, every time a student or teacher passed; she raised her head, or took a peek.*

Although I never heard any complaints about the location of the classroom from the students, but observation made me think that it could be an important matter, too. Being separated from other students and sitting in a place where people are constantly coming and going, may make them feel uncomfortable or disturbed. Consequently, they refuse to take this course in the next years. This is something that I have heard from the parents of the children participating in this study. Although I did not interview the parents formally, but during informal conversations they expressed their dissatisfaction with these lessons due to the short period i.e. 45 minutes per week, and not being formed regularly. Thus, having mother tongue lesson in itself is not problematic. It can even be very helpful in terms of children’s lesson and improvement of both native and Norwegian languages. However, the lack of adequate time, space, and conditions, may cause some problems.

In this section, I briefly described and discussed some of the challenges that were repeatedly mentioned by the informants. However, addressing these challenges made me ask whether my informants eventually are happy, or satisfied with their situations at school as a migrant child; or to what extent they are satisfied with their current school status. These issues will be explained in more detail below.

### **5.2.5 Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction**

As discussed above, adaption to new society is not an easy task, so that many challenges and difficulties lie ahead of the migrants and their children. Many studies in this respect have been centered on difficulties associated with the migration process. The general results from the



studies show that migration does not necessarily lead to negative adaptation consequences. In fact, most of the migrants are able to make a positive adjustment to new experiences and this ultimately will lead to their satisfaction with new environment (Sam, 1998). According to Shin and Johnson (1978), life satisfaction has been defined “as an overall assessment of an individual’s quality of life according to his or her own chosen criteria” ( cited in: Van Selm et al. 1997, p. 143). Regarding this, various factors may affect life satisfaction of migrant children. For example, study on life satisfaction of children of migrant workers in Shanghai/ China showed “relationship factors, social support, and self-esteem” serve a protective function and are important factors in the life satisfaction of migrant children (Wong et al. 2010, p. 143).

In relation to this study, it should be said that it is not easy to talk about the level of satisfaction with life and school in Norway. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are relative, and it is indeed difficult to draw a line between the children’s satisfaction and dissatisfaction, since they are very happy in some aspects and simultaneously complain about the others. In fact, my informants expressed their satisfaction in comparison with their previous experiences. Many of them are satisfied with their current situation because it is better than before. However, it does not mean that they are completely satisfied with their situation as a migrant child.

Generally, each individual child has a specific reason for her/his satisfaction or dissatisfaction. My informants pointed out to strict school system, existence of discrimination, lack of freedom and lack of facilities in Iran or Turkey (Intermediate country that some children lived before coming to Norway). They compare their present situation with their previous experiences and depending on the experiences that they already have, they may feel satisfied with the new environment. For example, Mahan as a Bahá’í student had many bad experiences of discrimination with some teachers and students in Iran. She also lived in a small city in the south of Iran where the quality of school was not good. In this sense, she highlights the importance of humanistic and democratic values on the one hand, and the limited democratic attitudes and practices on the other hand. Her previous experiences have an influence on her current view of the situation. Therefore, in spite of the difficulties and frustrations that she has suffered, she is still satisfied and has a dream about her future in Norway.

*With all difficulties, I like school in Norway more. In Iran, there is no freedom at all. It was not good at all. We had physical education several times a week, but instead of exercising, we were just sitting and talking. There was no physical education at all.... I did not feel secure. Children used to poke their noses into others' affairs; they reported anything we did to the school principal... I got harassed when I was in the fifth grade at primary school by my religion teacher... I didn't want to pray but she forced us to pray... may be because I was Bahá'í ... here you can do everything you want, no one interferes. [Mahan, 15 year-old girl, arrived 2 months before the interview]*

On the other hand, as I mentioned previously, her feelings of isolation and frustration on arrival due to loss of primary relationships, and living in a consumer society while many changes have been made to the economic status of the family, caused her dissatisfaction with the new environment.

*I wish I had not bought my cell phone first, if I didn't buy cell phone, now I could buy a piano, I previously had a piano, so I could play piano. Now, I should wait a few months to buy a piano... I want to buy new cloths but my parent says that I should wait, here everything is very expensive, our income is not enough, I am in a sort of limbo... [Mahan, 15- year-old girl]*

Similarly, Poya, who introduced himself as a football fan, referred to the lack of facilities in Iranian school as the reason of his satisfaction. He likes Norway more than Iran, because of more football facilities and more freedom to play at school.

*I like schools in Norway more...One reason is football. There was not football pitch in my school in Iran. In the playtimes, we could not run. The playtime is for running. But, it was not allowed in Iran. [Poya, 9-year-old boy, arrived around four years ago]*

The above instance raises the question of gender. Whether it is easier for boys than girls to be integrated in a new environment will be discussed in more detail later.

As another example, Nora, the daughter of a political activist talked about the reason for her satisfaction with the new situation and dissatisfaction with her life in Iran. She claims that she has been harassed in her childhood, but did not explain the reason. She just pointed to forced veiling in Iran. However, concerning the human rights in Iran, I would say children's of human rights activists in Iran are suffering due to fear of their parent's being arrested, imprisonment, or even worse. She had probably suffered from the consequences of her

parents' political actions. She responded to my question *if she could change something in the past, what it would be*:

*That, I insisted my parents to come here earlier... because I got a bit hurt in my childhood... (Pause) emmm, for example, in Iran we had to have hijab always, (pause)*

For Shabnam who studied in Iran for one year, satisfaction is associated with a feeling of freedom from strict schools and serious teachers. Despite many complaints about the difficulties and challenges that she encountered in Norwegian school like bullying, discrimination etc, she said:

*When I came here, I felt free. The teachers in Iran were very serious. But here it is better. [Shabnam, 18-years-old girl]*

Nasim raised another issue. She is satisfied with her current life in Norway, because she is looking into future and thinking about better future prospects.

*I like both Iran and Norway. I like Norway because I am sure that I can make more progress here. Because of high population in Iran, it is hard to make progress. The population here is only 4-5 million, while population in Iran is 60-70 million. So, I am sure that I can have a better future. But I like Iran more than here, because I was born there and grew up there. ...I cannot build up relationship with Norwegians; the same as what Norwegians have, because I haven't been here for a long time. I was born in Iran so I certainly could build up good relationship with Iranians. [Nasim, 16-year-old-girl, arrived 2 years ago]*

Negin said that she did not like academic competition among Iranian students. She likes the idea of teamwork that is common in Norwegian educational system. However, she prefers Iranian school in some aspects:

*I love Iran. I love its atmosphere and its people. They are very social. If I were in Iran, at this time I could be in middle school. I know that middle school and high school are very cool in Iran. Here is more freedom, I mean freedom in everything, but I have contact with children in my age in Iran, and what they say show that (school in) Iran is very cool. However, my mom says if I go there and study for one year I will regret. [Negin 14-year-old-girl, arrived around four years before the interview]*

Elham a 10-year-old girl who just started school 2 months before the interview, talked about her current school and her previous experiences in Iran:

*I like both schools somehow. In Iranian schools, some things are cooler than here. For example, you can be more playful, you can talk, and sometimes you can be naughty. It is interesting to be naughty sometimes. You can enjoy more. But here no one (means classmates) pays attention to you.*

Children's statements on freedom in schools appear to be contradictory. On the one hand, they complained about the lack of freedom in Iranian schools, but on the other hand, they claimed that they had more freedom to enjoy the social life in Iranian schools. I have experiences of teaching and consulting in Iranian schools for many years and I am familiar with the school system and somehow with children's behavioral codes in Iran. When children refer to freedom in Norwegian schools, probably they mean by freedom is getting rid of strict discipline in Iranian schools, serious teachers, harsh grading system, mandatory school uniform especially for girls mandatory veiling (hijab), large amounts of homework, very difficult midterm and final exams as well as dichotomy between family values and those that are defined by the school (for example religious values). Getting rid of all those stress and pressure that the school and the educational system impose on children brings a great sense of freedom.

Despite the school strict system in Iran, and controlling the students' behavior inside and even outside the school, they are familiar with their own country's cultural codes. In other words, they have learned how to bypass the system and ignore the strict rules and regulations and are able to enjoy their social lives at school. On the other hand, however, their unfamiliarity with behavioral codes of Norwegian children may hinder both their full and effective participation in school and full enjoyment during school days in Norway. For example, in Iran, having friendship with opposite sex (especially with non-blood relatives) is not allowed or considered a taboo. Students in Iran go to single-sex schools, but this may increase their desire to build a relationship with the opposite sex. Most of the high school and even middle school students have a boy/girl friend. Talking about the opposite sex or about their boy/girl friends is one of the most popular entertainments for the students at Iranian schools, while they are deprived of this fun and pleasure in schools in Norway. This is implicitly acknowledged by some of my teenage informants.

After addressing the challenges faced by my informants, it is important to point out the underlying causes of such challenges and the factors that influence their experiences of exclusion/ inclusion in school.

### **5.3 Underlying Reasons for Exclusion Experiences of Migrant Students**

The issue of inclusion or exclusion of ethnic minority students is very complex. Indeed, there are a number of factors affecting children's experiences of exclusion/ inclusion at schools. According to John Micklewright, 'parents, schools, employers, and governments' are responsible for children's exclusion of any kind. Of course, considering children's own agency toward themselves or other kids deserves special attention, as well (Micklewright, 2002).

Based on the empirical data, substantial factors that contribute in my informants' experiences of exclusion/ inclusion in schools can be grouped as following: Firstly, language and unfamiliarity with the host country's language appear to be a substantial challenge on arrival. Language is one of the crucial factors and, indeed is the key factor to enter any society. Consequently, the lack of familiarity with the host language can offer unique challenges to the migrant children, such as feeling of isolation and frustration. Secondly, the empirical data revealed that both migrant and Norwegian parents play an important role in inclusion or exclusion of the migrant children. For example, children's experiences of being stereotyped can be due to the effects of the parent's opinions. Thirdly, teachers, schools, and educational policies are the other decisive factors that have important impacts on the exclusion or inclusion of the migrant children.

It is worth noting that these factors are not entirely separate from each other, but rather, they my overlap. For example, children' feeling of isolation can be influenced by all three distinct factor groups mentioned above. Likewise, overcoming the language difficulties is not separate from the school and its educational policies. They are each described in more detail in the following sections.

#### **5.3.1 Language as a Key to Enter a New Community**

It is widely acknowledged that the acquisition of the host country's language is one of the crucial factors for integration of the migrants. The ability to speak the host language has a significant impact on almost all aspects of daily life, such as access and integration to the labor market, understanding the rules and the regulations of the society, accessing the services, and the exercise of human and civil rights (Ferguson, 2011). Indeed, fluency in the national language is very important for social participation in everyday life settings. Language as a carrier of information and as a tool helps to structure thought processes, and therefore is obviously essential for learning and development (Vedder et al. 2006). Language learning is

not simply a matter of education, rather a necessary condition for successful interaction with the people from other cultural and linguistic groups inside and outside the boundaries of a community (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2003-2004)

Proficiency in the language of host community is also very important for children of migrants (Vedder et al. 2006). A literature review on adaptation of immigrant children to the United States has confirmed the importance of the nation language mastery by migrant children. Proficiency in the national language of instruction can lead children into mainstream education, helping them to excel in school, and increase their chances for success and meaningful employment after graduation (McCarthy, 1998).

In addition, a research on a group of Bhutanese refugees from camps in Nepal and their resettlement in New Zealand illustrated that the main challenges on arrival for both migrants and their children were language and communication difficulties. To adult immigrants, unfamiliarity with the local environment, inability to understand other people, signs, and food labels for example, were extremely difficult. For their children, lacking someone to talk in their native language or play with was very frustrating (Ferguson, 2011).

Similar to the above example, empirical data revealed that my informants' feeling of exclusion on arrival was mainly due to unfamiliarity with the Norwegian language, which made it really hard for them to form close relationships with other peers, and in some sense created a feeling of isolation. Here are some of the informants' opinions:

*The main challenge is the language. Learning the language is a key to solve my problems. If I knew the Norwegian language, I could be friend with Norwegians... This is too bad when you don't understand or wrongly understand what other say, this is very annoying. I think the most difficult thing is the language...I feel I am very behind of the other students, because I don't know the language. [Mahan, 15 year-old girl, arrived 2 months before the interview]*

*The first days of my arrival were very difficult, because I did not know anything. I wasn't familiar with the society, with the culture. It was very difficult in the beginning but it became better little by little. I couldn't build up any relationship with others. But I learned little by little. Language is very important. Language is a key to enter into any society. First, you have to learn the language to be able to communicate with the people. [Nasim, 16-year-old-girl, arrived 2 years ago]*

*My first school was in [REDACTED] It was worse than here (her current school in Trondheim). I couldn't speak Norwegian. It was first time that I had come to Norway and I didn't know Norwegian language... when I went to school, all others smiled at me, (means they welcomed her) they thought I could speak Norwegian. But when I started talking and they realized that I didn't know Norwegian, they didn't talk to me anymore. I was very quiet and I felt alone. No one talked to me. During the year, I just talked to one of my teachers and a Kurdish girl. But she (the Kurdish girl) didn't talk to me too much since she already had her own friends. It was very difficult. When I went to school, I was upset. [Rozhin, 16-year-old girl, belong an ethnic minority group (Kurd), arrived two years ago]*

Besides doing interviews, attending school as an observer gave me an opportunity to watch closely the effects of the children's unfamiliarity with the language on their peer relationships. I noticed that it was very difficult for those two girls who have started school just some weeks before my observation to communicate with their peers. I repeatedly observed that they were playing or walking alone in the playtimes. I also listened to their complaints and grievances about their feeling of frustration and isolation from peers due to language unfamiliarity.

*Ohhh (pity), yeah, if I knew the Norwegian language, I could be friend with all children, but because I don't know the language, I can't be friend with them and I can't build up any relationship.*

In addition, during my classroom observations, I realized that newly arrived students had been excluded from participating in the class discussion because of not knowing the language. Children, who did not know Norwegian at all, had to be quite, and not participate in the class activities. Being a passive student made them bored, so when the teacher talked to other students, they were busy doing other things. For example, they played with their backpacks, books, and other stuff or they were busy with painting and drawing. Those who knew English may feel more comfortable to participate by using mix of Norwegian and English. At least they could say what they meant. However, this kind of exclusion was limited to the first months of their arrival. Little by little as time goes by, their language can be improved and consequently, they may turn into active students in the class.

As we see, the knowledge of Norwegian language is crucial and unfamiliarity with the host country's language is a big challenge for new comers, a challenge that can be reflected somehow in children's peer relationships. As Archambault (2010) states, language skills development facilitate children's inclusion in the Norwegian society. However, the question

arises here as how migrant children can reach the proficiency level in the host country language. As a response to this, it is obvious that the school norms, values, its environment, and support provided there, play a significant role in facilitating language learning, and adaptation in a wider concept, particularly for the newcomer students who are least familiar with the dominant culture and language (McCarthy, 1998). In this regard, The Norwegian Ministry of Work and Integration (AID) has clearly introduced its aims for integration of the immigrant children on the basis of language skills and language training from a very young age. To achieve this, municipalities are responsible for providing funds for the costs incurred by the schools in relation to children's language support (Archambault, 2010).

### **5.3.2 Role of Parents in Inclusion/Exclusion of Migrant Children**

Micklewright argues that parents have great impact on the progress of their children as well as their exclusion. For example, parents' problems in finding a proper job with sufficient income; in spending money wisely; in paying enough attention to education, health, and nutrition of their children; as well as their failure in assisting them in learning, developing their social skills and relationships, all these may lead to social exclusion of children (Micklewright, 2002).

In the context of this study, my informants argued that parental role has been very effective in their adaptability in the new environment as well as their experiences of exclusion. For example, Shabnam referred to the role of her own parents and influence of her family "socio-economic status" in creating her experiences of exclusion as well as her sister's successful inclusion (Adler and Adler, 1998, p. 47). Her parents' high-paying jobs and improvement in family economic situation provided more opportunities for the second child of the family who was born some years later, to experience less difficulties in relation to economic-related challenges.

*When we came here, my dad was a master student. For example, we did not have a big house to set up a big birthday party. We had to live in a small flat for students. Therefore, there was a big difference between our flat and my Norwegian classmates who had bigger houses... we didn't have trampoline or I didn't know how to ski. I think it was their (my parents) fault too. At that time, I was a little girl; we just came here and did not know about Norwegian culture. We had Iranian life style at home. Now my younger sister (Shima) is much more comfortable than I was, because my mother and father changed their idea and also our life style. Now they can buy many things for Shima. For me it was not like this... Now my sister does not have as*



*many problems as I had. I always say to her that she is much luckier than I was. She can have the best birthday party among her classmates. She has everything she likes. [Shabnam, 18 years-old girl, arrived 11 years ago]*

As another example, I can refer to Neda's experiences. According to her, children's adaptation is very dependent upon parents' involvement and effort. Neda, similar to Shabnam, argued how situation of her sister became better as a result of changes in her parent's involvement and integration.

*If I could change something in the past, I wished that my parents be more 'involved' in the Norwegian society. If my parents had that creativity to get more involved themselves in the activities in the society, it would be much easier for me. If they knew more about Norwegian schools; about what Norwegian children do; what they are allowed to do and what are Norwegian parents' opinions. Mom and dad still do not know many things; therefore, I am given the permissions similar to my cousin in Iran... I think that my parents still could not understand that living in Norway is different from the living in Iran ... (Although) now for my sister, is much easier. Her close friend is a Norwegian girl. This is because her mother is my mother's friend. They (my sister and her friend) are always together. The mothers always arrange and set the time with each other, for example today they will be staying together. But when we came here some years ago, it was not like this. [Neda, 15- year-old girl, arrived 10 years ago]*

Neda pointed out the cultural differences between her family and Norwegians on arrival that how she straddled two cultures. As Sam (1992), states, immigrant children come to learn their parental culture on the one hand, and the values and norms and customs of mainstream society on the other hand. "These two cultures are often viewed as opposing each other, a situation which is sometimes described as *cultures in conflict*" (cited in: McCarthy, 1998, p. 12). Migrant children are often forced to make tough choices between the norms and the values of their own parents and the mainstream school cultures. In the case of Neda, however, the conflicts seem to be more severe on her arrival. As Neda describes, the situation of her sister has been far better now due to the effects of her parents' familiarity with the culture of the host society and their relatively positive adaptation to the mainstream culture (ibid).

Unlike the other two participants (Shabnam and Neda), Nasim had a more positive experience with her parental involvement. Her statements about her successful integration and friendship

building with Norwegians shows, how parent's active participation into the society can accelerate the process of children's social inclusion.

*My mom is very social; she can build up relationships with everybody very quickly. I have learned from my mom. She has many Norwegian friends. She invites them to our place and they invite us as well. [Nasim, 16-year-old-girl, arrived 2 years ago]*

However, the question is how parents can get involved themselves in the new society when they first arrive and are not very familiar with the host community, its culture, language, etc. They first need to adapt themselves to the new environment to be able to help their children's adaptation process. Being in a new place where it has different traditions, religion, costume, and language, can be a daunting experience for anyone. The strategies they use to overcome these barriers are very important for their own adaptation, and consequently for their children's adaptation. In the meanwhile, perhaps migration policies of the host society can influence the process of the adaptation. If the policies for new arrivals are designed and implemented in a way to encourage the newcomers to remain actively engaged in the new society, the adaptation process will probably, be accelerated.

Nasim's experiences prompted me to think about why her mother, unlike Shabnam and Neda's parents, could easily adapt herself to the new environment, whether it is just because of her social personality or it may be due to different background or status. Nasim's family (including her mother and 13 year-old brother) arrived in Norway because of having refugee status. In relation to refugees, the Norwegian Government is interested in rapid inclusion of adult refugees as 'active adult citizen'. To do this, it makes positive efforts to provide support for them in their learning process and integration into labor market (Archambault, 2010, p.450). Once adult refugees settle in a municipality in Norway, they have the rights and obligation to undertake training, which includes language courses and classes about Norwegian society, the so-called 'introduction program'- a full time programme provided by municipalities for newly settled refugees (Archambault, 2011, p. 100). Hence, Refugee families like Nasim's mother had the privilege to benefit from free and compulsory language trainings.

Based on Continuous Reporting System on Migration (known by its French acronym, SOPEMI) for Norway, since September 2005, it has been obligatory for newly arrived adult refugees to participate in 300 hours of lessons in Norwegian language training and social studies and it expanded to 600 hours after January 2012 (SOPEMI, 2010–2011, p. 58). Taking

these courses appears to provide opportunities for newcomers and help them to successfully settle, engage, and integrate into the new society. Whereas those adult migrants, such as Shabnam and Neda's parents who came to Norway due to education or family reunification, and had not the right or obligation to participate in free Norwegian language training, may have faced more difficulties adjusting to the new environments. To confirm my argument I would refer to Valenta and Berg's study of asylum seekers in Norwegian reception centres, which illustrated "organised activities, such as Norwegian language training and information programs have a pivotal impact on resident involvement in service provision and participation in various arenas of mainstream society" (2010: 13).

Furthermore, my informants not only pointed out to the role of their own parents, but also emphasized on the role of the Norwegian parents in creating their challenges. They blamed Norwegian parents for their problems, because they believed that children are too young to be able to discriminate between foreigners and non-foreigners. In this respect, Shabnam points out to the impacts of Norwegian parental behavior on the inappropriate behavior of their children towards the foreigners.

*I think it is because of their families. For example, when I went to my classmate's home, the reaction of her parents was not good. Perhaps they preferred that their child invited Norwegian friends rather than me. Perhaps parents felt more comfortable and secure if their child made a friendship with a Norwegian classmate...For example at that time, if there were a general parents-teachers meeting, it would be obvious that Norwegian parents did not like to talk to my parents or make a connection with them. [Shabnam, 18 years-old girl, arrived 11 years before the interview]*

As another example of parents' role in creating children' exclusion can be referred to pajama or a sleepover parties that are very common in Norway. Although this is a party, most commonly held by children themselves, it needs parental consent. Children's interviews revealed that Norwegian parents were not willing to allow their children to have sleepover in the houses of the immigrants. Some allow sleepover at their homes, but not at others. Here are some excerpts from interview with Sara an eight year-old girl who was born in Trondheim. A similar experience happened to Shima as well.

*Sara: For my mom and dad it is ok (to have a sleepover). But her parents (talking about a Norwegian friend) do not allow her to sleepover at our home.*

*Rozita: has she said that her parents would not allow her?*

*Sara: yes, she has told me many times.*

*Rozita: do they have a sleepover at other Norwegians' homes?*

*Sara: they have sleepover a lot but they do not come to my house.*

*Rozita: what do you think the reason is?*

*Sara: because (pause, thinking), for example, they think, for example, we are different. (Thinking again), they prefer to invite me to their homes for a sleepover instead of coming to my house. [Sara, 8-year-old, born in Norway]*

Example above shows that Norwegian parents are not willing and indeed prevent their child from having close friendships with children of foreign origin. This might be because they are suspicious about something new and unfamiliar. This is while Sara's parents have no problem with their child's close relationship with Norwegian children. Iranians are also more likely to be skeptical of such relationships, but by allowing their children to have sleepover at a stranger's home, indeed they are taking a step towards integration into Norwegian culture.

In fact, integration is a dynamic relationship between the host society and the immigrants, and successful integration is not possible without mutual interaction between them (IOM, 2008). It is not supposed to be like that only new comers should learn ways of life in the new community. The host society should also learn how to accept new people in their community (NYU, 2012). Given to what is being said, the role of the schools, the teachers, and the proper implementation of the inclusion policies become more prominent in the field of children's social inclusion.

### **5.3.3 Role of Schools, Teachers, and Inclusion Policies**

School age children spend much of their time at school, therefore their experiences of migration are greatly influenced, and shaped by their experiences of school and educational system (Ackers & Stalford, 2004; Reynolds, 2008). Integration policies, in general, believe that schools serve as the means of integration for newcomer children (Candappa, 2000 in: Archambault, 2010). "This may be because in a normalized situation, children are expected to be active and to contribute to society mainly by attending school and learning "(Qvortrup, 1991 cited in Archambault, 2010, p. 450). According to Qvortrup (1990), school is one of the first main institutions in forming the different shape of childhood, where children socialize

and normalize to society (Qvortrup 1990 in Adler and Adler, 1998). Schools appear to be arenas of social interaction and identity formation (Reynolds, 2008). Archambault argues children's identification through their interactions with peers, is a key element to their integration and getting insights into complicated issues of inclusion and experiences of difference (2011:55). In this regard, school can serve as a bridge towards cohesion as well as improvement of relationships between children (Reynolds, 2008).

The number of the immigrants has been increasingly growing in recent years in Norway and resulting in an increase in the number of students belonging to language minority ( Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research , 2012). Based on SOPEMI's report for Norway, "between eight and ten per cent of students in Norwegian schools, are immigrants themselves or children of immigrants" (SOPEMI, 2010–2011, p. 49). This means that Norwegian schools have to absorb the students with migrant background into their student populations. Under Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), all States Parties must recognize the right of every child to education based on equal opportunity. In line with this, 'school for all' is a major goal of education policy in Norway. The purpose is to provide learning opportunities for all pupils, with specific attention to particular groups of children such as language- minority children or children with special educational needs (SOPEMI, 2010–2011).

However, according to Clark et al. (1999), education of immigrant children is problematic, due to existence of a dilemma between 'commonality and difference'. "Schools must negotiate how to offer learners who are palpably different from each other something (an education) that is palpably the same for all". (cited in: Reynolds, 2008, p. 2). It is schools' duty to work toward aiding the process of building strong and positive relationships between students from different backgrounds, with the aims of inclusion. In this regard, teachers play an important role in providing an inclusive education. Teachers should understand background and needs of their students, and not generalizing about them based on their race, ethnic, cultural or religious background (Reynolds, 2008).

Many authors have carried out research on the role of the teachers on the children's social development. Teachers as mediators can play an active role in children's peer interactions. They can support and help children to build up friendly relationships with their classmates (File, 1993). According to Corsaro, "children's interactions in the peer group involve a complex set of skills and understanding" (Corsaro, 1981, 1985 in File, 1993, p. 358), which

includes both cognitive, and language expertise. In this respect, teachers can facilitate children's social development. They can help them to develop their friendship relations and general interpersonal skills (File, 1993; Bergen, 1993), which consequently will lead to children's inclusion into mainstream school.

During observation period, I noticed that teachers' creativity could function effectively with establishing friendly relations between children. I think children sometimes need a little push. If someone pushes them toward each other, then they will probably find a way to continue their relationships. Experienced teacher may understand children's challenges in the beginning of their arrival and how to deal with this. They can help children to be close together by making plans that can push children toward each other. Grete, Dorsa's (a nine year-old girl who arrived two month before observation) class teacher is a good example of this type of teachers. She arranged a group lunch to make children closer together. As she said, the purpose was both helping children to make friends as well as language improvement. She also asked the children to pick up a student from the class and go to the schoolyard together. Here are some excerpts from my field observations:

*It was November 1, 2011 and lunchtime. I was in Dorsa's classroom. Dorsa called Maria (an American girl) to come and sit next to her to have lunch together, but Maria refused. She showed with her hand that she would like to sit next to other girls: Faiza (from Afghanistan) and Semhar (from Eritrea). They were around a table and eating their lunch. Faiza called Dorsa to join their table and sit next to them. Dorsa took her lunchbox, stood up to go but paused for a few seconds, and then sat at her desk and started eating alone. All children in the classroom sat together except Dorsa. The teacher came to Dorsa and asked her to join a group and then took her hand and led her toward the table where Maria, Semhar, and Faiza were eating their lunch. Dorsa sat next to them but she was quiet. She seemed unsatisfied. Nevertheless, after some minutes, she was smiling.*

Despite Dorsa's initial opposition to join the group, we see that the teacher's slight push propelled her into action and ultimately made her happy.

The other day, date 25.10.2011:

*It was playtime and Dorsa told me that she did not like to go out. She asked me whether I could ask the teacher if she could stay inside the classroom. I knew the rule so I told her that she is not allowed to stay inside, but I would ask the teacher. I talked to the teacher and she*

*said that she had to lock the door. The teacher asked Dorsa why she did not want to go out. Dorsa said that she was not in a good mood. But the teacher encouraged her to go out to the schoolyard. She said, "It would be good if you put your outdoor cloths on and talk a little bit with other children", then, she took Dorsa's hand and guided her into the locker room. She said to Maria that they were friends, and asked them to go out and play together... They (Maria and Dorsa) put on their outdoor clothes and went down stairs to the schoolyard. I followed them from staircase window. They sat on an empty swing and started swinging. Dorsa was smiling and looked happy now. Both children were laughing then.*

As another example, I can point to the experience of a 17 year-old boy named Peiman who arrived 11 years ago. Peiman explained how he could make friends with some Norwegian children when all his classmates accompanied by their teachers came to his house to visit. This example shows that a simple plan of student's home visiting could help to establish a friendly relationship among the children.

Nevertheless, in the case of this study, it was not as if the teachers always worked toward the inclusion of the migrant students. Sometimes, they either purposely or unintentionally acted in a way that led to the exclusion of the migrant children. As Verma et al. (1994) state, teachers can behave in such a racist or discriminatory manner, although most studies show that this is very rare. As shown by Vollmer (2000), teachers' beliefs, views, and attitudes have a powerful influence on training and social climate of classrooms (cited in Reynolds, 2008). Teachers are members of a wider community and they transfer perspectives from the wider society into the school (Foster 1990 cited in Reynolds, 2008). "Often, teachers are unaware of their ideological assumptions which have been 'naturalized' to such an extent that they are finally seen as being part of common sense" (Vedder et al. 2006 p.7). The beliefs and perspectives of the teachers about the immigrant students play an important role in training practices. Teachers' behaviors might be due to the lack of expertise and information and also lack of motivation they need to cope with the challenges of multicultural societies. Whilst, it is important that teachers adapt their instructional practices to the diverse needs of their students, help them to promote fruitful interactions and reasoning associated with learning duties (ibid).

Here are parts of Neda and Shabnam's experiences of teachers' behaviour:

*In the Norwegian school, sometimes I had problem with the teachers too. Sometimes the teachers were like students. For example for class activities, they put all foreigners in the*

*same group and separated us from Norwegians. I don't know what the reason was. I don't know whether she (the teacher) knew that we would like to be with Norwegians or she intentionally did not put us in the Norwegian groups. ...Some teachers are cruel, they don't want, even if they want, they can't solve children's problem....they don't try (to solve the problems), for example if I told her (the teacher in primary Norwegian school) that children teased me, she pretended that she was surprised, said, "oh they treat you badly! Let's talk to them". Then she gathered us in a room and asked each of us "what is your problem? What is your problem?" just this, she didn't try to help us to be friends with each other. After the gathering, children's behaviors were getting even worse than before, that why we had complained, so it was no use to complain. In my opinion, teachers could never solve the problem. [Neda, 15 year-old girl, arrived 10 years ago]*

In this respect, Shabnam had similar experiences:

*In Norwegian school, my teacher was not very good. I always shared a desk with Adina (friend from Ethiopia), and she (the teacher) did not take responsibility to group the children in such a way that they work with different students for different class activities. I wanted to work with other children but always we (Adina and I) just had to work together...I remember when other kids teased me, if we had complained about it, the teachers said, "we cannot do anything about it; it may be your fault that you don't know how to play with other children".*

However, in the next part we will see that Neda and Shabnam's experiences in Norwegian schools differed from their experiences in the receiving schools as well as English international school. Meaningful differences in their experiences inspired me to make a comparison among the experiences of the migrant children in different schools i.e. in receiving, private English, and in Norwegian regular schools.

#### **5.4 Comparison of Experiences of Migrant Children in Different Types of Schools**

The primary aim of following section is to compare the exclusion/ inclusion experience of migrant children in different schools: in receiving/ introduction schools, in English international school, and in Norwegian regular schools. The comparison will be discussed with regard to two parts: implementation of the inclusion policies, and the concept of 'identity matching'. It should be noted that only two of the informants, Shabnam and Neda, have had the experiences of attendance in all three types of schools. Therefore, the data related to English international school comes from the experiences of these two girls.



### 5.4.1 Implementation of Inclusion Policies

As Reynolds (2008) argues, Schools play a significant role in establishing and maintaining integrity in the society. Integration can be achieved through school inclusion policies, by best including both national and international newcomers into mainstream schools. Regarding this, Norwegian schools are designed in a way to help the newcomers to adapt, settle and integrate into the new environment. For this purpose, a number of municipalities provide separate receiving schools or classes (Mottak) for the immigrant children who have recently entered the country (from the website: New in Norway, 2012)<sup>11</sup>. “A Receiving school is the first meeting with the Norwegian school system for children and teenagers that have moved to [Norway] and do not speak the Norwegian language. The school provides an intensive training in the Norwegian language in addition to other basic school subjects. The pupils stay at the Receiving school until they are able to speak and write in Norwegian language sufficiently well. After that, they will be transferred to the neighboring public school” (Anders, 2006)<sup>12</sup>. Hence, providing separate receiving schools or classes (Mottak) for newly arrived children are in line with the goals and objectives of the inclusion policy.

A study conducted by Verma (1992) on interethnic relations in UK schools indicated that schools that contain significant numbers of students from ethnic minority groups were a lot more advanced in development of the race equality policy in relation to students than schools containing few such students (cited in: Verma. et al. 1994). Similarly, empirical data showed that the receiving schools as well as private English international schools in Trondheim appear to be more successful in implementing the inclusive policies and in providing an international and multicultural environment. Here are some excerpts from the interviews:

*This (discrimination) exists more in the Norwegian schools. Because most of the pupils are Norwegian, and almost all of the teachers are Norwegian too. Totally, there is a Norwegian environment. Therefore, when there are one or two foreign students, it is clear that the teachers do not mention them at the same level. There are some differences between them and Norwegians. But at the international schools (means both receiving and English schools), the situation was not like this. There were not any differences between foreigners and*

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nyinorge.no/en/New-in-Norway/Children--Schools/The-school-system/>  
retrieved 5.05.2012

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.minskole.no/minskole/mottaksskolen/pilot.nsf/vArt?Opennavigator&u=Hva%20er%20Mottaksskolen> retrieved 5.05.2012

*Norwegians... so making friends was not a big deal, because it was an international school. But first year of Norwegian school was difficult. [Neda, 15 year-old girl, arrived 10 years ago]*

Shabnam also spoke about the policies of international schools in creating a welcoming and multicultural atmosphere, whereby all children were welcomed and respected. For example, she said:

*In English international school, there was not any problem. In international school, policies were different. They (school staff) would like to create a multicultural environment. It's (the school) atmosphere was in such a way that all children were welcomed; all children could work together; all children could be together. Teachers cared a lot about children's friendship relationships, so that they asked children about their relationships with other kids time to time. I remember teachers questioned each individual child who is our friends at school, or whether we are satisfied or not. Then they talked to our parents. They asked my parents if I had any problem at school, or if I had any complaints when I came home from the school. [Shabnam, 18 years-old girl, arrived 11 years ago]*

It should be noted, however, that Shabnam and Neda's memories of Norwegian primary school date back to almost a decade ago. It seems that the increase in migratory flows during the last decade, has led to some changes in Norwegian society so that the country is moving towards a more heterogeneous society, and consequently more heterogeneous pupils in Norwegian schools.

As mentioned earlier, nowadays, "Between 8 and 10% of students in Norwegian schools have an immigrant background representing many countries, cultures and languages" (Taguma et al. 2009 p.7; SOPEMI, 2010–2011, p. 49). Accordingly, this may have led to some changes in the Norwegian's attitudes towards the foreigners, to adopt a more positive attitude. In this regard, Norwegian government has shown a positive trend toward integration and social inclusion of immigrants and their children and has been consistent in its efforts to implement the inclusion policies (SOPEMI, 2010–2011). "The goal for the inclusion policies is that each person shall have equal opportunities to participate in society" (SOPEMI, 2010–2011, p. 43). To achieve this goal, as of 2010, Norwegian government has appointed some expert Committees such as *The Welfare and Migration Committee* and *The Inclusion Committee* to examine different aspects of immigration, welfare, and integration policies. The committees'

reports lead to some suggestions and recommendation for future policy actions (SOPEMI, 2010–2011, pp. 43-44).

Surveys conducted by The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) on the population's attitudes to immigration and integration shows that the people's attitudes toward immigrants are changing to reflect greater acceptance of diversity (IMDi, 2011). For example, according to Statistic Norway, in 2012, 80 percent of Norwegians agreed with the statement that "Most immigrants make an important contribution to Norwegian working life" as opposed to 66 percent in 2002 (Statistics Norway, 2011)<sup>13</sup>. My informants also have mentioned this. Here are parts of focus group conversation in this regard:

*Shabnam: I feel that these days situation has changed, because the number of foreigners rose in Norway. When I was studying in primary school, all the students, except Adina (an Ethiopian girl) and I were Norwegian, or there were few foreign students. But now in every school, there are many foreign students. Even at the NTNU University, they have increased. For example only during last semester 50-, 60 Iranian master students came to Trondheim. This means that the situation has changed significantly (it means that attitude towards immigrants has changed due to increasing number of immigrants arrive in Norway).*

*I think that these days there are many foreigners here in Trondheim.*

*Neda: yes. I agree with Shabnam. As the number of foreigners has increased, Norwegian students also accustomed to foreign students. In the past, Norwegian children did not like much to form friendship with foreigners, but now they like it.*

*Shabnam: I think that now being a foreigner has gained more popularity. For example, my teacher asks me to explain something about my country in the class. Now they are more curious and eager to get information from my country and me. I think that they have changed their attitudes radically. I think that since five-six years ago Norwegian people have been more grown up. Before they did not have a positive opinion of the foreigners and wanted to separate themselves.*

The above-mentioned conversation indicates Norway's demographic shift towards more heterogeneous society as well as change in the attitudes of Norwegians toward immigrants.

---

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.ssb.no/innvhold\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/innvhold_en/) retrived 15.01.2013

However, this attitudinal shift is more complex issue than it seems. For example, the surveys' results (conducted by IMDi) show that although to some extent there has been a positive change in people's attitudes toward the presence of the foreigners in Norway, but "it has involved growing scepticism with regard to the volume of immigration and integration challenges" (IMDi, 2011, p. 71). As a result, immigrants and their children may still encounter with Norwegians' negative attitudes towards immigrants.

Concerning educational system, as Adams and Kirova (2006) state, providing an inclusive educational system in a setting where students have diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnical background can be seen as problematic (cited in: Reynolds, 2008). In this regard, a policy review performed by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Norwegian migrant education in 2009 came up with the results that "Norway has already developed measures to respond to some of the key challenges in educating migrants, but needs to build capacity to successfully implement these measures" (Taguma et al. 2009 p. 7). Hence, more work needs to be done in order to develop an inclusive multicultural education system in Norway.

#### **5.4.2 Identity Matching**

Study made by Verma et al. (1994) in UK schools shows that the multi-ethnic schools, where consists of many different ethnic groups, achieve greater coordination and less hostility than schools with smaller ethnic groups. Their argument is that in multi-ethnic schools, boundaries of identity become blurred, while in schools with less diverse group of students differences between groups can be highly felt and can lead to hostility (Verma et al. 1994). Similarly, Vertovec 2007 (cited in Reynolds, 2008) argues that in 'multi- ethnic or super-divers schools' children are better able to achieve inclusion. In such circumstances, students seem to have more chances to communicate to one another because there are lots of identities available that can act as positive bases. In this regard, Warikoo (2004) developed concept of 'identity matching'. She argued, "Individuals will form friendships if they are able to share some form of identity. A shared ethnicity can act as a particularly strong 'identity matcher'" (cited in Reynolds, 2008 p.9). In such situations, children seem to have more opportunities to build up relationships with their peers from a diverse range of backgrounds. Consequently, in international setting migrant children are likely to settle faster since they are among children of similar backgrounds and experiences, and more importantly, among those who can speak the same language and can understand their culture of origin (Ackers & Stalford, 2004). On

the contrary, in schools with less ethnic diversity, different ethnic groups may have clear boundaries between each other; consequently, the inclusion would be difficult to achieve.

Based on the data collected and similar to the above-mentioned issue, receiving schools in Trondheim where school population consists of a large number of migrant children were more successful in inclusion of their pupils than normal Norwegian schools. Most of the informants acknowledged that they perceived satisfaction with their experience of receiving schools, so that they were not being isolated. Reynolds argues that “a shared ethnicity can act as a particularly strong ‘identity matcher’ but other factors of identity from shared interests, to similar experiences can also act as bonds” (Reynolds, 2008, p. 9). Hence, being in an international environment makes it possible for migrant children to gain social symmetry. This is something that has also been acknowledged by the participants who had experiences of attendance at private English school. Migrant students can befriend children from different varieties of backgrounds because there are lots of identities on offer. This is happening while my informants had fewer chances for identity matching in Norwegian regular schools. In such an environment, they were not able to access different friendship groups since boundaries between non-migrants and migrants groups were explicit. Here are some excerpts from children’s interviews:

*It (receiving school) was a big school and all children were from different countries. It was good that not all children were Norwegian. I was not the only kid who was not Norwegian. All the students were from different countries. Many other children were also not speaking Norwegian. Therefore, I was more comfortable. So, we were learning all together. It was not as if I were behind of the others or think it is harder for me...the first year of Norwegian school was difficult. In that year most of the students were Norwegians, only few foreigners were at school. I do remember that we (foreign students) became friends with each other and spend our time together...We didn't have any relationships with Norwegian children, not at all (with emphasis), for example during the breaks, we (foreign students) just played together, and Norwegians played with each other. [Neda, 15 year-old girl, arrived 10 years ago]*

*In the receiving school (Mottak), making friends were much easier. Since we all were foreigners, we could understand each other better... we had a common experience in being foreigners [Negin 14-year-old-girl, arrived around four years before the interview]*

The relationships between ethnic and national group membership is not necessarily a question of pedagogical methods in schools, but has also to do with the state's policies. Almost all countries all over the world consist of ethnic, linguistic, or religious minority and majority groups. A key question related to this variation is about the relationships that minorities and majorities develop with the national government. As to what extent do minority groups feel connected to a state that they feel "is not theirs"? Moreover, how strongly do majority groups consider that their ethnic group overlaps with the state boundaries, and as a result potentially excluding minorities from participating in the political process? (Staerklé et al. 2010 p. 492).

In response to the above questions, historical analyses of the process of nation building have demonstrated that nations are built around core ethnic groups, which often represent the national majority group. Generally, core majority groups have advantage over minority groups "because they are likely to be in control of the state, its institutions, and its language". This implies the existence of asymmetrical relationship between minorities and majorities (Staerklé et al. 2005 p.8), and the creation of the sense of "them" and "us" (Metropolis World Bulletin, 2008, p. 34). Historical evidence indicates that members of core ethnic groups feel closer to the nation-state. Therefore, majority groups are likely to have a feeling of ownership and entitlement to the nation that influences their attitudes towards minorities and immigrants. They might be especially prone to impose their norms and values on a higher-order category. Consequently, they are likely to be more identified with the nation-state (Staerklé et al. 2005, 2010).

Ethnic asymmetry, is not necessary a universal event, rather it is a historically and politically conditioned phenomena. In relation to minority-majority relationships, there are three political and historical factors that expected to moderate asymmetry and moderate the gap between majorities and minorities. These factors are as follows: the level of human development of countries, their level of ethnic and cultural diversity, and their level of social and economic inequality. Accordingly, asymmetry should be higher in low-diversity or homogeneous societies like Norway. In such context, minorities are more under pressure to assimilate to dominant culture (Staerklé et al. 2010).

Here is another issue, even though the above arguments show that being among students who speak a common language gives children an excellent opportunity to build friendship, however, in the context of this study it is not always the case. As I observed or heard from my

informants, often there were some Afghan children in the classes where Iranian children attended. They could easily communicate with each other since both could speak almost the same language. Despite the fact that they often helped each other to overcome their challenges and difficulties, their relationship never went beyond language assistance. I have never seen or heard any evidence that indicate their willingness to establish friendship relationships. The reason may lie in the influence of politics on Iranian- Afghan attitudes toward each other. Iran and Afghanistan historically have had a long, intertwined, and precarious relationship. However, linguistic ties between the two countries, the racial differences, the cultural affiliations, and presence of the 2.5 million Afghan refugees in Iran (legally or illegally), creating various socio-economic and political issues. Consequently, the relationships between the two countries have been problematic more than being intimate. Lack of knowledge, negative images, and stereotypes of Afghans in Iran's state media and particularly television, have caused that Iranians look at Afghans as unwelcome immigrants. On the other hand, Afghans also have a stereotypical view of Iranians, so that they accuse them as the most racist people in the world (Aghdashlo, 2012).

Some examples below show how relationships between Iranian and Afghan children could appear. Here are parts of my field observation:

*Elham was sitting next to an Afghan girl named Mahnaz. Mahnaz was trying to help Elham constantly. When she did not understand something Mahnaz explained to her. She translated the things that teacher said and things they should do. She had a kind of supporting role. However, her help and support were limited to the classroom. She did not care very much about Elham during the breaks and playtimes. Once they left the classroom, Mahnaz did not pay attention to Elham. She almost did not talk to her at all. I saw several times that Elham went towards Mahnaz and talked to her but after only a few seconds she left her alone. I never saw them playing or talking together during the playtimes. [Elham, 10-year-old girl, arrived 3 month before the interview/observation]*

Nora, an eleven year-old girl who arrived one year ago, in response to my question of whether she has had any Afghan classmate in her reception class (Mottak), said that there was an Afghan girl in her class last year, but she did not like to be friend with her. The reason was that the Afghan girl belonged to a religious Muslim family, she wore a veil (hijab), and she also discouraged her to be friend or play with boys due to religious beliefs.

The examples above are consistent with Anderson et al's (2012) argument that students do not only make friends with peers who have similarity in language use, but also they tend to interact with other children because of common experiences and personal attributes, such as being a foreigner and even personal appearances. These communications often help children to build rapport, trust, and interaction. Similarly, Reynolds states that language and ethnicity are not the only effective factors in friendship formation, and children students rely on "a diverse range of bases for such friendships, including, sport, music, fashion, and an interest in reading" (2008:14). I will discuss this further in the next section.

## **5.5 Children's Peer Interactions in Culturally Diverse Setting**

Life is a complex web of relations and interactions. People are involved in a complex network of relationships with those who relate to with varying levels for different things, the people who love and spent much of their time with, or the people who just see and know in their daily activities (Condeluci, 2009). In this section, I will discuss how Iranian migrant children contribute to the process of integration in Norwegian schools. I will draw attention to the role of the children in structuring their everyday life, their strategies for developing friendships and dealing with cultural and ethnic diversity.

### **5.5.1 Importance and Functions of Friendship**

Friends and friendships serve very important functions in the lives of the children. For example, friends facilitate complicated forms of play (Asher & Renshaw, 1981). Friends improve children's social skills through providing regular access to groups to play (Corsaro, 1981). Establishing friendships serve emotional functions by providing a sense of security and belonging through reducing stress, and therefore, building successful friendships in early childhood is important for children's quality of life (Asher and Renshaw 1981; Yu et al. 2011)

For migrant children, peer relations are very important aspect of their social inclusion (Travers et al. 2010). Having intimate relationships enable migrant children to cope better with their challenges and difficulties and help them in better adjustment to school and life in the new society. Mc Daid's (2009) study of Irish schools also highlighted the importance of friendship as a key factor in helping language minority students to feel included in schools. Children, who have not any friends at school, may not have a sense of inclusion or belonging to the school (cited in: Travers et al. 2010). To highlight the importance of the friend's role, Deegan also argue, "Friends continue to play a role in what are often our most memorable positive and negative social learning experiences in school" (Deegan, 1996, p. 5). Devine



(2009) also argues, friendships that children develop are significant ‘sources of social capital’ and enhance their feelings of inclusion and belonging.

There is no commonly agreed definition for social capital. However, most of the definitions emphasize on the social relations among people that would benefit everyone equally (Claridge, 2004). According to Dekker and Uslaner (2001), “Social capital is about the value of social networks, bonding similar people and bridging between diverse people, and norms of reciprocity”. In their definition, social capital concerns mutual relationships among people (cited in: Goudarzi, 2011, p. 94). In the context of this study, “social capital is a term that describes the notion of friendship and social connectedness” (Condeluci, 2009, p. 53).

Many studies have resulted in the positive effect of social capital on individual’s health and happiness. So that having more social capital, and more friendship relationships have coincided with less experience of sadness, sickness and social isolation (Condeluci, 2009). Indeed, it can be directly assumed that meeting friends makes people happy (Lelkes, 2010).

My empirical data also shows that children’s best memories at school are somehow related to their friends and friendship relationships. For most of the participants, friendship relationship is the first priority. Only a few children ranked their teachers as top priority. Participant observation also illustrated that children enjoy their time at school only when they are with their friends.

Here are some quotes of children’s best memories of school that somehow relate to their friendship relationships and highlight the importance of friends and friendships:

*My best memory was when I became intimate friend with my four other classmates. Then, we had much fun together... having more friends, makes me feel more comfortable and it is a thing that makes me happy. [Negin 14-year-old-girl, arrived around four years before the interview]*

In response to my question of ‘*what does she like best about her school*’, Nora Said:

*My friends and the time I spend with my friends... I like all my friends very much; I mean they are almost the most important things that I can have... What makes me happy is to be friend with all the students in the class. [Nora, 11 year-old girl, arrived one year before the interview]*

*My best memories? I can't remember too many, but I think that my best memories are connected to foreign students in Norwegian school. [Neda, 15 year-old girl, arrived 10 years ago]*

*For me the best thing about the school is to be with my friends ... if students in the receiving class (Mottak) behave like Norwegians (not friendly); I never want to go to school. [Mahan, 15 year-old girl, arrived 2 months before the interview]*

All those issues mentioned above illustrate the importance of the friends and friendships for the migrant children. Consequently, the following questions then arise: how do migrant children interact with their peer groups in a new environment, and which strategies do they use to develop friendship?

### **5.5.2 Befriending Strategies/ Migrant Cultural Bubble**

In addition to significance of family support during the transitional period, peers can also play an important role in the successful adaptation of children to a new community. Peer interactions serve as an adaptive tool, which help migrant children to adjust to the new society in the multiple ways (Edwards et al. 2006). Children can construct their peer groups and peer cultures through interaction with each other. Peer cultures according to Corsaro & Eder (1990) are “a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers” (cited in: Kyratzis, 2004 p.627). “Doing things together” and the “protection of interactive space” are the core values within the children’s peer cultures (Corsaro 1997 in: Kyratzis, 2004 p.627). When peers share an activity and link to each other, they try to keep it protected from the influence of others. Those who are not involved in, looking for a way to enter, through development of a set of “access strategies”. Finally, inclusion occurs when children develop stable and quality relationships with their peers (ibid).

Goldstein’s (2003) study of the migrant children in Canada resulted in a complex picture of migrant students’ befriending strategies. In Goldstein’s study, the migrant students were able to establish relation with the people who spoke their first language by which they could maximize their social capital. At the same time, they tried to build up friendship with the students speaking the host country’s language to maximize their academic and school achievement (cited in: Reynolds, 2008, p. 9). Nora’s befriending strategy somehow seems to be similar to the experiences of migrant students in Goldstein’s (2003) study:

*My Norwegian friends are very important for me because they can help me ...they can help me in my study, in everything... they teach me everything they know, everything that I do not know about here... I prefer befriend with both, (Iranians and Norwegians), because when you have only Norwegian friends, if you want to say something to them and you do not know how to say in Norwegian language, you have to decide either not to tell them or ask them what is this (in your language), and this is a bit bad. But, if you have an Iranian friend, you can get help from her, and you have someone to speak in your native language, you can share your feeling. [Nora, 11 year-old girl, arrived one year before the interview]*

Furthermore, Ackers and Stalford (2004) argue that many foreign children befriend other foreigners creating a kind of *migrant cultural bubble* (Reynolds, 2008; Ackers & Stalford, 2004: 232). It means that migrant children do not cross the boundary of migrant community to interact with native children, or to be friend with them. They isolate themselves or do not involve themselves in the new environment. They have parallel life to the host community. They are only successful in establishing friendship with other migrant children, and in some sense, they failed to integrate with the native children at all. Within this bubble, migrant children have a very positive view of mixing with children of various nationalities rather than integrating with the host nationals. They can live more comfortable by staying inside the bubble instead of moving outside the bubble ( Ackers & Stalford 2004; Chung, 2008).

Similarly, in the context of this study, most of my informants valued having friends who had a common migration experience. The reasons they presented somehow related to cultural differences as well as the stereotypical views of Iranians toward Norwegians, which have been previously noted. They argued that Norwegians are not very social like Iranians. They have cold and unfriendly behavior toward foreigners and even each other. Many of them claim that they do not have any problem in becoming friend with Norwegians, but because of cultural differences, they are not able or would not like to expand their relationships.

It seems that they could find more ‘identity matchers’ among migrant children. Indeed, children look for similarities and commonalities in their relationships. Having shared experience of being a foreigner seems to propel them toward each other. They also said that friendship with non-Norwegians is much easier and more joyful, and they feel more comfortable when they are with foreigners. Therefore, they prefer to be friend with Non-Norwegian children as their best friends since they are cooler than Norwegian children. Hence, having fun and enjoying each other’s company is very important in creating a

relationship and its continuity. As Ojanen et al said, involvement in a friendship for the intrinsic pleasure is likely to improve person's perceived merit and well-being as well as increases the likelihood of a true friendship and intimacy (Ojanen et al. 2010). Here are some excerpts from the interviews that indicate my informants' friendship preferences:

*In my opinion, it is relative. It is not like this that all Iranian children be friend only with Iranian children. But there is a point, that is, I am more comfortable with foreigners. They are more similar to me... friends from other countries are more similar to me. There's no such thing as Norwegian children take them away from us because of our foreign background; they are like this between themselves too... in my opinion, Norwegians behave unfriendly with one another. [Neda, 15 year-old girl, arrived 10 years ago]*

Negin, another informant, although, emphasized on her good relationships with Norwegian friends, mentioned friendship with non-Norwegians is easier since they share the same experience of being different.

*I like Iran's atmosphere more. There is a thing that in Iran, you can get familiar with others and make friends much easier...Norwegians are not very social. Of course some of them are (social). They become friend quickly, but I think foreigners are, like, emmm. I mean they (foreigners) understand each other's language more. They understand each other's feeling better. Even though my Norwegian friends here are very good, but they are a bit different. (Pause, thinking). May be I'm thinking like Iranian children inside Iran... my non-Norwegian friends understand me much better. [Negin 14-year-old-girl, arrived around four years before the interview]*

*Norwegians are very unsocial. They have a negative character. They are very moody. For example, they have good relationship with you today, very close to you, but tomorrow they behave in such a way that they don't seem to know you. They may not even say hello to you. This is very bad...I went to a Norwegian birthday party I didn't enjoy very much. I don't enjoy when I am with Norwegians. I'm more comfortable when I am with a Non-Norwegian, because they (Norwegians) are not like us (Iranians). They are not very intimate even with each other. [Nasim, 16-year-old-girl, arrived 2 years ago]*

Similarly, Peiman talked about an Iranian culture that Iranians are always pioneer in establishing a connection with the strangers.

*Norwegian friends are not like Iranians. They do not come to you and talk. There are some foreigners whom now I have good relationship with, some Afghans and a friend from Thailand. When we are at school, we have good relationships. When they meet me, they warmly invite me to join them and we have more fun. They are more social, but Norwegians are not like them. I have relationship with some Norwegians as well, but not very much. They are not like Iranians that come to you...for example they (Norwegian classmates) may invite me to join them. If I go it is ok for them, and if I do not go it is ok for them as well. I mean it does not matter for them. [Peiman a 17-year-old-boy, arrived when he was five]*

In the above instances, children notice the cultural differences between Norwegians and Iranians. They also point out the existence of asymmetrical relationship between minorities and majorities (Staerklé et al. 2005), and the creation of the sense of “them” and “us”, that has already been mentioned (Metropolis World Bulletin, 2008, p. 34).

Even for Norwegian-born children, being friend with Norwegian children was not a priority. They preferred to be friend with Iranian children if given the opportunity. For Sara and Shima, two eight-year-old girls who were born in Norway, Norwegian friends have the third priority after two Iranian friends:

*Rozita: if you have two Tivoli ticket, whom would you like to take with you?*

*Sara: I'll take Shima (Iranian family friend)*

*Rozita: now, if you have three tickets?*

*Sara: Nina (another Iranian family friend)*

*Rozita: if you have four tickets?*

*Sara: Eva (Norwegian classmate)*

On the whole, I would say that friendships among migrant students were much more common than between migrants and non-migrants.

### **5.5.3 The Development of Peer Interaction through Activities**

Several factors affect the probability that a person being accepted as a candidate for group inclusion. Language as we have seen is the key factor, which acts as a ‘social action’. Language or peer talk helps establish and maintain peer culture through four domains

including; elaboration of games and codes, elaboration of conflict talk, identity-construction, and resistance to adult culture (Kyratzis, 2004).

Relevant to this study, the games and codes that children develop, which is basis for inclusion, “provide linguistic resources for organizing participation”. Games and behavioral codes are “reutilization of inclusion” and can attract other peers and allow inclusion (Kyratzis, 2004, p. 628). Peer interaction can take place in the context of various activities that are mutually understandable, meaningful, and enjoyable. Material resources such as games and toys can act to support and extend the activities (Edwards et al. 2006).

Many studies highlighted the role of sport and sporting opportunities in children’s social inclusion (Waring & Mason, 2010). Indeed, games have the potential to bridge between cultures and nationalities as well as create positive social interaction among children. When children are involved in a shared experience, they can recognize their common features. This engagement can result in development of tolerance, understanding, and respects for others. Katherine Gannett finds out that sport can act as a common language that passes through the cultural and language boundaries. Sports can generate a sense of ‘togetherness’, while there is no need for verbal communication (Gannett, 2010). Deegan’s study of children’s friendships in a culturally diverse classroom illustrated “Sharing was an important dimension in togetherness” (Deegan, 1996, pp. 44-45). Generally, when verbal contact is not possible, children may seek a non-verbal medium to communicate. Games and plays act as a mediator of communication.

To my informants, playing a game was the first step towards building a relationship. Most of the informants acknowledged that they started building relationships with other children through playing. In addition, during the period of observation, I repeatedly observed that children used a ball, a spinning bar, wooden walking sticks, and even a paper toy as a medium to build up kind of relationship. Hence, play can have an important role in establishing friendly relations. To establish play, there are often negotiation and agreement. Lacking language skill, makes communication difficult, but it is possible. In the following instances, we will see how a jumping rope and a chair could play an intermediary role in children’s peer interaction.

*I do remember that the time when my grandmother had traveled to Norway and stayed with us for 3 months. I asked her that “what should I do that they (Norwegian classmates) play with me?” She said, “You could play with jumping rope”. I remember that when I took my*

*jumping rope for playing at school, just Adina (Ethiopian friend) and I played with it, there were not third person to jump over it (laughing with sadness). Then once a Norwegian girl came and jumped, we became very glad because we were playing really. I said this to my grandmother that they came and played with me. [Shabnam, 18 years-old girl, arrived 11 years ago]*

*Elham started school in Trondheim just last week. She did not understand Norwegian at all. She was accompanied by a teacher, Hana (an Arab girl) and two other newcomer boys were sitting in a room to be taught separately. After a while, Elham and Hana both sat on a chair, and were trying to spin the chair and laughing. They were playing with each other, without being able to talk. [Elham, 10-year-old girl, arrived 3 month before the interview/observation]*

However, a child can be successful in starting a friendship relation, but she/he may not be very successful in maintaining and continuing appropriate interactions with the peers. Given this, common interest for specific activities can be the basis for friendship formation and its continuity (Asher and McDonald, 2011). Common interest in a particular type of game may make children close together, and prepare a ground for further friendship. Maybe in the beginning children do not think about the shared interests and tastes, they just want to play with each other. After a while however, they may get tired of playing and no longer be able to continue the relationships if the type of games is not their favorite. Indeed, they need more reasons to continue their relationships, like common language, interests, feeling, and culture.

In addition to the parameter of ‘togetherness’, which I discussed earlier, another form of friendship negotiation can take place within the parameter of ‘niceness’ (Deegan, 1996). The parameter of niceness deals with the concepts of sharing and respect among children. Data illustrated that some children tried to make friends through helping and treating others with niceness. For example, Dorsa, always tried to find a way to do something nice for others. She attempted to help others in order to draw their attention.

*It was Friday date 04.11.2011. Dorsa and I were sitting on a bench in the schoolyard. Suddenly she saw something. She saw a girl fell down on the ground. (She had no previous familiarity with the girl). She went to her, tried to help her to stand up. Dorsa hugged and cuddled her. Seemed to me that the girl did not care about what Dorsa was doing for her. Then Dorsa went to a school staff that was standing almost close to them. She showed the girl*

*and asked for help. I did not hear what she said but the school staff came toward the girl. Then, Dorsa left them alone.*

Another instance: date 25.10.2011 inside Dorsa's classroom.

*Dorsa sharpened her pencil several times. The trashcan was in front of the class, and she went to the front of the class to empty the pencil filings. She asked me whether I could say to Maria (her classmate) that if she needed her sharpener, she did not have to get permission, she could just use it. I told this to Leila who seemed a little surprised, but said ok.*

The other day I talked to Maria about her relationships with Dorsa:

*Rozita: Dorsa told me that you and Dorsa are friends, aren't you?*

*Maria: emmm, (thinking) she (Dorsa) helps me a lot; she helps me in putting on my boots, putting my jacket, holding my backpack.*

She sharpened her pencil several times without using it. Then she walked in front of the class, maybe in front of Maria to attract her attention; she offered her sharpener without being requested. I am not sure that Dora's actions had anything to do with my presence in the class/school or not. Perhaps she was trying different ways to include herself in the mainstream school, to integrate herself into new environment.

In short, students are able to establish friendship based on "non-divisive shared identities" such as an interest in an activity or sport like football (Reynolds, 2008, p. 19). However, these activities are influenced by gender orientation, which I will address further in the next part.

#### **5.5.4 Gender Matters- Game, Play, Football**

There have been many arguments on gender and social relations of children, about whether girls and boys have different peer cultures (Corsaro, 2005). Gender refers to "the meaning that people give to the biological reality that there are two sexes. It is a human invention that organizes our behavior and thought, not as a set of static structures or roles but as an ongoing process". People do "gender work"; through practices and discourses, they negotiate relationships and conflicting interests" (Mahler & Pessar, 2006, p. 29). Barrie Thorne argues, "Gender is socially constructed" (Thorne, 1993, p. 3), so the topic of children and gender is far more complex than just an expression of natural or inherent biological differences. Thorne argues that children should not be seen as passive or without agency, rather they should be considered as social actors in a wide range of institutions. They should not just be viewed as



the next generation of adults. They influence adults and also being influenced by adults. Therefore, instead of focusing on individuals and paying attention to biological differences between boys and girls, we should shift our attention to their social relations, and how they actively create and challenge gender structures and meanings (ibid).

Thorne argues that a “familiar story line runs through the literature on children and gender. The story opens by emphasizing patterns of mutual avoidance between boys and girls and then asserts that this daily separation results in, and is perpetuated by, deep and dichotomous gender differences” (Thorne 1993, p. 89; Corsaro, 2005:196). Girls and boys may have very different ways of bonding. They often show different forms of antagonism and conflict. They operate with different sets of values and goals. They totally do separate in their daily interactions, in some ways, they live and grow up in different worlds, in a gender-separated world of childhood (Thorne, 1993). These differences can be seen as both influencing and being influenced by the structure and nature of activities that take place in gender-separated groups. For example, several studies documented that boys tend to interact in larger and hierarchical groups more often organize their activities and engage in team sports (Corsaro, 2005; Thorne, 1993), engage in more aggressive, tough, and competitive games (Corsaro, 2005). This is while, girls interact in smaller and more private and cooperative groups; they more emphasize on friendship relationships, intimacy, care, and connection; they acknowledge solidarity and commonality (Thorne, 1993). This nature of differences between boys and girls’ activities can lead to the formation of different experiences among migrant children (Corsaro, 2005).

There is some evidence from the studies that show proficiency in sports, particularly football, facilitate the inclusion of ethnic minority boys in their peer groups (Devine and Kelly, 2006 in: Travers et al. 2010). Interest in football or other shared activities helps identity matching at school, and can improve children’s peer relations (Reynolds, 2008). Sport breaks the traditional barriers and function as a tool for communication and understanding among people from different backgrounds. The rules of the game go beyond difference and disparities and help people redefine their success and efficiency. Through sports, participants identify new role models in community (Rakoko, 2011). Elliot Medrich and his colleagues interview 764 children from various racial-ethnic background and found “for all racial-ethnic groups and for both genders, being involved in team sports correlated with reporting more friends” (cited in: Thorne, 1993, p. 104). This is well expressed in the words of Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations, “sport is a universal language that can bring people

together, no matter what their origin, background, religious, beliefs or economic status” (United States Sports Academy, 2002-2010).

In relation to this study, the empirical data revealed that for the boys who participated, football had a key role. In the following instance, Poya, a 9-year-old boy spoke about his process of friendship, which was built through his interest in football:

*Rozita: who is your best friend?*

*Poya: Erik (a Norwegian boy)*

*Rozita: how did you become friend with Erik?*

*Poya: first I got familiar with Tomas because he was the one that I talked to first. Then the next day we (Poya and Tomas) went to play football. Then Erik came. The next day I went to play football but Tomas didn't come, but Erik was there. Since then, it was only Erik and I who went there to play football regularly. Then we became close friends.*

Another informant, Peiman a 17-year-old boy said:

*When they (Norwegian classmates) wanted to play football, they asked me to be in their team. During playtimes generally, I played football, I remember playing football. I played football with those who were not my friends. They were just my classmates, but we played with each other.*

A review of empirical data revealed that boys who participated in this study could communicate more easily with their classmates, and therefore they faced fewer challenges regarding friendship formation and adjustment into new environment. No matter whether they knew Norwegian or not, since they did not have to speak too much during the game, if they just knew the language of games or plays, they could easily form a friendship relation. Engagement in sport like football or other games like computer games, Beyblade, etc, (which noted by other boy participant named Arya a 10-year-old boy) provided opportunities for them to become involved and engaged in the new environment.

Concerning my participants, similar to what Thorne (1993) found, characteristics of boys and girls' different cultures are as problematic for girls as it is for boys, if culture defines as the distinguishing patterns of behavior and interaction. Girls' social networks are quite complex. Girls seem to be less interested in team sports like football. They often participate in small

friendship groups including two or more people at one time who are more intimate. They engage in turn-taking, cooperative types of games like jump rope or playing on the bar. Consequently, they may face more challenges in relation to interaction with other classmates and friendship formation. However, that is not always the case. Sometimes girls like boys are interested in football or other team sports. We can see in the example below:

*I remember in Norwegian primary school, my girl classmates didn't let me play in their group, but I remember playing football, I played football just with boys. Boys were much better, they mocked me too, but when we were playing football, they didn't care anymore that I am a foreigner. The most important thing for them was the game. Their goal was something else, just playing... I was with boys more than girls. I played football and basketball with them. I was always pretty good at sports. [Shabnam, 18 years-old girl, arrived 11 years ago]*

Children may realize that by getting themselves involved in such games, they can take a step toward inclusion, and get rid of isolation at school. In this way, they exercise their agency and trying to cope with existing challenges.

The next chapter presents a brief recapitulation of the whole study and a few concluding considerations.



## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Recapitulation and Conclusion**

The main purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of Iranian migrant children at schools in Trondheim/ Norway. Specifically, the study answered questions on the school challenges and difficulties faced by the participants during their living in Norway, the factors that influenced the development of such challenges, and the ways that the children negotiated their everyday lives in school.

Reviewing the objectives and questions raised in the first chapter shows that the study has been successful in achieving the desired goals. However, it should be noted that although, at first, the main focus of this study was supposed to be on the friendship challenges of my informants, my empirical findings went beyond this issue. Children's responses have covered a wider issue than just friendship challenges, the so-called exclusion experiences in school setting.

The main theoretical perspectives based on which this study was conducted were the social studies of children and childhood, and structuration theory. Furthermore, this study tried to explore the experiences of the migrant children from the perspective of inclusion/ exclusion, in other words, what the migrant students' perception of inclusion is.

Within the social studies of children and childhood, this study recognized children as qualified research participants with particular social skills that deserve to be studied in their own right, independent from adults' concerns and perspectives (James and Prout, 1990). Hence, it has been tried to give children a voice to be heard, because they have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them (UNCRC).

In line with what the social studies of childhood as well as structuration approach seeks to emphasize, the study made an attempt to understand children as active participants in their experiences of migration. It recognized them as social actors who exercise their agency in their adaptation to new circumstances. There is a variety of ways in which my informants exercised their agency to cope with and overcome their challenges in school and new environment. They negotiated with their parents about cultural differences among themselves and Norwegian children. They looked to the future and tried to make progress toward a better future. In addition, they resisted against isolation and employed different befriending strategies to include themselves into mainstream school. Some of their befriending strategies

are as follows: offering niceness to get attentions of their peers, using plays and games as a mediator of communication, attempting for identity matching and creating a migrant cultural bubble through choosing non-Norwegian friends. All these efforts indicate that my informants are not passive recipients of the structural influences (James and Prout, 1990). They exercise their agency under existing social structures, instead. In other words, they are active agents of their own lives, they create and recreate social structures and actively shape the world they live.

On the other hand, the study looked at migrant children as a social group with specific needs and rights who are restricted by structures and practices of adults and wider society (Morrow, 2008 ). Children live their everyday lives within the social structures and they are influenced by the attitudes and structural conditions in their environment. Social structures indeed, shape children's practices (Giddens, 1984). Being a migrant child is therefore a structural condition that can have big impacts on their lives. This can be related to the socio-economic structures of migrant families as well as political structures of host community including policies relating to migration, children's rights, education, inclusion, and integration of immigrants.

As Giddens (1984) argues, social structures have both enabling and constraining effects on children's lives. In relation to this study, there are some examples that illustrate the enabling effects of social structures. For example, adherence to international treaties like UNCRC, developing and implementing an inclusion policy, creating inclusive classrooms and schools for children of migrants and also providing language training and information programs for adult immigrants enable and facilitate immigrants' better integration into Norwegian society. On the other hand, relatively homogeneous structure of Norwegian society and negative stereotypical view of native Norwegians towards migrants, can be regarded as constraining effects of social structure on my informants' experiences of school in Norway.

In general, when my informants identified the challenges and difficulties that they encountered in Norwegian society, and when they spoke of underlying reason for such challenges, indeed, they were mainly highlighting the effects of structural conditions on children's experiences of new environment. Moreover, when they negotiated their everyday lives in school and trying to develop coping strategies, they were presenting themselves as "agents who direct their own lives through actions or agency" (Giddens, 1984, p.162).

In fact, the structure-agency debate has been an important way of considering and analyzing the issue of this study. Drawing on Lee's (2001) concept of independency-dependency, I

emphasized here that Children should not only be seen as incomplete and dependent beings who are influenced and determined by the structures around them. They should not only be viewed as complete and independent beings that are able to act or make decisions independently, as well. In fact, as Lee (1998: 474) argues, they both “can be moved in and out of competence, in and out of maturity, and in and out of social inclusion”. Therefore, they should be considered as those who have dependencies to some extent.

## **6.2 The Main Findings of the Study**

Concerning the difficulties and the challenges that the children faced in terms of integrating into new environment, this study found some similarities. In other words, the participants under study encountered the same difficulties and challenges more or less. This is regardless of whether or not they were born in Norway and regardless of the reasons for the migration of their families. Having foreign backgrounds and being different created some problems that almost all my informants had to fight against.

The results of this study indicate that the feeling of exclusion has been the most common and difficult challenge faced by the participants in schools. Such a feeling has been expressed in a broad variety of ways, including feeling of isolation and frustration on arrival, experiences of bullying or peer rejection, experiences with being stereotyped and discriminated against, and the last but not the least, separation from peers due to taking mother tongue classes. In general, anything that separates children from the rest of their peers could cause a feeling of exclusion.

Although my informants confronted many challenges and difficulties in schools in Norway, this does not necessarily mean that they were not satisfied with their current situation. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction is relative, and considering this, my informants were satisfied with some aspects of their life as a migrant child and were unsatisfied or complained about other aspects. In fact, they expressed their satisfaction in comparison with their previous experiences. Strict school system, existence of discrimination, and the lack of freedom and facilities in their previous schools were some reasons for being satisfied with their current situation. On the other hand, unfamiliarity with language and behavioral codes of Norwegian children as well as the loss of friendship and kinship ties in the country of origin caused them to be dissatisfied with their current situation in the new environment.

Another important finding is that we cannot just focus on the negative practices in the peer groups as stemming from the migrant problem. Exclusion practices such as bullying or

rejection also happen towards so-called ethnic Norwegian as well. Therefore, to evaluate how to be a migrant child is, it is important to have a varied and not consistent image of it. However, even if the picture is varied, some critical structural issues emerged that seemed to be the most crucial factor in order to facilitate a good or optimal integration.

Study findings highlighted that there are a number of factors behind inclusion/ exclusion of the migrant students in schools. One of the crucial factors was language so that proficiency in the host country's language facilitated children's inclusion in Norwegian schools and unfamiliarity with the language could bring unique challenges for them, challenges that could be reflected in children's peer relationships. However, impact of language was mainly limited to the first months after their arrival.

The next factor- parents, both migrant parents and parents of Norwegian children- affected the informants' adaptability in the Norwegian environment as well as their experiences of exclusion. With regard to the immigrant parents, their socio-economic status as well as their active participation in Norwegian society has had significant impacts on children's inclusion and adaptation in Norwegian schools. In this regard, implementing policies on integration of adult immigrants, as 'active adult citizen', which include language courses and classes on Norwegian society have been very effective (Archambault, 2011). On the other hand, results showed that Norwegians parents have had the stereotypical view of the immigrants. This view affected their children's behavior and attitudes toward foreign peers and consequently led to exclusion of the informants under study.

Teachers, schools, and their inclusion policies form the third key contributing factor that influenced the informants' exclusion/ inclusion experiences of school. Findings indicated most teachers displayed positive attitudes towards immigrant children, and acted in a manner that facilitated their participation and inclusion in mainstream school. However, few of them hold negative attitudes and either purposely or unintentionally behaved in such a racist or discriminatory manner that led to exclusion of my informants.

Further, an effort has been made to compare children's experiences in different types of schools in Trondheim, which include receiving schools, English international school and Norwegian regular schools. In terms of inclusion, the comparison showed that my informants had positive perceptions and expressed more satisfaction with their experience of receiving schools and English international schools than Norwegian regular schools. In other words, the schools that their population consists of a large number of migrant children were more



successful in absorption and inclusion of their pupils. This is because such schools had been more successful in implementation of inclusion policies and in providing cheerful, welcoming, and multicultural environment for their students. In addition, students in such schools had more opportunities for identity matching because there were lots of identities on offer, so they had the privilege to build up friendship with student from a diverse range of backgrounds.

The findings of this study also confirm that friends and friendships serve very important functions in the lives of my informants. My informants' best memories at school were somehow related to friends and their friendship relationships. Having intimate relationships enable them to cope better with their challenges and difficulties and help them in better adjustment to school and life in the new society.

The informants' shared experiences of being foreigners propelled them toward other children with a similar experience, to build up friendships with them. This was because they felt more comfortable, and they were better able to understand and enjoy each other's company. In this way, similar to Ackers and Stalford's (2004) argument, some of them created a sort of migrant cultural bubble. In this bubble, they were only successful in establishing friendship with other migrant children, and in some sense, they failed to integrate with the native children. On the other hand, similar to Goldstein's (2003) study, some of them formed friendship with Norwegian peers to maximize their academic and school achievement.

Several factors influenced the development of friendly relations among migrant children. Some of the informants negotiated their friendship through parameter of 'niceness' (Deegan, 1996). They tried to make friends through helping and treating others with niceness, through being over friendly to other classmates. Furthermore, finding showed that plays and games had an important role in establishing friendly relations among foreign students and acted as the communication mediator for my informants.

As Thorne (1993) argued girls and boys have very different ways of bonding. They operate with different sets of values and goals and do totally separate in their daily interactions. Boys tend more often to interact in larger and hierarchical groups and prefer to engage in team sports like football. Regarding this, sports, especially football for the boy participants, acted as a common language that passes through the cultural and language boundaries and generated a sense of 'togetherness'. In this way, games and sports could attract other peers and facilitated the inclusion of them in their peer groups. Unlike boys, who tend to engage more in team

sports, my girl participants tend more often to participate in small friendship groups including two or more pairs at one time that are more intimate. Consequently, they faced more challenges in relation to interaction with other classmates and friendship formation.

### **6.3 Some Suggestion and Recommendation**

- Integration is a mutual process, through which both migrants and host societies are influenced. Hence, it is not fair that the burden of all the responsibilities fell on just immigrants' shoulders. The host societies should also make efforts to adapt their behaviors and expectations toward newcomers (NYU, 2012). For a successful integration, both migrants and host societies should respect each other's social and cultural similarities and differences (IOM, 2008). This is not possible without raising public awareness on the issue. In this regard, media can play a key role in fostering positive views of people of all background and also can combat the negative stereotypical views. This will ultimately lead to better integration of immigrants into the host society.
- Since friends and peers play a significant role in the life and inclusion of the migrant children, providing more opportunities for them to make friends with other children can facilitate their integration process. Immigrant children on their arrival have the inevitable language difficulties, therefore providing non-verbal activities appear useful to engage them in group-activities and help them to form friendships. Use of non-verbal activities will give them an opportunity to show their abilities and it would be very helpful to better inclusion of migrant children.
- Sports have been shown to have important roles in forming friendships and inclusion of a migrant child. Hence, availability of sport facilities and services, for both boys and girls, can make a positive contribution to inclusion of migrant children.
- The findings indicated that Norwegian regular schools have been less successful in creating welcoming and multicultural environment. Such schools should therefore actively work to create an environment where the diverse needs and rights of all students can be taken into account. To achieve this goal, teachers and other staff in schools should be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to fully include the students from diverse backgrounds.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abebe, T., 2008. *Ethiopian Childhoods. A Case Study of the Lives of Orphans and Working Children*. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
- Abrahamian, E., 2008. *A History of Modern Iran*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ackers. Louise & Stalford. Helen, 2004. *A Community for Children?: Children, Citizenship, and Internal Migration in the EU*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Adler. Patricia & Adler. Peter, 1998. *Peer Power*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press.
- Afary, J., 1996. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*. New York, Chichester: Columbia University Press.
- Aghdashlo, T., 2012. *A Population on the Move and a Weary Host*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.taraaghdashloo.com/2012/09/a-population-on-the-move-and-a-weary-host/>  
[Funnet 29 November 2012].
- Alanen, L., 2001. Exploration in generational analysis. I: *Conceptualizing Child-adult Relations*. London: Routledge falmer, pp. 11-22.
- Alanen, L., 2004. *Theorizing children's welfare*. Leeds: The Center for Research on Family, Kinship & Childhood University of Leeds (UK).
- Alderson, P., & Morrow, V., 2004. *Ethics, social research and consulting with children and young people*. Barking: Barnardos.
- Alyasan, S. F., 2000. *Adaptation religion to modern times: A study of religion and identity among Iranian immigrants in Norway*. Bergen: IMER Norway / Bergen Publications.
- Anarfi. J. K & Tagoe. C. A. & Kwankye. S. O, 2009. Independent North-South Child Migration in Ghana: The Decision Making Process. *Working Paper T-29*, February, pp. 1-38.
- Anderson. Alexis & Barenberg. Lynn & Weng. Carwina, April 5, 2012. Challenges of "Sameness": Pitfalls and Benefits to Assumed Connections in Lawyering. *Clinical Law Review*, pp. 338-399.
- Anders, S., 2006. *Hva er Mottaksskolen?*. [Internett]  
Available at:  
<http://www.minskole.no/minskole/mottaksskolen/pilot.nsf/vArt?Opennavigator&u=Hva%20er%20Mottaksskolen>  
[Funnet 05 May 2012].
- Ansell, N., 2005. *Children, Youth and Development*. New York: Routledge Publication.
- Archambault, J., 2010. The Status Shift of Refugee Children in Settlement: An Analysis of the Norwegian Context. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, Volum 18, pp. 437-456.
- Archambault, J., 2011. *Refugee children, citizenship and "the best interests" of the child. Experiencing settlement as new citizens in Norway*. Trondheim: Doctoral theses at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Asher. S R & McDonald. K L, 2011. Social Relations in Multiple Learning Environments. I: *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, pp. 231-236.

Asher. Steven R. & Renshaw. Peter D, 1981. Children without friends: social knowledge and social-skill training. I: S. R. A. & J. M. Gottman, red. *The Development of Children's Friendships*. Cambridge, New York, Melborn: Cambridge university Press, pp. 273-296.

Asher, S. R., 1990. Recent advances in the study of peer rejection . I: *Peer Rejection in Childhood*. Cambridge/ New York: Cambridge university Press, pp. 3-14.

Ashraf, A., 1997. *Education vii, General Survey of Modern Education*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/education-vii-general-survey-of-modern-education>

[Funnet 22 January 2012].

Auhagen, A. E., 1996. Private nonkin relationships. I: *The diversity of human relationships*. England: Cambridge University Press, pp. 227-233.

Azimi, B., 2007. *Roundtable of cultural challenges of Iranian immigrants in Australia*.

[Internett]

Available at:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/interactivity/debate/story/2007/05/070508\\_oh\\_australia\\_roundtable.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/interactivity/debate/story/2007/05/070508_oh_australia_roundtable.shtml)

[Funnet 5 February 2012].

Ball, J., 2011. *Enhancing Learning of Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds*:. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Barter, S., 2002. *Europe gripped by migrant myths*. [Internett]

Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2052298.stm>

[Funnet 5 January 2011].

Bergen, D., 1993. Facilitating Friendship Development in Inclusion Classrooms. *Childhood Education*, Volum Vol. 69, pp. 234-236.

Blanco Rosa & Takemoto Yuki, 2006. Inclusion in Schools in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Case of the Children of Haitian Descent in the Dominican Republic. I: *Global Migration and Education: Schools, Children and Families*. London and New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 53-67.

Chambers. Natalie A & Ganesan. Soma, 2005. Refugees in Canada. I: *Cross- Cultural Caring, A Handbook For Health Professionals Second Edition*. Vancouver: UBC Press The University of British Columbia, pp. 289-323.

Christopoulou. Nadina & Rydin. Ingegerd, 2004. *Children's Social Relations in Peer Groups : Inclusion, exclusion and friendship*. [Internett]

Available at: <http://swepub.kb.se/bib/swepub:oai:DiVA.org:hh-635?tab2=abs&language=en>

[Funnet 27 march 2011].

Chung, K., 2008. *Korean English Fever in the U.S.: Temporary Migrant Parents' Evolving beliefs about normal parenting practices and children's natural language learning*. Urbana-Illionis: ProQuest LLC.

- Claridge, T., 2004. *Social Capital and Natural Resource Management, Unpublished Thesis*. Brisbane: University of Queensland.
- Clark. Catherine & Dyson. Alan & Alan Millward & Sue Robson, 1999. Theories of Inclusion, Theories of Schools: deconstructing and reconstructing the 'inclusive school'. *British Educational Research Journal*, pp. 157-177.
- Condeluci, A., 2009. *The Critical Nature of Social Capital*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, SHOUT PRESS, pp. 53-57.
- Connolly. Mark, & Ennew. Judith, 1996. Introduction: Children out of place. *Childhood: a global journal of child research*, Volum 3, pp. 131-145.
- Corsaro. William A & Eder. Donna, 1990. Children's Peer Cultures. *Annual Review of Sociology*, pp. 197-220.
- Corsaro, W. A., 1985. *Friendship and Peer Culture in the Early Years*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.
- Corsaro, W. A., 2000. Early childhood education, children's peer cultures, and the future of childhood. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, pp. 89-102.
- Corsaro, W. A., 2005. *The Sociology of Childhood*. London: Pine Forge Press.
- Corsaro, W. A., 2009. Peer Culture. I: *The palgrave handbook of childhood studies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 301-215.
- Dar Anandin , Cox Patrick, 2011. Re-Exploring Childhood Studies. *Childhoods Today Volume 5 (2)*, pp. 1-8.
- Davies, C. A., 2008. *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. 2nd red. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Deegan, J. G., 1996. *Children's friendships in culturally diverse classrooms*. London, Washington: Falmer Press.
- Deegan, J. G., 1996. *Children's friendships in culturally diverse classrooms*. London, Washington: Falmer Press.
- Devine. Dympna & Kelly. Mary , 2006. I Just Don't Want to Get Picked on by Anybody': Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion in a Newly Multi-Ethnic Irish Primary School. *Children & Society*, pp. 128-139.
- Devine, D., 2009. Mobilising capitals? Migrant children's negotiation of their everyday lives in school. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, pp. 521-535.
- Edwards. Carolyn P & de Guzman. Maria Rosario & Brown. Jill & Kumru. Asiye, 2006. Children's Social Behaviors and Peer Interactions in Diverse Cultures. *Faculty Publications, Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies*, pp. 23-51.
- Elias. Maurice J & Zinsd. Joseph E, 2003. Bullying, Other Forms of Peer Harassment, and Victimization in the Schools. *Applied School Psychology*, pp. 1-5.

- Elliott, J., 2005. Listening to people's stories: the use of narrative in qualitative interviews. I: J. Elliott, red. *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 17-35.
- Ennew Judith. et al, 2009. *The right to be properly researched, Black on White Publications. Manuals 1-10*. s.l.:Knowing Children.
- Esfandiari, G., 2004. *Iran: Coping With The World's Highest Rate Of Brain Drain*. [Internet] Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1051803.html> [Funnet 23 January 2012].
- Ferguson, B., 2011. *The Bhutanese Refugee ii Resettlement Journey – Part 3: Settlement, An environment that encourages you to work hard, erasing the present tag of refugee*, Wellington, New Zealand: Department of Labour.
- Ferrer. Millie & Fugate. Anne M. , 2007. Working with School-Age Children: Promoting Friendship. *Family Youth and Community Sciences*.
- File, N., 1993. The Teacher as a Guide of Children's Competence with Peers. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, pp. 351-360.
- Fine. Gary A & Sandstorm. Kent L, 1988. *Knowing Children: Participant Observation with Minors (Qualitative Research Methods No. 15)*. California: Sage Publications.
- Flaten, J., 2012. *Dealing With Social Rejection*. [Internet] Available at: <http://www.life123.com/parenting/young-children/popularity/social-rejection.shtml> [Funnet 21 May 2012].
- Flick, U., 2007. *Managing Quality in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Foot. Hugh C. & Chapman. Antony J & Smith. jean. R., 1995. *Friendship and Social Relations in Children*. New brunswick: Wiley & sons Ltd.
- Gannett, K. R., 2010. *Bridging National and Cultural Differences through Sport: The Case of the 2010 Football for Hope Festival*. [Internet] Available at: <http://dev11980.wordpress.com/> [Funnet 6 June 2012].
- Gaskins, S., 2006. The Cultural Organization of Yucatec Mayan Children's Social Interactions. I: *Peer Relationships in Cultural Context*. New York: Cambridge University , pp. 283-309.
- Giddens, A., 1984. *The Constitution Of Society: Outline of the Theory of structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goudarzi, M., 2011. Imrovemnet of social capital through the internet in developing countries: Case study of Iran. *International Journal of Cyber Society and Education*, pp. 89-108.
- Gudmundsdottir, S., 1996. *The Teller, the Tale, and the One Being Told: The Narrative Nature of the Research interview*. s.l.:Curriculum Inquiry 26.

- Hakimzadeh, S., 2006. *Iran: A Vast Diaspora Abroad and Millions of Refugees at Home*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=424>  
[Funnet 17 01 2012].
- Hammersley. Martyn & Atkinson. Paul , 2007. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. 3rd red. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hamseda, N. A., 2009. *Countries absorbing the Iranian elite*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.hamseda.ir/fa/news/3084>  
[Funnet 7 February 2012].
- Hauge, A. L., 2007. Identity and place: a critical comparison of three identity theories. *Architectural Science Review (ASR)*, 1 March.pp. 1-15.
- Heckmann, F., 2008. *EDUCATION AND MIGRATION, strategies for integrating migrant children in European schools and societies*, Brussels: European Commission Directorate-General for Education & Culture.
- Henriksen. Kristin & Østby. Lars & Ellingsen. Dag (eds.), 2011. *Immigration and immigrants 2010*. [Internett]  
Available at: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/sa\\_innvand\\_en/sa122/sa122\\_en.pdf](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/sa_innvand_en/sa122/sa122_en.pdf)  
[Funnet 24 Janury 2012].
- IMDi, T. N. D. o. I. a. D., 2011. *Fact booklet about immigrants and integration*. Oslo: The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity.
- Investopedia, u.d. *Economic Refugee*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/economicrefugee.asp#axzz1lcGFARxS>  
[Funnet 6 February 2012].
- IOM, 2008. *MIGRANTS AND THE HOST SOCIETY: PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- IOM, 2010. *Facts & Figures*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/about-migration/facts-and-figures/lang/en>  
[Funnet 30 January 2012].
- IOM, 2011. *Labour Migration*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/about-migration/developing-migration-policy/migration-labour/labour>  
[Funnet 22 January 2011].
- Iranian Refugees' Alliance, 2011. *Statistical Data On Iranian Refugees 1 and asylum seekers2*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.irainc.org/iranref/statistics.php>  
[Funnet 24 Janury 2012].
- Jalali, B., 2005. Iranian families. I: & N. Monica . McGoldrick & Joe. Giordano, red. *Ethnicity and family therapy*. New York: Guilford Press, p. 451–467.
- James, Allison and James Adrian, 2004. The Universalisation of Law. I: *Constructing Childhood. Theory, Policy and Social Practice*.. London: Palgrave/ Macmillan, pp. 78-107.

- James. Allison & Jenks. Chris & Prout. Alan, 1998. *Imagining Childhood. I: Theorizing Childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 3-34.
- James. Allison & Prout. Alan, 1990. A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems. I: *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. London, Philadelphia: Falmer press, pp. 7-31.
- James. Allison & Prout. Alan, 1997. A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems. I: *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. London: Falmer Press, pp. 7-33.
- Jenks, C., 1996. Constituting childhood. I: *Childhood*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-31.
- Jovchelovitch, Sandra & Bauer, Martin W., 2000. Narrative interviewing. I: G. G. Martin W Bauer, red. *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound : a practical handbook*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 57-74.
- Kamalkhani, Z., 1988. *Iranian Immigrants and Refugees in Norway*. Bergen: Department Of Social Anthropology University Of Bergen.
- Kearney, A., 2011. Exclusion from and Within School. *Studies in Inclusive Education*, pp. 27-77.
- Kehily, M. J., 2004. *Understanding childhood: an introduction to some key themes and issues*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Khosroshahi, M. S., 2007. *Impact of immigration on the education of children*. [Internet] Available at: <http://hamshahrionline.ir/page-about.aspx> [Funnet 22 January 2012].
- Kimberley. Jo & Claydon. Anne, 2012. *A global model of human migration*. London: CASA, University College.
- Kitchin. Rob & Tate. Nicholas J, 2000. *Conducting research in human geography. Theory, methodology and practice..* Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Kjørholt, A. T., 2004. *Childhood as a Social and Symbolic Space: Discourses on Children as Social Participants in Society*. Trondheim: Department of Education / Norwegian Centre for Child Research.
- Klasen, S., 1998. *Social exclusion and children in OECD countries: some conceptual issues*. Munich: Department of Economics University of Munich.
- Klasen, S., 2001. Social exclusion, children and education: conceptual and measurement issues. *European Societies*, pp. 413-445.
- Komarov, S., 2004. *Immigrant Children Suffer As Much As Adults*, s.l.: innovation report, alphagalileo.
- Kvale. Steinar & Brinkmann. Svend , 2009. *Interviews, Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: SAGE.
- Kvale, S., 1996. *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: SAGE.



- Kyratzis, A., 2004. Talk and interaction among children and the co-construction of peer groups and peer culture. *The Annual Review of Anthropology*, p. 625–49.
- Lazzerini, R., 2005. *Where Did The Swedes Go? The Causes of Swedish Immigration and Settlement Patterns in America*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.kindredtrails.com/Where-Did-The-Swedes-Go.html>  
[Funnet 5 February 2012].
- Leech, B. L., 2002. Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews. *Political Science and Politics*, Volum 35, N.4, pp. 665-668.
- Lee, E. S., 1966. A Theory of Migration. *JSTOR*, Volum Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 47-57.
- Lee, N., 1998. Towards an immature sociology. *The Editorial! Board of The Sociological Review* , pp. 458-82.
- Lee, N., 2001. *Childhood and society : growing up in an age of uncertainty*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Lelkes, O., 2010. *Social participation and social isolation*. Vienna, Austria: European Union.
- Løkken, G., 2000 a. Tracing the Social Style of Toddler Peers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, pp. 163-176.
- Løkken, G., 2000b. The playful quality of the toddling “style”. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, p. 531–542.
- Mahler, Sarah J & Pessar, Patricia R, 2006. Gender Matters: Ethnographers Bring Gender from the Periphery toward the Core of Migration Studies. *International Migration Review (IMR)*, Volum 40, pp. 27-63.
- Mc Cracken, G., 1988. *The Long Interview*. California, London, New Delhi: SAGE.
- McAnulla, S., 2005. *The Utility of Structure, Agency and Discourse as Analytical Concepts*. s.l.:University of Birmingham.
- McCarthy, K., 1998. *Adaptation of Immigrant Children to the United States: A Review of the Literature*. Princeton(New Jersey): The New Jersey Immigrant Youth Project.
- Metropolis World Bulletin, 2008. *The Shared Societies Project: Building a World Safe for Difference*. Canada: Metropolis World Bulletin.
- Micklewright, J., 2002. *Social Exclusion and Children: A European View for a US Debate*, Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre No. 90.
- Mohammadi Mohammad Reza, Taylor Eric, Fombonne Eric, 2006. Prevalence of Psychological Problems Amongst Iranian Immigrant Children and Adolescents In UK. *Iran J Psychiatry*, pp. 12-18.
- Moran-Ellis, J., 2010. Reflections on the Sociology of Childhood in the UK. *International Sociological Association*, p. 186–205.
- Morrow, Virginia & Richards, Martin, 1996. The Ethics of Social Research with Children: An Overview. *CHILDREN & SOCIETY*, pp. 90-95.

Morrow, V., 2008 . Ethical dilemmas in research with children and young people about their social environments. *Children's Geographies*, pp. 49-61.

New in Norway, 2012. *The school system*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.nyinorge.no/en/New-in-Norway/Children--Schools/The-school-system/>  
[Funnet 05 May 2012].

Nilsen, R. D., 2005. Searching for analytical concepts in the research process: Learning from children. *The International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, pp. 117-135.

Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2003-2004. *Language Education Policy Profile*. Strasbourg: Utdannings-og forskningsdepartementet.

Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research , 2012. *Education Policy*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.norway.org/aboutnorway/society/welfare/mariannetest/>  
[Funnet 05 May 2012].

NYU, S., 2009. *Orientation to a New Society*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.academicwebpages.com/preview/pathways/newsociety/index.html>  
[Funnet 07 May 2012].

NYU, S., 2012. *Pathways to Immigrant Opportunities*. [Internett]  
Available at: [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/immigration/pathways/host\\_society](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/immigration/pathways/host_society)  
[Funnet 11 May 2012].

Ní Laoire Caitríona & Carpena-Méndez Fina & Naomi Tyrrel & White Allen, 2011. *Childhood and Migration in Europe. Portraits of Mobility, Identity and Belonging in Contemporary Ireland*. Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Ojanen, Tiina & J.Sijtsema, Jelle & Hawley, Patricia H & Little, Todd D, 2010. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in early adolescents' friendship development: Friendship selection, influence, and prospective friendship quality. *Journal of Adolescence*, pp. 837-851.

Olweus, D., 1993. *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do (Understanding Children's Worlds)*. Malden/ Oxford/ carlton: Blackwell.

Olweus, D., 1996. Bullying at School Knowledge Base and an Effective Intervention Program. *Annals New York Academy of Sciences*, pp. 265-276.

Press TV, 2010. *Iran to start bank for expat-investors*. [Internett]  
Available at: [innvandrergupper i Norge](#)  
[Funnet 23 January 2012].

Punch, S., 2002. The same or different from research with adults?. *CHILDHOOD*, p. 321-341.

Qvortrup, Jens & Corsaro, William A & Honig, Michael-Sebastian, 2009. *The pargrave handbook of childhood studies*. London: Palgrave macmillan.

Qvortrup, J., 1987. [Introduction in Qvortrup, J. (ed.)]. *International Journal of Sociology (special issue: 'The Sociology of Childhood')*, pp. 3-37.

- Qvortrup, J., 1998. Book Review, *The Sociology of Childhood* by William A. Corsaro. *CHILDREN & SOCIETY*, pp. 318-321.
- Rakoko, K., 2011. *From crime to sports*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=189533>  
[Funnet 22 November 2012].
- Reynolds, G., 2008. The Impacts and Experiences of Migrant Children in UK Secondary Schools. *Working Paper No 47*, February, p. 34.
- Richardson. Robin & Wood. Angela, 2000. *Inclusive Schools, Inclusive Society: Race and Identity on the Agenda*. Staffordshire: Trentham Books.
- Rysst, M., 2012. «*Stuck in your skin?*»: *Norwegian-ness in a presumed colour-blind society*. Oslo, Norway, National Institute for Consumer Research.
- Sam, D. L., 1998. Predicting Life Satisfaction Among Adolescents from Immigrant Families in Norway. *Ethnicity & Health*, pp. 5-18.
- Saran. Rupam & Diaz. Rosalina, 2010. Introduction: Why Study Stereotyped Youth. I: *Beyond Stereotypes Minority Children of Immigrants in Urban Schools*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 1-12.
- Silverman, D., 2005. *Doing Qualitative Research*. 2nd red. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Skeldon, R., 2006. Interlinkages between Internal and International Migration and Development in the Asian Region. *Population, Space and Place*, pp. 15-30.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T., 1981. *Bilingualism Or Not: The Education of Minorities*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters .
- Sonn, C. C., 2002. *IMMIGRANT ADAPTATION: UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS Through Sense of Community*. New York(Kluwer): Fisher A. T., Sonn, C.C., & Bishop, B.B. (Eds.).
- SOPEMI, 2010–2011. *International Migration 2010–2011, SOPEMI Report for Norway*. [Internett]  
Available at:  
[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/AD/publikasjoner/rappporter/2012/SOPEMI\\_Report\\_2011.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/AD/publikasjoner/rappporter/2012/SOPEMI_Report_2011.pdf)  
[Funnet 16 October 2012].
- Staerklé. Christian & Sidanius. Jim & Green. Eva G. T & Molina. Ludwin E, 2010. Ethnic Minority-Majority Asymmetry in National Attitudes around the World: A Multilevel Analysis *psops\_766 491..520. Political Psychology*, Volum 31, No. 4, pp. 491-519.
- Staerklé. C & Sidanius. J & Green. E.G.T. Molina. & - L, 2005. Etnic Minority-Majority Asymmetry and Attitudes towards immigrants Across 11 Nations. *Psicología Política*, Volum N° 30, pp. 7-26.
- Statistics Norway, 2011. *Immigration and immigrants*. [Internett]  
Available at: <http://www.ssb.no/english/>  
[Funnet 08 January 2011].

Stewart, A. E., 2009. *Span of Control and Stress: The Nurse Manager's Perspective*. Ann Arbor : UMI .

Taguma. Miho & Shewbridge. Claire & Huttova. Jana & Hoffman. Nancy, 2009. *OECD Reviews of Migrant Education/ Norway*. [Internett]

Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/preschoolandschool/43723539.pdf>  
[Funnet 18 October 2012].

Thorne, B., 1993. *Gender Play, Girls and Boys in School*. Buckingham : Open University Press.

Travers. Joseph & Balfe. Tish & Butler. Cathal & Day. Thérèse & Dupont. Maeve & McDaid. Rory & O'Donnell. Margaret & Prunty. Anita , 2010. *Addressing the Challenges and Barriers to Inclusion in Irish Schools*, Dublin: Special Education Department.

Tucker, K., 1998. *Anthony Giddens and Modern Social Theory*. London : SAGE Publication Ltd.

UDI, 2009. *Education*. [Internett]

Available at: <http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Central-topics/Protection/New-in-Norway/Education/>  
[Funnet 30 May 2012].

UNCRC, 1989. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. [Internett]

Available at: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>  
[Funnet 20 October 2011].

UNHCR, 2011. *2012 UNHCR country operations profile - Islamic Republic of Iran*. [Internett]

Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486f96.html>  
[Funnet 25 January 2012].

United States Sports Academy, 2002-2010. *United States Sports Academy, America's Sports University, The Sport Digest - ISSN: 1558-6448*. [Internett]

Available at: <http://thesportdigest.com/archive/tags/volume-13-number-1>  
[Funnet 22 November 2012].

Valenta. Marko & Berg. Berit, 2010. User involvement and empowerment among asylum seekers in Norwegian reception centres. *European Journal of social Work*, Volum 13:4, pp. 483-501.

Van Selm, K & Sam, D. L & van Oudenhoven, J. P, 1997. Life satisfaction and competence of Bosnian refugees in Norway. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, p. 143-149.

Vaquera. Elizabeth, Kao. Grace, 2008. Do you like me as much as I like you? Friendship reciprocity and its effects on school outcomes among adolescents. *Social Science Research*, p. 55-72.

Vassenden, A., 2011. Untangling the different components of Norwegianness. *Nations and Nationalism*, Volum 16 (4), p. 734-752.

Vedder. P & Horenczyk. G & Liebkind. K, 2006. Ethno-culturally diverse education setting; Problems, challenges and solutions. *Educational Research Review*, pp. 157-168.

- Verma. Gajendra Kishore & Zec. Paul & Skinner. George, 1994. *The Ethnic Crucible: Harmony and hostility in multi-ethnic*. London: Falmer Press.
- Wangari, W. C., 2011. *Peer support among immigrant women to promote their psychological wellbeing*. Espoo, Finland: Laurea University of Applied Science.
- Waring. Amanda & Mason. Carolynne, 2010. Opening doors: promoting social inclusion through increased sports opportunities. *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, pp. 517-529.
- Warming, H., 2005. Participant observation: a way to learn about children. I: P. M. T. K. Alison Clark, red. *Beyond Listening: Children's Perspectives on Early Childhood Services*. Bristol, Uk: The Policy Press, pp. 51-70.
- Wengraf, T., 2001. *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Wikipedia, 2012. *Russo-Persian War (1804–1813)*. [Internet]  
Available at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Persian\\_War\\_\(1804%E2%80%931813\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Persian_War_(1804%E2%80%931813))  
[Funnet 17 January 2012].
- Wong. Daniel Fu Keung & Chang Yingli & He. Xuesong & Wu. Qiaobing , 2010. The protective functions of relationships, social support and self-esteem in the life satisfaction of children of migrant workers in Shanghai, China. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, pp. 143-57.
- Woodhead, Martin & Montgomery, Heather , 2003. *Understanding childhood: an interdisciplinary approach*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.
- Yu. SeonYeong & Ostrosky. Michaelene M & Fowler. Susan A, 2011. Children's Friendship Development: A Comparative Study. *Early Childhood Research and Practice (ECRP)*, 13 Number 1( peer-reviewed multilingual journal on the development, care, and education of young children), pp. 1-21.



## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1: focus group interview guidelines

Interview guidelines

Name of interviewer: Rozita Mirsadeghi

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Attendees\_\_\_\_\_

Location\_\_\_\_\_

Method: Focus group

Required time: 1 - 1.5 hours

Project title: “The impacts and experiences of Iranian children in Trondheim schools”

Introduction (10-15 minutes):

- Welcome participants and introduce myself to those who I have met for the first time.
- Explain the scope and purpose of the discussion

{ We are here to talk about your experiences since you have attended school in Norway. Your information will help me to write my master thesis and to find out more about the situation of Iranian children as foreign students in Norwegian society. You are the best informants, because you have directly been involved with the issue. I am not here to share information, or to give you my opinions. There is no right or wrong or desirable or undesirable answers. You can disagree with each other, and you can change your mind. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel }

- Discuss procedure:

{ I will be taking notes and voice recording the discussion, because I don't want to miss any of your comments. No one outside of this room will have access to these recorded voices and they will be destroyed after my report is written. As you know everything is confidential and your names will not be used in any analysis of the discussion. No one will know who said what. I want this to be a group discussion, so feel free to respond to me and to other members in the group without waiting to be called on. However, I would appreciate it if only one person speaks at a time. The discussion will last approximately 1-1.5 hours. Sometimes I may

interrupt you if I have some questions on the topic or want to be assured of covering all the topics. If you don't understand a question, please feel free to ask me. If there any questions you have about the process, please ask me before we begin the interview.

- Participant's introduction:

{Start by everyone introducing themselves, sharing their name, what grade they are and when they came to Norway for the first time }

Focus group questions (40-60 minutes):

I am going to start with following open-ended question:

{Please think back and try to remember the first thing that comes to mind when you think about your first school in Norway }

Participants brainstorming will give me the best information to bring up questions and then I can prioritize them in order the importance. Anyway, I would like to find answers to the following questions:

- Let's talk about your relationship with the other peers at school, with migrant and non/migrant students? How is it now?
- What do you think of your previous classmates? Current classmates? (remember not to ask directly)
- Can you remember the best/worst memories of school? Or what did you like best/least about your school?
- Think back over all the years that you have attended at Norwegian schools and tell me about the most serious challenges facing you.
- How those challenges affected your life?
- What was the role of school in creating/ solving the challenges?
- How was your relationship with the teachers and the other school staff? How is it now?
- If you could change anything happened in the past, what would it be?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the situation of foreign students?



Based on the situation, I will direct the session by using follow up questions such as; “what does that mean”? “How did it happen”? “Why cause the problem”? “What did you do?”, and probing statements such as; “Please tell me more”, “Please give me an example,” “Please help me understand and etc.

I hope all participants feel comfortable to share their experiences; therefore, I do not need to pose all these questions.

Points that I should consider:

- Use only open-ended questions and encourage a truly open discussion.
- keep the discussion focused on the major issues.
- Attempt to remain as neutral as possible, not agreeing or disagreeing with what is said, and not putting words in the participants’ mouths and not showing strong emotional reactions to their responses.
- Giving the same opportunity to all participants to participate during the discussion.
- Encourage shy participants to speak and manage dominant participants.
- Use in-depth probing questions and avoid leading questions.
- Write down any observations made during the interview.
- Ask only one question about one subject at a time.
- Focus groups should take place in a comfortable and quiet setting.
- Estimate how long each question will take to discuss.

Focus group ending (10-15 minutes):

I will close the interview by asking the participants about:

{If there is anything we missed that they would like to speak talk about, if they would like to change or add something to their previous statements and about the most important point that we discussed}.

I will conclude the interview by asking how they feel about sharing their experiences.

Finally, I will thank the participants and ask them for their permission to contact them for future meeting.

## **Appendix 2: letter of confirmation**

Dear principal....

My name is Rozita Mirsadeghi and I am doing my master program (MPhil) on the Childhood Studies at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTNU. My master thesis is related to Iranian students who live in Trondheim and attend Norwegian schools. The main objective in my study is to investigate and explore the children's experiences in Norwegian schools, such as their interaction and integration into the Norwegian society, particularly build up friendships, their challenges and possible related difficulties. Regarding this, for my study I need to attend at those classes, which include Iranian students, in order to do observations directly. I will try to talk (interview) with them about what they think about themselves and other peers, their feelings about particular situations, their expectations etc. The purpose of these observations is to enhance my experiences in the stage of education and doing research with children. I need to fulfill the observations as soon as possible and it will take about 6-8 weeks.

Hence, I require your permission to conduct my field research in your school. I will be much obliged to you if you kindly support this endeavor and make it possible for me to do my fieldwork in your school. Thanks for your attention and cooperation. I look forward to hearing from you. I appreciate and look forward to receiving your reply.

Best regards,

Rozita Mirsadeghi,

### **Appendix 3: parents' information & informed consent form**

The following Informed Consent Form is prepared for parents of the girls and boys who participating in the study titled “The impacts and experiences of Iranian children in Trondheim schools”

#### **Information about the study:**

My name is Rozita Mirsadeghi and I am doing my master on Childhood Studies at Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTNU. My master thesis is related to Iranian living in Trondheim and attend in Norwegian schools. The purpose of my study is to understand and explore the children's experiences in Norwegian schools, their interaction and integration into the Norwegian society, particularly, how to build up friendships and their possible challenges. Based on Norwegian law, a study that involves children needs to be agreed upon by their parents. Therefore, hereby I ask for your permission, and if you agree, then the next step is to ask your child for his/her agreement, as well. I need informed consent of you and your child before starting my study.

The participation of your child helps me to write my master thesis and to find out more about the situation of Iranian children in the Norwegian society. Therefore, I am inviting you to have your child to be part of this study. I will assure you that all the information collected in this study will be kept confidential and will be put away and no one will access to that. Any information about your child is marked with a number on it instead of his/her name.

You have right not to give permission to your child to participate in this study if your child does not wish to do that. In addition, your child has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give me any explanation.

Please sign the certificate of consent below and do not hesitate to ask me about any kind of information you may need, now or later even after the study has started. You may contact me of the Following: email.....phone number.....

#### **Certificate of consent:**

**I have read the foregoing information and I consent voluntarily for my child to participate in this study and understand that I have the right to ask any question to my satisfaction and withdraw him/her from the study at any time I or he/she wishes.**

**Name of participant (child) -----**

**Name of Parent or Guardian-----**

**Signature of Parent or guardian-----**

**Signature of participant**-----

**Date** ----- (day/month/year)

#### **Appendix 4: children' information & informed consent form**

The following Informed Consent Form is prepared for girls and boys who participating in the study titled "The impacts and experiences of Iranian children in Trondheim schools"

##### **Information about the study:**

My name is Rozita Mirsadeghi and I am doing my master on Childhood Studies at Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTNU. My master thesis is related to Iranian students who live in Trondheim and attend in Norwegian schools. The purpose of my study is to understand and explore the children's experiences in Norwegian schools, their interaction and integration into Norwegian society particularly to build up friendships and their possible challenges.

Therefore I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you choose to participate I will ask that you partake in a focus group discussion which it will last for approximately 1 - 1.5 hours. Your participation helps me to write my master thesis and to find out more about the situation of Iranian children in Norwegian society.

I will ask you for permission for voice recording. I assure you all data collected – voice recordings, and notes as I observe you – will be kept confidential and it will be put away and no one will access to that. I will use code numbers to label and organize data instead of your name.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to refuse to be interviewed. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give me any explanation.

Please sign the certificate of consent below and do not hesitate to ask me about any kind of information you may need.

##### **Certificate of consent:**

**I have read the foregoing information and I consent voluntarily to participate in this study and understand that I have the right to ask any question to my satisfaction and withdraw from the study at any time I wish.**

**Name of participant -----**

**Age of participant -----**

**Signature of participant -----**

**Date ----- (day/month/year)**

